The New Americanist

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Editor's Introduction

I.

For our second issue, *The New Americanist* features four articles which involve issues of race, immigration, and belonging, each from a very different perspective – focusing on return, the transnational, the domestic, and placemaking, respectively. The issue opens with Izabela Zieba writing on second-generation Jewish Americans and ethnic return, and in discussing works by Dara Horn and Steve Stern, she analyzes the intersection of ancestral and dark tourisms. Sriya Shrestha argues for a transnational, relational analysis to better understand how decades of liberalization policies are reconfiguring inequality on a global scale, creating parallel pockets of wealth accumulation and deprivation across the North and South. Lauren M. Brown draws upon popular analyses of American exceptionalism by Amy Kaplan and Donald Pease to argue that the characters in Chang-rae Lee's *A Gesture Life* project differing attitudes towards a state fantasy of belonging, and ultimately rehearse alternative orientations to the nation. Marta Gierczyk proposes reconfiguring the question of who belongs in a place and what criteria define the terms of belonging by looking at Ethiopian American artists in Washington, D.C. who make use of their imaginative prowess to extract from these challenges of urban negotiation a vision of commitment and being together in the city that could work across difference.

Our interview with Lyndsey Stonebridge rounds out these concerns of place and belonging in a post-war world where a new class of placeless

peoples was created with a discussion of her new book *Placeless People: Writing, Rights, and Refugees*.

<p align="center">**II.**</p>

The New Americanist will be released biannually–in the fall and spring–and in addition to peer-reviewed scholarship, will publish book reviews, interviews, updates on significant ASC events, and other short features. Beginning with our third issue (Fall 2019), we will periodically run special feature sections with the first being "Hobgoblins of Fantasy: American Fantasy Fiction in Theory" guest edited by James Gifford and Orion Kidder. The fourth issue (Spring 2019) will feature a section called "American Studies in the Archive." Please visit our website for more details.

We commit ourselves to the highest standard in publication ethics. *The New Americanist* publishes only original scholarship which has been subject to double-blind peer review. We have a strict policy against plagiarism and defamation, and we seek editorial best practices, including fair editing, avoiding conflicts of interest, and the assurance of confidentiality for submitted work. Our journal uses the Chicago Manual of Style.

The New Americanist announces calls for papers for every issue, but we welcome abstract proposals at any time. Please submit a 250-word abstract and 200-word biographical note to **newamericanistjournal@ gmail.com**.

Dark Homeland: Ancestral Returns in Contemporary Jewish American Fiction

Izabela Zieba

ABSTRACT

This project reverses the traditional directionality of ethnic studies by examining literary representations of ethnic returns – the returns of second-generation Americans of foreign descent to the land of their ancestors. It specifically focuses on Jewish Americans who travel between their natal and ancestral homelands, having to face the burden of history and trauma that East-Central Europe necessarily represents. Analyzing a variety of texts, from the works of prominent anthropologists to literary accounts by Steve Stern, I argue that Jewish American returns could be located at the intersection of ancestral and dark tourism. While they are frequently based on rejection and ambivalence inherited from the members of the first generation, these returns could prove transformative if they are undertaken as quests rather than missions – a distinction particularly important for Jewish Americans visiting Europe. Missions are characterized by their prescribed nature and prescribed outcomes, but the protagonists of contemporary Jewish American fiction do not follow these paths: their travels take them to the heart of East-Central Europe, where they unexpectedly connect to their histories and identities, sometimes against their own wishes and expectations.

From its early examples at the end of the nineteenth century, the immigrant novel focused, as the name suggests, on immigration to the United States, finding the way in the new country, and all but forgetting the old one, which created both intra- and intergenerational problems. For ethnic writers to take interest in the return to the land abandoned for political or economic reasons – however short the return might be – is to alter the traditional direction of ethnic reading and writing; it is to show that the act of leaving is rarely so definitive as the first generation would sometimes like it to be. While scholars of ethnicity also tend to be more interested in the movement towards the new country and the assimilation process within, they recognize with increasing frequency the importance and the implications of the reversed "directionality of the migrant flow."[1] In ethnic literature, the shift has taken place as the new generation of writers – children and grandchildren of the first-generation immigrants – started imagining the land their parents had left. As Americans of foreign descent, they tend to combine two approaches to their homeland: that of insiders, a perspective inherited from their (grand)parents, and that of outsiders – mere tourists visiting foreign lands. While the tourist aspect highlights the feeling of foreignness and dissatisfaction if the results are not as advertised, the inherited perspective makes the trips necessarily political and emotional.

Homeland tourism is a section of tourism studies that is increasingly catching scholarly attention. Jillian Powers, who in her research deals mainly with organized trips, defines homeland tours in a deceptively simple statement as ones that "take individuals to destinations that they believe is their land of origin."[2] The interesting part of this definition is the word "believe" that Powers uses instead of simply referring to destinations that are "their land of origin." *Origin* is a contested term, and whether a person considers their origin to be God, his or her parents' place of birth, or the hospital in which were welcomed is largely subjective. However, what seems to be the focus in homeland tourism studies is the second example I listed: visiting places inhabited some time ago by direct antecedents of the person in question. In this rather unusual type of travel, visitors move between two separately conceptualized homelands, one probably more tangible but in a way less authentic than the other.

The problematic nature of homeland tourism is especially pronounced in Jewish American fiction, which presents the visit to the land of the

protagonist's ancestors as – necessarily – a death tour.[3] In this sense, I propose that the return of a Jewish American protagonist is less an example of straightforward homeland tourism and more what is known among sociologists and anthropologists as dark tourism or thanatourism. This concept is not new, yet it has been recently gaining renewed scholarly attention. Osbaldiston and Patray observe, "People have long been drawn, purposefully or otherwise, towards sites, attractions or events linked in one way or another with death, suffering, violence or disaster."[4] Joy Sather-Wagstaff in her book *Heritage that Hurts* provides examples of dark tourism destinations quoting medieval trips to see relics, pyramids, and cemeteries, asserting, "the educational, cultural, and historical dimensions of tourism and tourist destinations are overwhelmingly centered on the dead."[5] The peculiar intersection I am interested in is the meeting point for two modes of traveling, both of which tend to satisfy a need for the extreme. Tourists who return to their ancestral home expect to find strong, even overwhelming emotions, a sense of belonging and recognition, which feed off their inherited, second-hand nostalgia. Dark tourists, on the other hand, expect a similarly powerful, overwhelming experience that can be found in the proximity of death.[6] In the twenty-first century, according to Hirsch and Miller, "the desire for return to origins and to sites of communal suffering has progressively intensified."[7] The two scholars link this new intensity to the fall of the Iron Curtain as well as the new technologies that allow for and inspire unearthing familial origins in the most unexpected places; it is not a surprise then that Jewish American fiction of the early twenty-first century presents protagonists who can now easily travel back to the land of their ancestors in search of their roots and who find there an uneasy sense of belonging.

Returning to an ancestral home that is simultaneously a dark site of past or present suffering creates a powerful cathartic cocktail of emotions. The protagonists of Jewish American fiction have an awareness of participating in some sort of "dark" type of traveling, as it is impossible to escape the implication while visiting East-Central Europe; they are also more attuned to the "sacred aura" of these heritage sites, a component that is necessary to understand dark tourism.[8] This sacred aura produces different meanings for descendants returning to a home they had never visited before; Hirsch and Miller explain that "[f]or the generation of descendants for whom the world of the parents and grandparents is not a world they shared in the same fold of time, going back to the city of origin…is a way of coming to grips with the mythic dimensions of a place they would have to apprehend on new terms."[9] The return trip is an opportunity

to confront one's fears and assumptions inspired by the highly mediated image of East-Central Europe. One of the more intense fears the returnees might experience is that of actually finding a sense of belonging in the charged, deathly spaces. In their intensely autobiographical article "Generations of Nostalgia," Marianne Hirsch and Leo Spitzer state that "[i]n reconnecting with what is both *positive* and *negative* in the past at the site, journeys of return require a renegotiation of the conflicting memories that constitute the returnees' ideas of 'home.'"[10] It is the positive that can be more unsettling in this scenario, which is very typical for second- and third-generation returnees. The authors describe the "nostalgic yearning in combination with negative and traumatic memory" – which this article will analyze in the section on the "subjunctive" – as "internalized" by the descendants. Their memory is a "postmemory, a secondary, belated memory mediated by stories, images, and behaviors" whose power stems from the "unintegrated, conflicting, fragmented, dispersed" layers, which are simultaneously positive and negative.[11] Interestingly, Hirsch and Spitzer understand the contradictory and fragmented nature of postmemory as powerful and thus worth preserving.

This type of memory is clearly a complex combination of seemingly contradictory forces, and only a highly unique and to an extent personalized return experience can truly match this level of complexity. The mode of traveling most popular among American and Israeli Jews, which continues to be an organized tour, tends to be focused on specific sections of European geography and history, and frequently turns myopic in the representation of their destinations as dark and threatening. However, ethnic fiction published in the 2000s that describes homeland tourism to East-Central Europe promotes exploration, self-awareness, and the willingness to avoid over-generalizations of the tourist space are characteristic of. Daniel Mendelsohn in *The Lost* (2006) describes his own literary task as an act of escaping the obvious, monolithic interpretations that the tourist space of Auschwitz inspires. A fusion of literary genres, *The Lost* is an attempt to provide new ways of remembering the Shoah; the narrator uncovers the story of his relative, Schmiel, whom he physically resembles, as well as his family who were killed in the Holocaust. The detailed, meticulous narrative of one family stands in opposition to how the victims tend to be remembered: Mendelsohn recognizes that "Auschwitz, by now, has become the gigantic, one-word symbol, the gross generalization, the shorthand, for what happened to Europe's Jews."[12] His decision to visit this charged location is dictated by his fear that what it means – so much on the one hand, but so little on the other when it is

reduced to a "one-word symbol" – silences and overlooks particular stories. Once Auschwitz has been diminished to a mere symbol, the freedom to read this symbol depends on the reader's cultural awareness and skill, as well as the burden of ancestral stereotypes and myths: "It had been to rescue my relatives from generalities, symbols, abbreviations, to restore to them their particularity and distinctiveness, that I had come on this strange and arduous trip."[13] To protect the stereotype, the abbreviation of suffering that many visitors are deeply attached to, tourism (and in some cases homeland tourism) offers special forms of traveling organized around the idea of preserving the myth, yet the protagonists of contemporary Jewish American fiction take trips that are far from the predictable nature of organized tours.[14]

Methodology

Transnational studies constitute the theoretical framework for this discussion of international returns, as they redefine the ambit of the humanities, highlighting the significance of an approach that transcends national boundaries to arrive at a better understanding of complex historical and social phenomena. The definition of literary studies has long been based on a repressive "container" model, with "evident edges" enclosing "uniform contents," which assumed predominantly territorial criteria of belonging.[15] Current theory challenges this paradigm, opting for an "open network...its circumference being continually negotiated." Transatlantic studies challenge the national lens used to define the humanities: instead of focusing on American history and literature, it acknowledges the existence of the Atlantic world, tied closely with a net of cultural and business relations, including but not limited to the infamous Middle Passage. I propose to widen the range of possible connections and include in the realm of transnational theory such geohistorical spaces as Eastern Europe, described in *Shades of the Planet* as "a locality whose deep entanglement with American literature is just beginning to be recognized."[16] Wai-chee Dimock and Lawrance Buell's volume includes a section entitled "Eastern Europe as Test Case," in which Eric J. Sundquist and Ross Posnock successfully pave the way for this new type of scholarship, recognizing in Eastern Europe facts that according to the editors "have a bearing on American literature, facts that Americanists need to know."[17] The significance of projects like this one for literary and historical studies, understood as a network of connections rather than rigidly delineated national narratives, is in reshaping disciplines to include localities that are frequently excluded from the discussion on the

territorial basis, but which can illuminate old critical conversations and suggest new avenues for scholarship.

I follow anthropologist Takeyuki Tsuda's definitions of natal and ancestral (ethnic) homelands. Tsuda explains that the two types of diasporic returns are, in fact, different: "The first [type] is the return migration of first-generation diasporic peoples who move back to their homeland (country of birth)…The second is *ethnic* return migration, which refers to later-generation descendants of diasporic peoples who 'return' to their countries of ancestral origin after living outside their ethnic homelands for generations."[18] According to Tsuda, recently the phenomenon of ethnic returns has increased due to, among others, "a nostalgic desire to rediscover ethnic roots."[19] Despite the fact that the migrants of the second and third generations (and further) had never seen their ancestral homeland before their first trip back, this first trip is uniformly called a "return," which preserves the continuity of particular diasporas despite the generational lapse. The phenomenon of ambivalent homecoming can be clearly distinguished in the works of ethnic writers, even if virtually every one of them writes about short stays rather than migration. Because the experiences that Tsuda describes in his book explain some of the feelings and challenges my protagonists are faced with, in using his scholarship for my purposes I overlook the obvious differences between return migrants and returning tourists, focusing solely on common denominators for the two groups, like ambivalence and high expectations.

Tsuda's work on ethnic returns demonstrates one dimension of a multidimensional and paradoxical issue. The only certain thing is that ethnic return will not turn out to be what one expected. To Jewish Americans, conditioned to loathe East-Central Europe, it might prove to be surprisingly rich and familiar. I present ethnic return as the multidimensional, complex phenomenon that I found it to be. It is as much a tourist experience as it is not; on the one hand, the visit is shaped by the visitors' preconceptions about their destinations and shaped by their American perspective just like any other tourist trip. On the other, it is a peculiar type of a quest, which is driven by much more than a wish to experience new cultures, to learn about the histories of different places or to taste new foods. It is a journey into the new regions of the self as much as a journey into a new land. Finally, the ethnic return I discuss in this project is a subsection of homeland tourism that is unique to Jewish visitors in that the desire to return is undermined by the hatred of what the land represents, but also by a strong sense that it is ancestral land. Anthropologist Erica Lehrer records an interesting conversation as she conducts her fieldwork

in Kraków's Jewish quarter of Kazimierz. When Max Rogers, a Hasidic Londoner on his business trip to Poland hears Lehrer's Polish, he says, "I should speak such good Polish! You're so lucky!"[20] Lehrer questions his comment and asks why he thinks he should speak the language, which annoys him to an extent, and after a while he responds, "I don't know!… It's in the blood." Classic nostalgia combined with an annoyance at having admitted the possibility of nostalgia seems to be the mode of the second-generation's being in the complicated worlds old and new. Hirsch and Spitzer call it "resistant nostalgia," quoting Svetlana Boym's idea of "a home that no longer exists or has never existed."[21] Such ambivalence, according to Lehrer, is a first step towards a better understanding of the relations between the past and present – resentments and wishes of the subjunctive identity; the ambivalence stands in opposition to the predetermined denial inspired, for example, by organized tours. It is, among others, the ambivalent combination of bitterness and nostalgia that produces a certain sense of dissatisfaction and futility involved in going back. The land of return is neither what the travelers hope for nor what they fear: it is a present-day version of what they only knew from stories, which means that it resembles little to nothing the country they imagined (frequently already distorted by both first-generation silences and second-generation inferences). Szifra talks about her parents' "pathological or adaptive need to just go forward."[22] In fact, Finkelstein admits in her narrative that "[l]ife was a lot simpler when I thought Poland was only a country of killing field and ugly Soviet-style architecture."[23] Perhaps, this realization – that what one expected is both much more and disappointingly less than that – is what the older generation expects and fears.

To differentiate between the two modes of traveling and reacting to difficult pasts, I distinguish, after Lehrer, two types of Jewish travels to East-Central Europe: one involves participation in an organized tour and the other a quest.[24] Lehrer calls the former type of tourism a "mission": "a term used in Jewish communal circles for a wide range of organized Jewish group travel experiences, almost always advertised as an opportunity to enhance one's Jewishness."[25][26] Mission travel is a pursuit of "a pre-determined outcome" and offers little new to the traveler other than the physical markers of the already interpreted world of the Holocaust.[27] If the visitors arrive with little knowledge of the events, the guides are there to interpret the events for them. Thus, the conflicts that inspire the fears on both sides never come close to the possibility of being resolved, and the stereotypes keep circulating without a chance at correction.[28] Instead of creating space for the "possible futures" to happen, the encounters serve

to reaffirm previously held beliefs about the other, and it seems true for both sides alike: travelers and inhabitants of the charged space. Taking a trip to Poland, for example, is a political statement, and it is expected that the statement fit within the larger political context or atmosphere of the moment. Because of the fraught nature of Jewish relationships with East-Central Europe, it is no wonder then that the return represents much more than just a trip back.[29][30] The literary encounters that I am interested in and whose one example I explore in the last section are far from this rigid form of tourism; their participants are challenging their own mythologies by the way of quests rather than missions. A quest, according to Lehrer, is "motivated and informed by travelers' struggles with absence, fragmentation, cultural displacement, and longings for a living connection to the intimate past, a sense of being at home in the world."[31] I argue that the homeland trips undertaken by the protagonists in contemporary Jewish American fiction may be defined as quests in Lehrer's understanding of the word in that "they do not follow prescribed paths, and thus are often subversive, even if accidentally."[32] The accidental nature of what turns out to be a subversive trip is especially visible in contemporary Jewish American novels, such as Steve Stern's *The Angel of Forgetfulness*. Before I move to the close analysis of Saul's encounters with East-Central Europe, I explain just how fraught the relationship with East-Central Europe is for Jewish Americans and what about the region continues to attract them.

Escaping the Subjunctive

I base this section on various fictional and non-fictional accounts which do not find their way to the final, close-reading section, but which help me demonstrate exactly what forces the Jewish travelers are up against when they decide to head east. Erica Lehrer's informants create the most realistic layer of this article, demonstrating that the "resistant nostalgia" is not a figment of literary imagination. Barbara Finkelstein's "Return to Poland" is an autobiographical story whose honesty about Poland is refreshing. She also consistently uses the subjunctive to describe her desire to visit, and this section's purpose is to explain what drives members of the second-generation to visit the "primordial site of origin," as Hirsch and Spitzer call it: the desire to escape the subjunctive mode of their lives, a yearning understood from grammatical point of view as a precarious, undetermined space that longs to be filled with the indicative and the factual.[33]

In an interview, Steve Stern quotes the following traditional tale about the Baal Shem Tov (translated as the "Master of the Name"), the founder of Hasidic Judaism:

When the Baal Shem Tov needed enlightenment, he went to a place in the forest, lit a fire, said a prayer, and *mirabile dictu*: enlightenment was granted him. His nephew would go to the same place in the forest and light the fire, only to find he'd forgotten the prayer. Still it was sufficient; it was enough to be in the forest and light the fire. Then the nephew's nephew would go to the forest, only to discover that he was unable to light the fire or remember the prayer. But that was also sufficient; he was in the forest and that was enough. Then you arrive at the generation of the nephew's nephew's nephew, who can't find his way into the forest, never mind build a fire or recall the prayer. But he at least remembers the story of the forest, the fire, and the prayer, and that must be sufficient for him.[34]

Contemporary ethnic writers are, arguably, in the position of the nephew's nephew's nephew: they remember the stories but find it impossible to find their way back into the forest. Even though less than three generations elapsed, physical remoteness increases the metaphorical distance from tradition and culture. What they have left are stories. Because the memory of the forest is vivid despite the inability to light the fire and say a prayer, the stories are frequently concerned with the "what ifs" of the generation: wondering how life would have been if they had access to their ancestors' lives and spaces.

Erica Lehrer is interested in the concept of "what if" and thinks of it in terms of grammar, emphasizing the textual nature of the inherited nostalgia – one that is not based on actual memories and so it only has stories, words, to thrive on. Lehrer thus explains the concept of subjunctive identity, "The subjunctive is a grammatical mood that expresses doubts, wishes, and possibilities. The use of the subjunctive in memory work, then, suggests a relationship with identity in which one considers the possibility that things might have been different – or proposes that they might yet be so."[35] In the majority of works I am familiar with, the first generation, due to painful memories of Eastern Europe, is reluctant if not straightforwardly hostile to the idea of return.[36] They are also generally opposed to any identification with the region. Yet the next generations yearn for the experience: as Hirsch and Miller remind us, "[e]ven if every return emerges on some level from a desire to map a loss, at the same time, every return inevitably exercises, or attempts to exercise, a right to acknowledgement."[37] The authors add that for some root seekers, "return is a counterfactual effort to imagine a world before disaster and displacement"; the statement describes returnees' desires using the same language as Lehrer does – the grammar of longing.[38] One of Lehrer's informants thus

explains his feelings upon seeing Kraków: "I see people on the street, going into fruit shops just like my grandmother did. I see their faces and think it's amazing, all these people who look just like grandmother *would have* looked here."[39] Despite also describing more negative feelings Poland inspires, like constant fear of anti-Semitism, the young man cannot help but imagine what might have been, and it makes the trip worthwhile. Barbara Finkelstein thus reminisces the reactions she encountered before and after her visit to Poland, "One of my acquaintances…told me that she loathes Poland so much that she asked me not to discuss my trip with her. Her parents, Polish Jews, had been in Auschwitz, and as far as she was concerned, Poland did not exist any more."[40] This was the burden that Finkelstein, and many Jewish travelers like her, had to take on their journeys east.

The "classic nostalgia" that Lehrer recognizes in the subjunctive descriptions (that things might have been different or better) is complicated by the fact that it relates to places never before visited. Psychiatrist Aaron Hass, for example, thus describes his own life in the subjunctive:

When asked 'Fin vanit bist du?' [Where are you from?] by someone from the old country, I would respond "Ich bin a Lubliner" [I am a Lubliner]. Even though before 1978 I had never been to Lublin, Poland, where my parents and grandparents lived before the war, I felt *as though that were* my home. Through a series of circumstances beyond my control, my life was displaced from where *it should have* taken place, from where, I believed, I *would have* led a far more contented existence.[41]

This subjunctive identity, delineated by "should haves" and "would haves," is the source of a particular appeal to younger generations and perhaps even a source of comfort despite no tangible recollection of its origin. As Hass' example suggests, the most prominent place among the subjunctive statements in second- and third-generation speech patterns belongs to the counterfactual conditional: a part of the subjunctive where the if-clause counters facts. Even if Hass does not explicitly state, "I *would have* led a far more contented existence *if the war had not happened*," the if-clause is always there between the lines. Everything about the second and third generations seems to reflect the subjunctive mood, and based on my literary research, its members do not share the peculiar desire to imagine alternative scenarios with their parents, who – even if they have their own subjunctive in the new country – experienced at least part of their lives in the indicative and whose need to leave the country was frequently communicated to them in the imperative. The descendants do not have the factual, indicative basis from which to draw their layer of wishes and "might-have-beens." The subjunctive is a way to gain access to the stories

and perhaps even approach the forest of the old tradition, and it is the "what if" that leads many of them to return despite the first generation's admonitions.

The subjunctive features prominently in the language used by the authors in discussing the motivation behind their writing, as well as the motivation behind trips to ancestral homelands. Sarah Wildman, the author of *Paper Love: Searching for the Girl My Grandfather Left Behind*, declares she researched and recorded her grandfather's story of prewar Vienna lovers to preserve what was meant to be obliterated: "I think that what I realized at the very beginning of this project was that the Nazi experiment was not just to exterminate, but to erase – to render people literally unmemorable."[42] Wildman jumps into subjunctive while attempting to determine why she is so dedicated to uncovering the story of Scheftel, the girl her grandfather left behind in Vienna: "And I thought that this was an opportunity to tell one person's story – a regular person, someone who didn't have big art, someone who you wouldn't have heard of – but someone who might have been someone you knew." The appeal of the subjunctive is in its potential: rather than presenting faceless figures with no history, it allows the imagination to connect with whoever is described by virtue of possibility as "someone who might have been someone you knew." This realization brings the reader closer to the past in some ways, yet simultaneously the usage of the unfulfilled hypothetical statement highlights the fact that the potential is forever unrealized.

Due to its unmistakable relation to the past, the subjunctive can become a tool of self-torture and blaming. In "Return to Poland," Finkelstein utilizes subjunctive in an agonizing and exhausting manner, looking for someone – anyone – to condemn: "I fell prey to my old habit of suspecting people of the worst. How would these guys have acted during the war? What would have motivated them, fury or pity?"[43] Subjunctive is a way, even if tenuous, to connect with the past and try to understand it, yet it can become obsessive and unhealthy. As Finkelstein is walking through Polish streets, she cannot help but keep guessing:

I spent part of my time surreptitiously eyeing the middle-aged lovers in front of us. The woman had bleached blonde hair piled high on her head and black eyeliner wings. Both wore inexpensive leather jackets. Descendants, I thought, just as I am. What did their families do during the war? I was glad that my parents had spared me the trial of living in a country where I would ask myself this question about everyone I met.[44][45]

Finkelstein demonstrates the perils of the subjunctive, far from its more dreamy and romantic connotations that the concept could inspire.

Whereas Wildman uses her yearning to investigate the "what ifs" in a productive manner – somewhat close to Mendelsohn's wish to "rescue" his dead family members from being forgotten or, worse, remembered as unified symbols of the Holocaust under the all-encompassing banner of Auschwitz – Finkelstein has to control the power of her imagination to revive the past in the most unexpected and menacing ways.

For many of the writers who have never experienced the pre-war Jewishness of the land, Europe becomes the locus of an annihilated culture: the nightmare of remembrance, but also a paradoxical Promised Land, akin to *po-lin*[46] – the haven their ancestors sought and found. In a most unexpected admission, Zuckerman in Roth's *The Prague Orgy* reveals "the sentiments stirred up by [his] circuitous escape route, or the association it's inspired between [his] ancestors' Poland, his Prague tenement, and the Jewish Atlantis of an American childhood dream."[47] As a young boy, collecting funds for the Jewish National Fund, this is how Zuckerman claims to have imagined the Promised Land:

This is the city I imagined the Jews would buy when they had accumulated enough money for a homeland. I...recalled, from our vague family chronicle, shadowy, cramped streets where the innkeepers and distillery workers who were our Old World forebears had dwelled apart, as strangers, from the notorious Poles – and so, what I privately pictured the Jews able to afford with the nickels and dimes I collected was a used city, a broken city, a city so worn and grim that nobody else would even put in a bid.[48]

In this short passage, all the interesting threads of this chapter come together. Roth reflects on the transnational aspect of the Jewish experience (Palestine, Prague, Poland) with a combination of resentment for the "notorious Poles," the imaginary nature of homeland and the Promised Land ("this is the city I imagined"), even the dichotomy between "hearty Jewish teenagers" in Palestine and the "broken," "used," "worn," and "grim" Old World. What Roth finds most fascinating in the old city of Prague is the possibility of endless storytelling: "Second were the stories, all the telling and listening to be done...the mining and refining of *tons* of these stories."[49] The chance of participating in the immediate ancestral history seems more tangible in Prague than in the centuries' old Israel, despite the fact that the European Jewish history has been partially erased. The process of excavation and refining suggests not only certain difficulties in obtaining the stories, but also the necessity to purify them, to separate the valuable part from the decades' worth of additions and distortions. Longing for a beginning to their own story, the writers

of the second and third generation fall into the inherited nostalgia for the unknown, the homesickness of a person who never left.

Heading East

In this section, I look closely at Steve Stern's novel *The Angel of Forgetfulness* (2005) to analyze a literary return to East-Central Europe. My choice of Stern's novel to exemplify the phenomena discussed in previous sections is very deliberate: his protagonist is not consciously looking for any connection with the past, but his spontaneous, unexplained decision to go to Europe results in better understanding of his Jewish identity.[50] The novel offers the reader a window into the various periods of Jewish history, from 17th-century Chmielnicki massacres to the tenements of the Lower East Side. However, it is the trip to Prague that finally awakens in the protagonist an interest in his heritage. Organized tours and the tourism industry complex generate stories and interpretations that travelers on a quest have a chance to dismantle or complement, depending on their case. Saul's unplanned and chaotic visit to Prague gives him an opportunity to face the ghosts of the Jewish past, and his guide, Svatopluk, is a contradiction of a typical tour guide in that he often mystifies Saul more than he interprets the world for him. Stern's work adds one more dimension to the already multifaceted paradigm by including a manuscript written by Aunt Keni's lover, Nathan Hart, on top of the story of the manuscript's author and the leading story of Saul Bozoff, whose aunt first introduces him to the rich life of the Jewish New York. It is not until Saul receives his part of the inheritance – money from the sale of Aunt Keni's paintings depicting the life on the Lower East Side – that he decides to go to Europe. Prague is not his first destination, yet slowly but surely his steps lead him to Altneushul (Staranová Synagoga), where the legend locates the creation of the Golem. Having inhaled the creature's remains on an eccentric tour guide's recommendation, Saul returns to the U.S. and becomes a scholar of Jewish texts. Stern presents this intense journey – only one among Saul's many sojourns in life, which include living in a hippie commune and a brief period in a mental institution – as a mirror to his own life, but it is also one of the stops many contemporary Jews will take in search of their roots.

Even though previous sections highlighted the fraught nature of East-Central Europe as a homeland tourism destination, the fictional trip becomes a true quest in Lehrer's understanding of the word in that it does not follow any specific itinerary, and it helps the traveler understand his Jewishness in a new, deeper manner. The seemingly random nature of his journey and the fact that he decides to explore independently and

delve into the unknown generates the meaning of his quest, providing a spiritual dimension to what might have seemed otherwise unremarkable and profane. The quest is in a way a compulsive action, even if it is planned.[51] It is with hindsight that the travelers understand that their trips were not accidental; initially, the idea of going away (not yet coming home) seems random and spontaneous.[52]

The protagonist of *The Angel of Forgetfulness* never really explains how the thought of heading east entered his mind; he presents it as a coincidence at best, surrendering to external forces that push him in this forbidding direction without consulting his own desires. Saul calls his European period "[t]he lost years of Saul Bozoff" and proceeds to explain, "there was really only one, which began, I guess, under a sycamore tree on a soft spring night in Arkansas and ended in the attic of an ancient synagogue in the old Bohemian capital of Prague."[53] Despite its undeniable importance in shaping the scholarly persona of Bozoff, the year is deemed lost, perhaps because of the constant drugged blur that affected the former hippie. The night in the genizah of the Altneushul proves to be a groundbreaking event in Saul's life, which will keep influencing his development for the next decade at least, but he has a rather hard time determining what exactly brought him to the capital of then communist Czechoslovakia, and what inspired the motivation to overcome all the accompanying obstacles:

It hadn't been easy to get there; in Amsterdam, they'd sent me from consulate to embassy back to consulate again to secure a visa. I'd ridden dingy trains that, as if literally turning back time, changed from diesel engines to steam as they traveled farther east. I crossed border checkpoints where submachine-gun-toting police entered my sleeping compartment in the middle of the night to inspect my papers and solicit bribes. Whenever, during the journey, I recalled that I was a wanted man, a suitably straitened expression would lay hold of my features, but I knew perfectly well I was small fry…Nobody was in pursuit – so why was I traveling so unthinkably far afield? Far from what? Still I continued heading east, trying to will an unpremeditated impulse into a necessary quest.[54]

Even though his journey is out of the ordinary, Saul expects the readers of his narratives to take such spontaneous decisions for granted, as if it were only a natural occurrence. The reader is led to believe that the urge to "continue heading east" is reason enough to take the trip. Only a post-factum analysis reveals that the beckoning and the urge are signs of an emerging interest in Jewishness and a budding desire to experience the Old World first hand despite prejudice and fear.

Perhaps precisely because the Jewish travelers do not wish to admit that they might feel any connection to the land of their immediate ancestors, as it would mean a certain affinity to the space of historical betrayal and torment, and thus they have no expectations of finding any, what awaits them in Europe is a disconcerting sense of familiarity. Saul remembers that his friend, Billy Boots, "had sometimes spoken of Prague in that way he had of sounding familiar with places he'd never been," locating the city in the shared unconscious of perhaps not all of the humanity, but certainly of readers: "He pictured himself strolling arm in arm through crooked streets with Franz Kafka, whom he portrayed as a Charlie Chaplin figure oppressed by a city that traded in things for which he (Kafka) had no tolerance, such as magic and beauty."[55] When he meets Svatopluk Lifshin, who represents the Jewish Heritage Society, Saul has a chance to participate in a guided tour of the city, his agonizing path to Jewishness. The visiting card he receives from his guide advertises a "Magical Mysery Tour," which initially strikes Saul as a rather "unfortunate typo," but later turns into an accurate description of the experience: "he read me the riot act of local Jewish history, reciting the thousand-year cycle of expulsions, pogroms, accusations of ritual murder."[56] Though unwelcoming and offering no sense of belonging, the city constitutes the skeleton of the once living organism, exposing the remains of Jewish life and culture. The eccentric guide tells Saul, "The streets of Prague...correspond to configurations of human brain...To negotiate thoroughfares of Prague is, in manner of speaking, to explore brain of Franz Kafka, though many other strenuous Jewish brains also repeat map of city."[57] The sense of recognition is heightened by the analogy, and perhaps even mocked to an extent by Stern, as if the only way to really get to know the maze of the city was to imagine it as the mind of its best-known Jew.

Svatopluk's claim that Prague is akin to Kafka's brain represents relatively common imagery associated both with European cities as well as Jewish ghettos; it imagines the city as a maze: enticing yet unwelcoming, where mysterious corners attract questionable characters and streets intersect at puzzling angles, creating an impassable labyrinth. Aziza Khazzoom, a sociologist examining Edward Said's concept of Orientalism in light of contemporary ethnic tensions in Israel, traces the Orientalist discourse to pre-war Jewish Europe, adding filth, darkness, and crowd to the narrowness of the streets. "Friends and foes alike," Khazzoom recounts, "were disgusted by Jewish poverty, by their dark disorderly ghettos with the 'narrow streets, dirt, throngs of people...and ceaseless haggling'...The heder, the primary educational institution, was

dismissed as crowded, unhygienic, and chaotic."[58] In her subsequent anal-ysis, Khazzoom discusses the varying value judgment placed on an idea as seemingly trivial as the narrowness of streets; in reference to Jewish ghettos, it is considered a pejorative characteristic, but it otherwise in-creases the picturesque qualities of European cities: "Of course it is em-pirically true that Jewish ghettos were small, crowded, and noisy...But the superficial accuracy of the constructions is misleading. For example, there is nothing inherently backward about narrow, twisting streets; today, many parts of Europe are popular precisely for their romantic, intimate sidelanes."[59] It is not the objective physical state of a given location that determines its judgment, but prejudicial associations in reference with the people who live there. The same quality can be positive and highly negative simultaneously depending on the context of the utterance; what is romantic in one instance can be deemed chaotic in another with no awareness of the underlying hypocrisy.

The Prague that Saul visits is a good example of a reversal in the ap-plication of this rule. It seems forbidding and "cruel" precisely because of the absence of the once-existing ghetto or the impending liquidation thereof.[60] Prague in Svatopluk's description becomes a macabre museum of Judaica. As the man guides Saul through the streets evoking Kafka's brain, he brings his attention to the neighborhood of "Josefov, old Jewish quarter, named in honor Emperor Joseph Two, who opens ghetto gates in seventeen and eighty-four. He also outlaws Hebrew and forbids all but eldest son of Jewish family to wed."[61] The location is already charged with meaning as a Jewish quarter that is no longer Jewish, but Svatopluk adds one more layer to the place when he says, "It is Josefov that archfiend Hitler, ordering Jewish artifacts be brought here from all over Europe, designates site for Museum of Extinct Race, which is precisely...what ghet-to has become."[62] The tour given by Svatopluk is a Mysery Tour focusing on an Extinct Race, with dead artifacts left by Kafka and rabbi Löw, as well as the nameless Jews of Prague. The city seems rather unwelcoming and ready to administer electric shock if one takes a wrong turn, and not only because it is separated from the Western part of the continent with a thick layer of barbed wire. Saul recounts,

I suffered the indignities of the journey, passed through whorls of barbed wire and red tape to reach a city where everyone looked as scared as I felt. It did not give me a sense of belonging. A condition of my being in Prague was that my already limited visa might be revoked at any mo-ment, and without ceremony I would be sent packing back to the West. I half hoped the time would come soon.[63]

Saul experiences the same ambiguity his ancestors did: despite the daily risk of expulsion, he renews the literal visa as the metaphorical one was renewed by the Jewish inhabitants of the city. This precarious position, warranting no shelter from fear and no "sense of belonging," might make Saul want halfheartedly to leave, but in reality it keeps him strangely attached to the city, even despite its pernicious nature: "But in breathing the city's toxic air, I had compounded my own private malaise; I'd reached an outpost in the middle of Europe that was neither East or West but stood at a threshold, or on a cusp if you like, of two worlds, and, wandering about it, I couldn't tell if I were coming or going."[64] The toxicity and cruelty of European cities did not evaporate once the war ended; in the eyes of Jewish travelers, the thick unpleasant atmosphere hovers over East-Central Europe, both attracting and repelling them with its inbetweenness and historicity.

Part of the toxic cloud over Europe has to do with the remnants of fear. Depending on when a traveler visits East-Central Europe, he or she might encounter perpetrators, people who stood by watching, but hardly ever any survivors. That is true not only for the contemporary Europe Saul visits, but for any Jewish experience in Europe. Even the Golden Age of Prague Jewry in the times of Rudolph II was already tainted by growing uneasiness. Fear is a sensation that Svatopluk highlights in his description of the Jewish Prague:

Kafka...was inventor of twentieth century, sounding theme which reverberates more loud with every year. The theme, as you...are aware, is fear, and Kafka, because he is afraid of everything, is fear's prophet. Fear is concept he is getting from Jews, who are cultivating it for ages: fear of capricious tyrants, of blood libel and mob that makes of ghetto a charnel house, fear of own *pipik*, of love, fear of horrors that often preview in Prague before they are exported to rest of Europe. World bequeaths to Jews raw material for manufacture of fear, which Jews are refining over centuries, until fear is rectified to perfection in person of Kafka.[65]

The city's fear is now compounded by the communist regime that keeps it closed off from the world, which increases its deadness. For Saul, Prague is "a memory that refused to come alive."[66]

Another aspect of the fear that the protagonists experience is related to their encounters with local inhabitants. To the American visitors, Europe seems to be the place where, unlike in America, being Jewish is an offense. That is why when Saul Bozoff in Stern's novel hears the word "Jew?" asked in a hushed tone, his immediate reaction is fear: "'Žid?' asked the spidery fellow in the transparent plastic rain slicker on Maiselov

Street in the Old Town section of Prague…It was a face I'd seen many variations of (minus the eagle beak) in this somber city, which, although it was already April, seemed far from the outset of spring. On first hearing the charged syllable on the man's lips, I stiffened, assuming an insult."[67] If one adds the problematic history to the communist regime, which controlled Czechoslovakia from Moscow at the time, the assumption Saul makes seems understandable: "The question would have been less loaded in the streets of New York, where he might have been hawking discount matzos or scalping tickets to Yom Kippur services, but here in a city where being Jewish had once been a capital offense (reduced now to only a felony?), to answer seemed a complex affair."[68] Interestingly, the awareness of his Jewishness in the face of an undefined threat brings Saul closer to his identity, which might be a more realistic explanation of his subsequent scholarly activity than smoking the dust of the golem.

Linenthal points out in his book *Preserving Memory* that "[j]ust because an event is perceived as transformative, epochal, a watershed, a break in human history – all the sweeping phrases used to separate the Holocaust from the ongoing stream of history – *memory of that event is not necessarily equally transformative.*"[69] In the case of death camp tour participants, this is certainly the case. Their visits inspire remembrance, but do not lead to a deeper understanding or a transformation of the people involved with the tour. The ordinariness of their experience resembles, at best, the trivial platitudes uttered by TripAdvisor's members reviewing the experience of visiting Dachau Concentration Camp at five stars, and, at worst, the banal concerns the same members have about restrooms and the café when they decide to award the place with three stars. Yet for those who participate in quests, these experiences are indeed transformative – sometimes against their expectations. After Saul tastes the "dust of golem," according to Svatopluk "premium righteous shit," he becomes an avid scholar of Jewishness with a professorial position at a fictitious Mermelman College.[70] The power of the Golem drug gives him inspiration to study Jewish texts, seeking the original light hidden in the Torah: "I made it my business to gauge the volume and intensity of the light generated by the stories I read. For this project it was necessary to try to make of myself a sensitive instrument capable of registering Judaic photons broadcast over millennia – no mean task."[71] Saul gets so caught up with the task that he virtually forgets about the life beyond his studies. "Of course, by the time I'd stuffed the essentially empty vessel of Saul Bozoff with stories, years had passed, and the walls of the room I called home were buttressed with books,'" he notices, quickly to add: "In

short, I was never so content."[72] The Prague episode gives Saul more focus than the first encounter with his own Jewishness, the stories told to him by Aunt Keni. Even though the focus becomes absolute, not allowing any other duties, like teaching and writing, or pleasures, like food and sex, to really enter his life, the abnegated body of the scholar feels satisfaction. The stories preserved by Aunt Keni in the manuscript, as well as the "misery tour" of Prague, grant Saul access into the world of his past.

Conclusion

In the literary texts that I looked at, Jewish returns – which might initially seem like no returns at all – are undertaken under the guise of touristic endeavors or haphazard travels. The stigma surrounding the cursed land of East-Central Europe, and Poland in particular, does not allow the travelers to admit they are in pursuit of their roots and identities, since it could be ridiculed as "back-to-the-shtetl heritage nostalgia."[73] The assumed indifference, the air of randomness and spontaneity, however, turn their journeys into quests as opposed to missions from Erica Lehrer's useful definitions, leading to more profound revelations than expected. When the tourist experience has to be "life-changing" or when it has "a spiritual awakening" written into its itinerary, the results tend to be predictable and short-lived.[74] It is precisely the lack of expectations that illuminates the newfound sense of familiarity the literary traveler encounters in Prague. There is value in exploring the borderlands of dark tourism and experiencing a heritage that hurts, even if the encounters and realizations these types of travels bring are far from the ones advertised by tourist folders. Despite the fact that their destinations seem unwelcoming, if not straightforward hostile, what the travelers obtain as a result of the visit in the forbidding spaces of remembrance is a better sense of their Jewishness. Even if Stern mocks his protagonist to an extent, leaving him buried in books and deficient in nutrients in the tradition of great Jewish philosophers, Saul emerges from his European visits renewed, as if this necessary step had to be taken not to seek reconciliation or understanding of what happened – but simply to go and see, to breathe the same air, to touch the remains of the world that will never be again. The potential for the mental rejuvenation that happens not because of, but despite, the bloody history of the place is thwarted if the visit is organized as a mission. When the individuals are forced to experience something profound, the trivialities of the everyday make their efforts laughable, but when they explore the unknown, the trivial can lead to the profound, the profane to the sacred.

Ultimately, even though their quests do not bring a sense of belonging or closure to the travelers, they find that a face-to-face encounter with their questions, resentments, and even actual fears is, to an extent, liberating. The authors do not devote any space to extolling the virtues of the "return": how the trip will help you make sense of the familiar in the most foreign, how traversing the streets that resemble Kafka's brain will lead you to a life of scholarly devotion. They do not need to do this, and they really cannot if they understand that articulating these benefits will only increase the popularity of mission tours. The grammar of their texts does the work for them, and careful readers will understand how groundbreaking the visits are in the scheme of the novels. They will also see that the real quest is undertaken when the traveler is ready and that it needs to be an exploration of the unknown – even if it eventually reveals hidden layers of familiarity – for it to attain any significance.

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Notes

1   Tsuda, *Diasporic Homecomings*, 7.
2   Powers, "Reimaging the Imagined Community," 1362.
3   Lehrer addresses this (necessary to an extent) focus on the death in an endnote: "In 2012, Krakow's local Jews spoke explicitly back at the March of the Living, in a form of a large banner that was hung between the gateposts of Krakow's Jewish Community Center when the March was in town, which read, in all capital letters, 'HEY MARCH OF THE LIVING! COME INSIDE AND SEE SOME JEWISH LIFE.' The word 'life' was in larger letters, presumably to contrast with the March's focus on death" (228).
4   Osbaldiston and Petray, "The Role of Horror and Dread in the Sacred Experience," 176. The author provides colorful examples to support his argument: "The Roman gladiatorial games, pilgrimages or attendance at medieval public executions were, for example, early forms of such death-related tourism whilst... the first guided tour in England was a train trip to witness the hanging of two murderers. Similarly...visits to the morgue were a regular feature of nineteenth century tours of Paris, perhaps a forerunner to the 'Bodyworlds' exhibitions in London, Tokyo and elsewhere that, since the late 1990s, have attracted visitors in their tens of thousands" (176). It proves that the phenomenon is, in fact, not as recent as the newly found interest in researching dark tourism.
5   Sather-Wagstaff, *Heritage that Hurts*, 70.
6   Skinner asserts that dark tourism and thanatourism "reflect a nostalgic authenticity by way of endangerment," and he detects that "extreme travel writing," which is the focus of his book, strongly involves two types of sensations: Schadenfreude and catharsis (Skinner, "Introduction: Writings on the Dark Side of Travel," 9).
7   Hirsch and Miller, "Introduction,"3.
8   Osbaldiston and Petray, "The Role of Horror and Dread in the Sacred Experience," 176.
9   Hirsch and Miller, "Introduction,"12.
10   Hirsch and Spitzer, "Generations of Nostalgia," 360.
11   Hirsch and Spitzer, 362.
12   Mendelsohn, *The Lost: A Search for Six of Six Million*, 112.
13   Mendelsohn, 112.
14   Most widely read examples include Dara Horn's *In the Image* (2002) and Jonathan Safran Foer's *Everything is Illuminated* (2003).
15   Dimock, "War in Several Tongues," 270.
16   Dimock, "Introduction," 10.
17   Dimock, 10.
18   Tsuda, *Diasporic Homecomings*, 1.
19   Tsuda, 3.
20   Lehrer, *Jewish Poland Revisited*, 92.
21   Hirsch and Spitzer, "Generations of Nostalgia," 256.
22   Lehrer, *Jewish Poland Revisited*, 106.
23   Lehrer, 59.
24   Lehrer, 93.
25   Lehrer, 57.
26   Israel is the first-most-visited destination of such tours with Poland as close second. Lehrer, 58.
27   Lehrer, 59.
28   In her book on "the tourism of nostalgia," depicting the motivation behind the undiminished interest in visiting the Amish country in Pennsylvania and Ohio, Trollinger points out, "Tourism is the heritage center that interprets, the tour guide who describes a people in a certain way, or the restaurant that offers a certain 'unusual' style of food. It is never actually that other mode of being in the world. It is, at best, a representation of it. Moreover, tourism is a particular kind of representation, one that aims to please tourists" (Trollinger 36). It is virtually impossible to experience "the other mode of being in the world" with the constant mediation of the heritage center. Organized trips to Poland, whose purpose is to see the "blood-soaked soil" of Lehrer's description, are the "key mode of Jewish travel to Poland today," and their heavily

mediated form impede, if not entirely preclude, their participants from independent encounters with the country and its locals (57). Even if the genuine unmediated encounter with the locals is a myth in itself, as many anthropologists point out, a complete separation from them produces unfounded fears and perpetuates prejudice.

29 Alex Danzig, a consultant to Yad Vashem and the Israeli Ministry of Education on group travel to Poland, once confessed to anthropologist Erica Lehrer: "The trip to Poland, it's not just a trip to Poland. It's your [perspective on] life. How to [do it] depends what you think about life at all, about history, about your future" (22).

30 In Edward Linenthal's description, one of the first organized "returns" of Jewish Americans to the charged space took place in the summer of 1979. Members of the President's Commission on the Holocaust, whose most prominent achievement was the opening of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, D.C., organized a "fact-finding mission" to Eastern Europe. It started in Warsaw, included a tour of death camps in Poland and Ukraine (then part of the Soviet Union), and ended in Israel. Linenthal describes particular power plays that took place during the trip, including continuous fights about who to honor first. The act of wreath-laying took on a metaphorical significance when the members of the delegation resisted the pressure to lay the flowers on the monument honoring Polish resistance fighters before commemorating Jewish victims. Right after landing on Polish soil, the chair of the Commission, Elie Wiesel, threatened to cancel the trip unless it started on Miła 18 (the headquarters of Jewish Fighting Organization) (30). In an act of delusion and denial, Polish newspapers still claimed that the delegation honored Polish fighters first. Even though the historical climate and the related strict censorship of the late 1970s explain this outright lie, it is still indicative of the relationships between the two nations, and it provides perspective to and foreshadowing of the returns that young Jewish American writers describe in their novels.

Linenthal's narrative points out that the members of the delegation were aware of the million-dollar tourism industry that Poland acquired in the aftermath of World War II (31). Death camps are, however, very specific historic sites, where tourists are faced with absence rather than presence. Even in the most flagship tourist destination, Auschwitz and Birkenau concentration camps, which present the onlooker with multiple artifacts like shoes, suitcases, and even artificial limbs, the experience is mostly that of absence, and what tourists come to recognize is the efficient machinery that led to the perceived emptiness. Artificial limbs are parts of humans that are no more; suitcases hold belongings of people whose presence has been forcefully eliminated. The travelers of Jewish fiction know ahead of time that the world they will be searching for is long gone. Linenthal quotes Dr. Hadassah Rosensaft, who visited Warsaw's memorial sites in 1979, as saying, "Since much of the city had been destroyed and then rebuilt, I did not recognize it...I sensed a painful silence and emptiness. There were no more Jews in Warsaw. The streets that had once teemed with Jewishness now seemed barren. Generations of Jewish life had disappeared" (qtd. in Linenthal 29). The barren quality of Eastern Europe makes for difficult returns, especially for Jews who still remember their towns and villages in the pre-war state. It is not the ruins or traces of bullets in buildings that surprise them, but the absence of people.

31 Lehrer, *Jewish Poland Revisited*, 93.

32 Lehrer, 93.

33 Hirsch and Spitzer, "Generations of Nostalgia," 261.

34 Stern, "Tugging at Jewish Weeds," 157.

35 Lehrer, *Jewish Poland Revisited*, 102.

36 Ruth Behar reminisces about her grandmother, affectionately called Baba ("grandma" in Polish), who was equally loath to return to Poland as to Cuba: "Poland has never interested me," recalls Behar, in large part because Baba had always said she had no desire to return there" (*Traveling Heavy* 144). On the other hand, Baba always asked the same question when Behar visited her in Miami Beach en route to Cuba: "*¿Qué se te perdió en Cuba?*" Behar translates, "What did I lose in Cuba? She wanted me to forget Cuba, move on" (193).

37 Hirsch and Miller, "Introduction," 18.

38 Hirsch and Miller, 18.

39 Lehrer, *Jewish Poland Revisited*, 102 (Lehrer's emphasis).

40 Finkelstein, "Return to Poland," 39.

41 **Q**td. in Lehrer, *Jewish Poland Revisited*, 103.

42 Wildman, "Box of Love Letters Reveals Grandfather Didn't Escape WWII with 'Everyone.'"

43 Finkelstein, "Return to Poland," 73.

44 Finkelstein, 49.

45 Of course, as Sather-Wagstaff explains and as contemporary Polish Jews would confirm, the locals seem to move on much faster than those forced to leave, and they renegotiate their space as a living one with each new generation.

46 The story of Eastern and Central European Jewry began as early as the late Middle Ages. The heart of this new settlement became, for centuries to come, Poland and later Polish territories under foreign rule. Michael Brenner, the author of – exhaustive despite its title – *A Short History of the Jews*, presents "the founding myth" of Polish Jewry in the words of an Israeli writer born in Poland – Shmuel Yosef Agnon:
Israel saw how the suffering was constantly renewed, how the impositions multiplied, how the persecutions grew, how the bondage became great, how the rule of evil brought to pass one disaster after another and piled on expulsion after expulsion, so that Israel could no longer stand up to its haters – and so it set out on the roadways and looked and inquired after the paths of the world as to which might be the right road it should take in order to find rest for itself. Then a note fell down from Heaven: Go to Poland!...And there are some who believe that even the name of the country issues from a holy source: the language of Israel. For so spoke Israel when it arrived there: *po-lin*, that is to say: Here pass the night! And they meant: Here is where we want to pass the night until God gathers together again the dispersed of Israel. (S. Y. Agnon qtd. in Brenner 151).
As rulers of more and more European states, ranging from as far as Portugal to as close as Germany, decided to expel their Jewish population, the kings of Poland encouraged Jewish settlements in hope of stimulating trade and increasing the state's income by building a larger population. In the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, Polish and Lithuanian law protected Jews to a degree – despite the protests of the Catholic Church – ensuring a safer and more prosperous existence than in any western European country. It is, perhaps, a good indication of what safe and prosperous meant for Jews in the early modern period that a sixteenth-century rabbi, Moses Isserles of Cracow, thus summed up the situation in Poland: "In this country there is not such a ferocious hatred of Jews as in Germany. May it remain this way until the arrival of the Messiah!" (qtd. in Brenner 152). Lack of hatred or hatred not as ferocious equaled a safe haven.

47 Roth, *The Prague Orgy*, 492.

48 Roth, 491.

49 Roth, 491.

50 Sather-Wagstaff argues that Jewish travelers think of Central Europe as a cemetery, yet its inhabitants are able to move on and build life on the ashes of war as a testament to an interestingly malleable notion of spaces of disaster; the anthropologist asserts that "they are spaces that are constantly negotiated, constructed, and reconstructed into meaningful places through ongoing human action" (Sather-Wagstaff 20).The differences in the way a site is understood or embraced also stem from various interpretation of history: "Public memory also mediates between dominant, official (and usually national) narratives and local or individual narratives, and it is also a means of accepting, resisting, informing, or even significantly altering these official histories and memory" (Sather-Wagstaff 20). Additionally, especially in the case of typical commemorative sites like the Holocaust museum or Auschwitz, the sites "play key roles in the construction and maintenance of nationalism, national or ethnic identities, lessons-to-be-learned, and political ideologies (40).

51 Ruth Behar, for example, admits she had no interest in Poland before her first visit, mostly due to the fact that her grandmother never expressed willingness to return. This is how the anthropologist describes the moment of making a decision to go: "[I]t was three o'clock in the morning, and being an insomniac who makes unexpected decisions at an hour when most people are sleeping soundly as babies, I decided to travel to Poland" (144). The short passage demonstrates the compulsion to go – booking the tickets right

that moment – and also serves as an explanation of sorts, the justification of the decision to visit the cursed land in case someone questions it. The compulsive nature of the trip – when the travelers feel they *have to* go – is combined with the inability to pinpoint why. Lehrer mentions Szifra, an informant whose parents survived the Holocaust, "Although Szifra admitted she couldn't quite pin down why she wanted to visit Poland, she said, 'I feel like I *have* to go'" (106, Lehrer's emphasis), and this despite the fact that, in Szifra's words, "Poland sucks." Lehrer argues that quests are "undertaken out of sense of lack, in pursuit of what can only be fulfilled through an expedition into the unknown" (93). Szifra's comment, "This vacuum feels bizarre. I have to fill it in some way," testifies to this sentiment (Lehrer 106).

52   There are, of course, examples of the opposite in contemporary Jewish American writing; however, these are mainly non-fiction or fictionalized memoirs. Daniel Mendelsohn in *The Lost* describes his grand, well-planned return as an impossible banality: "[T]he return to the ancestral shtetl was by now so cliché that we half-mocked ourselves even as we made the elaborate plans necessary to get four adults with careers onto the same plane at the same time" (109). The weather and the family name on a cardboard in the arrivals hall seem to ridicule their endeavor – "the idea of the family return to its roots, the enforced family togetherness necessary to make it happen, and most of all the expectations of what we would find" (109).

53   Stern, *The Angel of Forgetfulness*, 277.

54   Stern, 299.

55   Stern, 299–300.

56   Stern, 297, 307.

57   Stern, 301–302.

58   Khazoon, "The Great Chain of Orientalism," 491.

59   Ibid.

60   It always seems to rain, too. Daniel Mendelsohn recounts in *The Lost*: "[I]t had been raining from the start of our Eastern European trip – a cold, steady, wet drizzle, enough water to be irritating without ever providing the giddy relief of a downpour" (109).

61   Stern, *The Angel of Forgetfulness*, 306.

62   Stern, 306.

63   Stern, 300.

64   Stern, 300.

65   Stern, 300.

66   Stern, 301.

67   Stern, *The Angel of Forgetfulness,* 296.

68   Stern, 297.

69   Stern, 267 (author's emphasis).

70   Stern, 310.

71   Stern, 332.

72   Stern, 333–4.

73   Reich, *My Holocaust*, 24.

74   Lehrer, *Jewish Poland Revisited*, 57.

A Crisis of Inclusion: Towards a transnational, relational approach to global inequality
Sriya Shrestha

ABSTRACT
The 2017 release of MIT-economist Peter Temin's study on the emergence of a dual economy gained traction in major media outlets. The headlines paraphrased Temin's findings as evidence that the United States has "regressed to developing nation status." This article analyzes Temin's argument as part of a broader liberal response to the issue of growing economic disparity in the United States rooted in nationalist narratives of middle-class prosperity and egalitarian capitalism. This framing atomizes poor Black communities and other communities of color within the boundaries of US political-economy. I argue, that analyses of the current crisis in the United States would do better to situate impoverished people of color not as aberrations at the fringes of American life but rather as one of many nodes in global circuits of exploitation. I employ a transnational, relational framing that draws on the work of scholars of racial capitalism to consider how policies aimed at market-driven development and middle-class growth in the 1950s and 1960s gave way to neoliberal polices of intensified policing and removal of the poor by the 1970s and 1980s. Thus, it is not simply that the United States is becoming like the Third World. Rather, decades of liberalization polices are reconfiguring inequality on a global scale, creating parallel pockets of wealth accumulation and deprivation across the North and South.

In 2009, the Institute for New Economic Thinking formed with funding from billionaire philanthropist George Soros and the involvement of progressive economists like Joseph Stieglitz. Recognizing the failure of the field to adequately predict or intervene in the devastating economic collapse of the previous year, the organization seeks to offer informed alternatives to the "free market fundamentalism" that has come to dominate the study of economics as well as public policy.[1] A leading expert at the Institute, MIT-economist Peter Temin, released his study on the emergence of a dual economy in the United States entitled *The Vanishing Middle Class: Prejudice and Power in a Dual Economy* in 2017. His work gained traction in major media outlets such as *The Independent*, *The Atlantic, Forbes*, as well as a number of progressive news sites and blogs. One headline paraphrased Temin's findings as evidence that the United States has "regressed to developing nation status"[2] in reference to his use of an economic theory developed to analyze Third World economies. Temin is one of a chorus of voices that articulate concern over growing US inequality through comparisons with nations in the Global South.[3] In this sense, his work resonates with public anxiety about the political, economic, and cultural crisis in the United States ushered in by financialization, deindustrialization, and drastically reduced or eliminated social services. Temin takes an interdisciplinary approach that draws from social science literature on race and inequality. He notes how the systematic exclusion of Black people from citizenship and later economic prosperity undermined political equality and upward mobility in the United States for communities of color and later justified the neoliberal policies that have exacerbated US inequality. This article asks, what is at stake in framing the current crisis in the United States as a regression into developing/ Third World status? This comparative framework constructs the developing world as sites of stubborn social, political, and economic lag behind global (primarily Euro-American) progress. For the United States to be "like" the Third World is a provocative statement, meant to evoke a sense of shock and dismay at the deterioration of American life exemplified in the "Make America Great Again" sloganeering of the Trump campaign and its supporters.

However, conservatives are not the primary purveyors of this framework. Rather Temin and like-minded commentators condemn the way neoliberal ideologies and practices have led to US decline. Thus, they

maintain a different kind of American exceptionalism. "To Make America Great Again" means to restore a supposedly achievable and desirable American Dream. They approach inequality in the United States as an aberration that comes from the exclusion of racialized communities from upward mobility. This framing atomizes poor Black communities and other communities of color within the boundaries of US political-economy by approaching their marginalization as a betrayal of nationalist ideals of meritocracy and equal opportunity. Only through a more genuine adherence to these same principles, they argue, can a robust middle-class, the backbone of American hope and glory, be restored.

This narrative is certainly a compelling one stemming from a sincere effort to address the appalling deterioration of everyday life among a growing portion of the US population, most especially poor people of color. The influence of Michelle Alexander's *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness*, which Temin cites extensively, and social movements like Black Lives Matter are apparent in this framing. In his analysis, Temin centers the devastating impacts of segregating poor people of color in neighborhoods marked by abysmal access to basic services including health care, retail, and public education while targeting them for heavy policing resulting in an exploding prison population. Temin's analysis parallels much of the liberal and progressive discourse in the United States that has emerged since the 2008 economic collapse and the subsequent Occupy Wall Street movement which brought greater public attention to issues of growing inequality and intensified precarity.

However, the story of racialized poverty and inequality, historically and in the present, is not only a US one. Rather, it is the all too common story of ongoing legacies of colonial and imperial devastation across what Vijay Prashad calls the "darker nations" that created the developing world in the first place. The use of "Third World" as pejorative in the context of Euro-American economic decline reproduces the colonial logic that divides the West from the rest while asserting Western superiority.

In contrast, I argue, that analyses of the current crisis in the United States would do better to situate impoverished people of color not as aberrations at the fringes of American life but rather as one of many nodes in global circuits of exploitation. This approach draws from the Third World internationalism that informed the radical politics of activists and intellectuals like WEB DuBois, Malcolm X, the Third World Liberation Front, and the Black Panther Party among others. These individuals and organizations looked beyond models of national inclusion for addressing

racist violence and racial disparity. Rather than a pejorative, the "Third World" has been a visionary political project aimed at addressing the needs and demands of those displaced, disenfranchised, and impoverished by capitalism's colonial development.

In this way, Third Worldist politics have historically undermined American exceptionalism and Euro-American superiority by refuting claims that attribute underdevelopment to social and cultural failings, inherent vice, or even unfortunate climatic circumstances of non-Western societies. Drawing from and reinvisioning Marxist insights, anti-colonial intellectuals including scholars of racial capitalism have highlighted the role of violent expropriation in capitalist development by identifying the enslavement of Black people and colonization of indigenous lands as essential to the generation of capital for US and European industrialization. Thus, they challenge liberal approaches to underdevelopment that presumes that impoverished peoples, countries, and regions have simply been excluded from the benefits of industrialization and capitalist market systems. Rather, they articulate an analysis of capitalist development and exploitation that work through stratified incorporation of marginalized populations so that the extraction of surplus value from peripheral capitalist nations sustained the wealth of the overdeveloped core. Importantly, global peripheries exist within the United States and Western Europe in rural, urban, and increasingly suburban communities.

This transnational relational framing is vital for apprehending the relationship between race and capitalist accumulation in the contemporary moment. Economic liberalization policies operate through the incorporation of populations and places that were once abandoned to the peripheries of the global economy. For decades, development projects in the United States and global south have employed the progressive discourse of inclusion in the search for new populations of racialized and gendered exploitable labor and consumer markets. At the same time, these projects shore up security apparatuses that criminalize, displace, and annihilate surplus populations. Hence, Nikhil Pal Singh asserts that "neoliberal exponents of market progressivism appropriated liberal antiracism and civil rights discourse in the shadow of the carceral state and the launching of the global war on terror."[4] In the Global South, liberalization policies have been justified through the discourse of anti-imperialism even as post-colonial states have abandoned support and protections for their most poor and vulnerable populations. Thus, it is not simply that the United States is becoming like the Third World. Rather, decades of liberalization polices are reconfiguring inequality on a global scale, creating

parallel pockets of wealth accumulation and deprivation across the North and South.

I begin with an overview and analysis of the concept of the dual economy that Temin elaborates on in his book. I am interested in the ways his arguments and assertions articulate a broader liberal response to the issue of growing economic disparity in the United States rooted in nationalist narratives of middle-class prosperity and egalitarian capitalism. Departing from Temin's US-centric perspective, I then move to a more in-depth examination of the Third World project to better understand the transnational dynamics of global inequality. More specifically, how neoliberalism emerges from the consolidation of class interests of elites around the world who sought to pacify more radical demands for racial justice and redistribution of wealth. I consider how policies aimed at market-driven development and middle-class growth to address the intense poverty of isolated urban communities in the Global North and poor communities in the South in the 1950s and 1960s gave way to intensified policing and removal of the poor by the 1970s and 1980s. In this context, racial capitalism's relational analysis recognizes the limits of models of inclusion while imagining new visions of global solidarity and social transformation that look beyond the horizons of the revival of a fabled American dream.

The Dual Economy Model

As a trained economist, Temin's central contribution to the burgeoning conversation on economic disparity in the United States is his reliance on a "dual economy" model developed by W. Arthur Lewis, a Nobel Prize winning economist. Born in Saint Lucia in 1915, Lewis was the first Black person and first person from the developing world to receive this prize in a field other than literature. Lewis created his model to describe conditions in Africa, the Caribbean, and other so-called "tropical" countries.[5] He notes the coexistence of two distinct, hierarchical sectors: an "upper," urban capitalist sector and a "lower," rural subsistence-based one. Temin is deliberate in his use of a model used to describe Third World underdevelopment to analyze "the richest large country in the world" arguing that "the political policies that grow out of our dual economy have made the United States appear more and more like a developing country.[6]" He is also particularly interested in what he calls the "darker aspect" of Lewis's model that notes how the "upper sector will aim to keep incomes in the lower sector low."[7] Hence, for Temin, to be "like a developing country" is primarily defined by polarity between rich and poor with the wealthy

dominating the political sphere against the interests of the poorer ma-
jority.Temin adapts Lewis's model of uneven development to account for
the state of the current US political economy characterized by growing
inequality and a disappearing middle-class. The upper sector is made up
of the finance, technology, and electronics (FTE) industries that still
offer opportunities for gainful employment and wealth accumulation.
Meanwhile, the "low-skilled sector" has struggled under the impact
of globalization and technological advancement. Overall, the semi-skilled
labor force has declined undermining the middle-class. Thus, Temin de-
scribes how the middle-class share of national wealth has dropped from
35 percent to 23 percent from 1978 to 2012 while the wealth share of the
top tenth of the 1 percent tripled during that same time period.[8] Closely
tied to uneven wealth accumulation has been the drop in incomes with
the middle-class share of the total national income falling by 30 percent
beginning in 1970.[9] For Temin, the dual economy captures the dynamics
of the contemporary American economy where 20 percent of the wealth-
iest Americans live comfortably, experiencing stability, access to high
quality services like education and health care, and enjoying luxuries like
new cars and family vacations while the remaining 80 percent fall un-
der the "low-wage" sector barely able to make ends meet.[10] Temin defines
middle-class primarily as median income people who have as many people
who earn more than them as less across the population.[11] However, he
is concerned not just with changes in wages but how this impacts life-
styles. Industrial economies situate middle-class people as primarily the
consumers (rather than producers) of goods in the marketplace.[12] This
consumer position and orientation is becoming the global norm across
class. According to social theorist Zygmunt Bauman, as work has become
more deskilled, volatile, and fragmented under late capitalism, dominant
discourse in the Global North construct consumption (rather than work)
as people's most vital economic contribution.[13] Ethnographic accounts
of middle-class growth in the Global South indicate the intense burdens
the expansion of consumer norms places on individuals and families.
Display of purchased goods has become increasingly important to main-
taining social status. This leaves many people drowning under the pres-
sure to keep up with ever-higher expectations while volatile economies
decrease currency values and raise prices.[14] In this sense, middle-class
forms of consumption are idealized as gainful employment and eco-
nomic security once associated with the middle-class are disappearing.[15]
This is precisely the phenomenon Temin critiques in the United States.
Temin notes that democracy can act as an anecdote to a dual economy

by creating social programs and policies that can intervene to maintain access to upward mobility and middle-class stability.[16] Hence, he laments the ways that democracy has been undermined by a backlash and consolidation of political power among the wealthiest Americans. Temin cites Lewis Powell's secret 1971 memorandum to the United States Chamber of Commerce as setting off a concerted effort on the part of wealthy business leaders to assert political influence in order to save the "free enterprise system."[17] A system they perceived to be under threat from the adoption of Keynesian policies in the wake of the Great Depression that tempered concentration of wealth and more radical social movements of the 1960s that were often critical of the racist and patriarchal roots of capitalism. In direct response to the Powell memo, billionaires like Richard Mellon Scaife and Charles and David Koch created think tanks and policy institutes like the Heritage Foundation, Cato Institute, and American Legislative Exchange Council (ALEC) that have been instrumental in drafting legislation and lobbying elected officials in order to enact policies favorable to the interests of the wealthiest 1 percent of the country. These policies have favored deregulation of business and related industries, privatization of social services, and cutting taxes in the name of protecting individual liberties and the free market.[18] Thus, Temin notes, wealthy donors and funding organizations have become the most influential force in voter decisions and election outcomes.[19] Importantly, for Temin, the shrinking US middle-class is both an economic and political project indicating the demise of American democracy. In line with much liberal progressive discourse on inequality, Temin upholds the "American Century" as an ideal that Keynesian New Deal economics sustained through the development of a gainful middle-class. He disdains neoliberalism for threatening to unravel the measures, particularly access to high quality public education, that laid the "golden eggs" of mid-century American prosperity and democracy.[20]

American Exceptionalism and the Middle-Class

The association between a stable middle-class and American democracy and economic prosperity emerged after World War II, when the state and business leaders looked to consumer spending to sustain and expand the US economy. The image of middle-class families moving out of congested cities to buy suburban homes fully stocked with technologically advanced appliances, consumer goods, and a home-making wife supported by her husband's income exemplified American prosperity and the idealized cultural norm. This emergence of what Lizabeth Cohen instructively calls

a "consumer's republic" associated consumer choice in terms of access to a wide-variety of high quality consumer goods with democratic choice.[21] In contrast to the Soviet Union and European socialism, consumerism emerged as a uniquely American economic system heavily influenced by theories of John Meynard Keynes. Keynes sought to revive capitalism as a viable alternative to fascism and communism by turning to mass consumption which would foster "economic egalitarianism because dynamic consumer demand depended on wide distribution of purchasing power. Concentration of wealth in a few hands, in contrast, led to excessive saving and only minimal spending." Hence fostering consumerism through economic growth promised "a more democratic and egalitarian America for all its citizens."[22] Temin's focus on how neoliberal policies have decimated the middle-class and aided in the concentration of wealth rests on his commitment to preserving this distinctly American ideal of personal freedoms, free markets, and equal opportunity through wide-spread consumerism. However, Temin is not ignorant to the fact that American middle-class prosperity and democratic promise has never been fully accessible to many communities of color particularly poor Black people. He notes the systematic exclusion of African Americans from various opportunities aimed at building up middle-class prosperity from union employment to New Deal programs to access to credit and home ownership.[23] He also describes how the more than century of exclusion of Black men and women of all races from voting also denied the country's democratic promise by maintaining an oligarchic system where only one portion of the population has decision making power over governmental policies as others are systematically denied access.[24] The disenfranchisement of those branded criminals and the concerted efforts of the wealthy to influence elections and legislation has only further exacerbated this oligarchic system. Temin echoes a number of other scholars who have noted how racism, against Black people (and also some immigrants of color), has played a key role in impeding policies aimed at redistributing wealth in the United States.[25] In this sense, he successfully integrates critiques of neoliberalism with attention to the legacies of slavery and the role of race in maintaining social and economic hierarchies. At the same time, Temin constructs racism as an aberration that has compromised American claims to exceptional equality and democratic promise. To this end, he quotes at length Senator Elizabeth Warren's speech on inequality where she states:

> Entire legal structures were created to prevent African Americans from building economic security through home ownership. Legally enforced

segregation. Restrictive deeds. Redlining. Land contracts. Coming out of the Great Depression, America built a middle class, but systematic discrimination kept most African-American families from being part of it[26].

Warren and Temin articulate a kind of liberal approach to inequality where the central concern is not poverty per se but rather racism's role in compromising meritocracy as a core value in American nationalism. As long as people of color are locked in to the lowest stratas of society due to racism, this fundamental value will be compromised. The solution becomes "leveling the playing field" in order to remedy the historical and contemporary exclusion of Black people from middle-class prosperity.

These earnest calls for addressing racial disparities, economic inequality and the disproportionate power of the wealthiest Americans certainly seek to improve the everyday lives of those crushed by economic uncertainty. However, disidentification with the developing world in the name of reviving a deserving, stable middle-class upholds the American exceptionalist justifications for global hierarchies. Representations of the United States as the bastion of equality and democracy against a lagging, stubbornly hierarchical South have been integral to justification of American imperial ventures aimed at preserving the country's economic and geopolitical interests. However, Temin's use of Lewis's dual economy model to indicate the regression of American prosperity presumes that the US political economy is distinct and unrelated to the places Lewis studies.

In contrast, scholars of racial capitalism give a Third Worldist analysis of how the systematic impoverishment and exploitation of racialized communities, countries, and regions have long sustained the prosperity of the industrialized world. Cedric Robinson developed the term "racial capitalism" to articulate the central role that racial difference plays in capitalist exploitation.[27] Given that capitalist systems generate profits and wealth through social stratification, Robinson notes that race along with class is a key modality of this stratification. I use the term racial capitalism to refer to Robinson's work as well as the larger body of literature inspired by anti-colonial scholars of color like Eric Williams, CLR James, WEB DuBois, and Walter Rodney that challenge dominant narratives regarding poverty in Third World countries and Black communities in the United State by highlighting the violence of forced incorporation in capitalist systems. Rather than an aberration, exploitation and expropriation through slavery, seizing of communal and indigenous lands, and colonialism is approached as foundational to capitalist development. In this

sense, they employ a global scale of analysis that approaches capitalism as a world-system.[28] This transnational, relational analysis better apprehends economic disparity in the United States as part of a reconfiguration of inequality across the world. In the following sections, I take this approach to examine the history of the Third World project and its demise with the expansion of neoliberal globalization. Diverting from Temin's US-centric analysis allows us to see how the discourse of inclusion and middle-class prosperity that he promotes as a remedy to racialized inequality led to the neoliberal policies he laments. In other words, inclusion in capitalist market systems cannot eradicate the social inequities it creates and in fact requires.

The Demise of the Third World and the Crisis of Inequality

In his essay for *Third World Quarterly* on the 60th anniversary of the concept of the "Third World," Marcin Solarz credits the French scholar Alfred Sauvy with coining the term in 1952.[29] Different than the Euro-American first world and the Soviet dominated second world, the term "Third World" made allusions to the French revolution's third estate to evoke how non-Western peoples were transforming the existing global order through anti-colonial struggle. Thus, the term was not meant to "hierarchize the international community, but drew attention to its structure…" and potential transition.[30] The common usage of Third World to indicate "poor, undeveloped countries with an unsatisfactory quality of life" takes a significant departure from this original meaning.[31] The Third World project itself preceded Sauvy's use of the term and emerged from within formerly colonized countries themselves. Vijay Prashad begins his history of the Third World with the League against Imperialism that met in Brussels in 1927. Leaders came from the centers and peripheries of the colonized world to envision their own multilateral platform distinct from the paternalistic imperialism of the League of Nations.[32] By the time of the 1955 Bandung conference in Indonesia under the anti-imperialist leadership of Sukarno, representatives from newly liberated countries across Asia and Africa came together to consider how to combat the continuation of neocolonial conditions (economic control, military dominance, intellectual authority) in an increasingly post-colonial world. The spirit of Bandung was pivotal in the formation of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) in 1961 that envisioned the solidarity and autonomy of the Third World against the escalating conflict and bifurcation of the Cold War. As a result, US leaders approached Third Worldist politics with suspicion and derision, identifying the neutralism

of NAM as a threat to their foreign policy interests.[33]The Third Worldist vision reached far beyond the national leadership of the formerly colonized world inspiring intellectuals, artists, and economists, including the author of the dual economy model Temin references, W. Arthur Lewis. Prashad describes Lewis as a "friend and comrade" of Raul Prebisch, a Latin American economist who provided the foundation for dependency theory.[34] In contrast to modernization theory that attributes Third World underdevelopment to a lack of work ethic and Protestant values, dependency theory emphasized the role that imperial powers played in systematically impoverishing their colonies.[35] By setting up economies of raw material extraction and importation of finished goods, colonizing countries enriched themselves while restraining social and economic development in their colonies. After independence, formerly colonized countries sought to remedy this uneven dynamic. This formed the basis for the field of development economics in which Lewis became a leading figure. Development economists like Lewis who were inspired by a Third Worldist vision proposed various ways for addressing the imbalances in global trade and wealth accumulation. Import substitution industrialization (ISI) in the developing economies would encourage the establishment of large-scale industry, protected by the state, to reduce reliance on imports. Foreign aid in the form of grants from Euro-American countries would act as reparations for past exploitation and provide much needed capital for investment. Raw material producing countries should form alliances to better negotiate terms and prices with Western importing countries. Overall, the aim was to increase the wealth of post-colonial states to fund social advancement of the poor through education, infrastructure, subsidies, and social services.

Despite this anti-imperialist vision, many of the policies that emerged from this period paved the way for neoliberal globalization to flourish. Lewis has been criticized for naively encouraging foreign investment in the Caribbean in the hopes that they "would reinvest their profits and transfer their technology, instead of exploiting the cheap labor, exporting their profits, and moving on."[36] Overall, formerly colonized countries became increasingly dependent on foreign aid and investment leaving the national leadership beholden to outside interests and their nations heavily indebted. Addressing developing world debt became the entry point for organizations like the International Monetary Fund (IMF) to demand the kind of structural adjustment policies that steered national leaders away from meeting the social needs of the country and towards corporate-friendly policies like free markets, debt repayment, and diminished

labor protections. At the same time, import substitution industrializa-
tion helped to establish a new class of post-colonial elites who benefit-
ed from protectionist policies amassing large amounts of wealth. By the
1970s, they began to encourage liberalization policies and seek a closer
relationship with Euro-American powers. Having never experienced
directly either colonial repression or anti-colonial struggle, the Third
Worldist vision of growth for the sake of development began to give way
to growth for the sake of accumulation and access to First World con-
sumerism.[37] Thus, wide-spread criticism of contemporary globalization
as a form of neoimperialism must be attentive to how elites living in the
South have played a vital role in implementing these policies as means
to secure their class interests. Only then can we recognize neoliberal glo-
balization as not merely the work of a handful of American billionaires,
but rather, as Marxist scholar David Harvey asserts, a "restoration of class
power" for the wealthy all over the globe.[38] As result, the landscape of the
Third World has transformed. Under the auspices of the World Bank,
International Monetary Fund, and World Trade Organization, the
solutions for Southern underdevelopment prioritize economic growth
through the establishment of market systems that increase foreign direct
investment. Emphasis on debt repayment require incentives for business
that diminish protections for labor and the environment and reduce tax-
es. The result has been unprecedented opportunities for wealth accumu-
lation for some while others have stagnated under low and shrinking wag-
es, unemployment and underemployment, and the loss of state sponsored
support systems like public services and subsidies. Rural land consolida-
tion has pushed peasant populations to the urban core where they strug-
gle to survive on streets increasingly saturated by global brand names, fast
food restaurants, and shopping malls eager to capitalize on the increased
disposable incomes of the wealthy and growing middle-classes. Hence,
Prashad convincingly argues that along with its internal failings, the
Third World project was assassinated by Euro-American dominated or-
ganizations like the IMF and their policies of structural adjustment and
liberalization.[39] In this context, inequality has emerged as a global crisis.
As Ruth Wilson Gilmore, drawing from the work of Stuart Hall and Bill
Schwarz, notes, crises emerge when the reproduction of a given set of so-
cial relations become untenable whether politically, economically, cul-
turally, and/or biologically. This leads to contestation and opportunities
for transformation. [40] Though crises are inevitable and neutral (neither
inherently good nor bad), the instability they create generates social and
cultural anxiety. To say there is a global crisis in inequality speaks to how

the deindustrialization of the Global North has created new pockets of deprivation and undermined the middle-class core that has been crucial to maintaining social, political, and economic stability in the United States. At the same time, the shifting of industry and investment to the Global South has intensified wealth accumulation among elites and lead to the emergence of "new" middle-classes. Despite poverty reduction and new middle-class formations, the global economy is characterized by intensified disparity and attendant social upheavals exemplified in the wave of anti-austerity movements around the world like Occupy Wall Street, the Arab Spring, student protests in Chile and Puerto Rico, uprisings in Greece and Spain as well as the rise of ultra-right nationalism and religious fundamentalism throughout the United States, Europe, Asia, and Africa.

Middle-Class Development and Policing the Poor

In the midst of this inequality crisis, national governments and trade organizations continue to uphold the growing Third World middle-classes as evidence of the success of liberalization policies. While the promise of enormous populations of middle-class consumers with rising incomes in emerging markets has spurred foreign direct investment and economic growth, development experts and policy makers debate precisely how large and prosperous these populations actually are.[41] A 2010 working paper from the Asian Development Bank (ADB) cautions that China and India, two of the largest and most celebrated Asian economies, are home to huge numbers of people living below the global poverty line: 900 million in India and 400 million in China.[42] Development organizations also warn of the inequalities between and within middle-class population in different countries in Asia.[43] Despite these apparent limitations, many liberal anti-poverty programs cite middle-class growth as a positive achievement. This is not surprising given that researchers and policy makers have seen middle-class development as a strategy for quelling radical politics in US urban centers and the developing world since the Cold War. The influential political scientist Samuel Huntington's concern about the "'anarchistic'" tendencies of the poor lead him to prioritize securing the middle-class in potentially volatile sites of persistent poverty often through the support of an authoritarian military.[44] Hence, Prashad notes that:

> For Huntington and much of the modernization theory school... a society with a middle-class is...optimum. Anything less smacks of monarchy, and

anything more is Communism. The worst of all outcomes is Communism and therefore at times oligarchies or even monarchies can be tolerated if it means that a middle class might flourish.[45]

In this context, development initiatives focused on growing and securing the middle-class in contexts of poverty and despair vulnerable to radical infiltration.

Thus, rather than the United States regressing to developing world status, the Global South is experiencing the violence of an American-style system of increased consumerism that constructs the poor as a dangerous aberration in the midst of middle-class growth and progress. In this way, neoliberal globalization has lead more poor people around the world to experience what disproportionately impoverished Black Americans have for decades. By the mid-twentieth century when America's consumer economy was firmly established, sociologists and other researchers began to examine the enduring problems of racialized poverty.

As Ananya Roy, Stuart Schrader, and Emma Crane Shaw indicate in their "globalized history" of community development, by the mid-1960s liberal anti-crime policy and poverty alleviation formed in concert with one another. They trace the links between counterinsurgency tactics abroad and national strategies for tackling "race and revolution in American cities" in ways that were "alert to cross-border solidarities among political radicals."[46] Thus, they highlight the "sense of deep crisis" that categorized the historical moment due to organized militancy and spontaneous uprisings among poor people of color within and beyond the United States.[47] The Third Worldist internationalism of many Black Power activists cultivated these connections among oppressed people. Thus, they quote extensively from a 1970 critique of the War on Poverty in *Freedomways*, a leading African American political journal of the time, that links domestic policy with paralleled initiatives like John F. Kennedy's Alliance for Progress in Latin America. Both programs combined "tanks and trinkets" in the form of funding for development alongside the strengthening of state apparatuses of control such as the police and military.[48] Making the links between foreign and domestic policy illuminates economic development initiatives' commitment to stability and social control in order to reclaim abandoned areas for capitalist accumulation. For this reason, the *Freedomways* article argued for autonomy and radical social transformation as a more viable means for addressing racialized poverty. In contrast to the radical, transnational lens of some Black activists and intellectuals, liberal advocates for the poor

took a more US-centric approach. In the 1960s and 1970s, social scientists like David Caplovitz and Alan R. Andreasen wrote influential studies on the social and economic isolation of the urban poor who they saw as disadvantaged consumers. They argued for further integration of these populations into mainstream consumer markets. Like Temin, their calls for a more inclusive capitalism failed to recognize the centrality of social stratification to capitalist accumulation. As a result, their earnest calls for integration of the marginalized into the centers of American consumer prosperity would lead to the vicious criminalization of the poor in the name of inclusive capitalism but with a neoliberal twist.

By in large, studies of low-income markets past and present assert that poor people pay more for the same goods as their wealthier counterparts. Most of these issues are attributed to poor consumers' confinement to a "captive marketplace" defined by economic, social, and geographic isolation.[49] Most large-scale discounters fled inner-city areas in the wake of suburbanization and white and middle-class flight leading to urban blight. However, lack of access to automobiles and public transportation left poor people beholden to the small shops in their vicinity. These local retailers also offer flexible credit options for those who would not otherwise qualify. For some people of color, including non-English speaking immigrants, these retailers also give a sense of familiarity, belonging, as well as specialized products and language access.[50] At the same time, store-owners can subject local residents to exploitative business practices because there is little threat that their customers will shop elsewhere. In this sense, the studies of the consumer lives of poor people focus on how their exclusion from the "'normal' marketing situation"[51] forces them pay to a "double penalty"[52] of having less money and less access to lower-price goods. However, researchers also found that locating in inner-city communities is simply unprofitable for mass-market retailers. Mostly poor Black residents have little money and often spend in small quantities making it cost more to serve them than suburban middle-class consumers. Thus, mass-market retailers followed the cheaper operating expenses and more profitable middle-class white consumers to the suburbs. This left city centers to the most ill-functioning businesses that could not afford to leave and thus turned to exploitation as their main means of profit.[53] Also, higher operating expenses (insurance, permits), small-scale, and limited budgets for maintenance and upkeep ensure that inner-city groceries and shops have shoddy appearance, high prices, and limited product assortment.[54] In this sense, the market system, by overlapping with institutionalized racism, determines which individuals and communities

have marketable value as consumers. By and large, these mid-century policy-oriented studies of low-income consumers recommend improving poor people's access to mainstream businesses beyond the informal and small-scale stores they find in their communities. Thus, they recommend convincing mainstream businesses to incorporate the poor as a viable, 'valuable' consumer market. However, these researchers do not advocate a neoliberal strategy for improving the situation of the disadvantaged consumer. Rather, they see a central role for the state in regulating businesses and providing public assistance including "income supplement programs."[55] However, by the 1980s and into the 1990s, another set of advocates reformulated this consumer-oriented approach to the problems of the poor in ways more in line with the prevailing neoliberal common sense. Rather than a moral or ethical imperative to serve, they highlight ample business opportunities among the poor. As early as 1982, Phillip Kotler, professor of marketing at Northwestern University, gave a talk at a marketing educator's conference that criticized the blind spots in academic research that include the rapidly growing low-income market in the United States and developing economies.[56] Over ten years later, Michael Porter, professor at the Harvard Business School, followed this impulse by encouraging private firms to leverage the "comparative advantage" of the inner-city that includes "strategic location, local market demand, integration with regional clusters, and human resources."[57] Porter emphasizes the possibilities for creating profitable businesses while enhancing development in these long neglected areas. Porter adds a race-blind and free market orientation to Caplovitz and Andreasen's pro-business recommendations. Porter also suggests that states move away from specialized support for women and people of color-owned businesses and instead reserve preference and assistance programs for those who will hire the greatest number of local residents no matter the race or gender of the owner.[58] Along the same lines, community-based organizations are advised to create job readiness training programs, quell potential opposition and skepticisms towards business interests among residents, and help with environmental clean-up.[59] Along with developing manufacturing and distribution clusters in inner-cities serving nearby centers of finance and commerce, Porter advocates selling directly to marginalized low-income consumers. He asserts that offering specialized products and services utilizing large-scale, modern technology and professional management techniques have great potential for turning a profit amongst those who have been relegated to high-cost, inefficient retailers.[60] Porter advocates moving away from an "old model" of wealth redistribution

exemplified in the work of state and social service organizations. Instead, he favors the kind of "wealth creation" initiatives that only private firms working in profitable, export-oriented business can create.[61] In this way, neoliberal community development programs construct economic growth and mainstream market access as the key for improving poor people's lives. Within this trickle-down framework, prioritizing business interests benefits everyone because private firms have the skills to create this growth and access. Thus, institutions traditionally tasked with curbing private power, like state regulatory agencies and grassroots organizations, should instead seek to expand it. The Porter article also marks a reformulation of neoliberal discourse away from a Reaganesque attack on poor Black people to a language of pro-poor advocacy and development. Hence, Porter makes a point to dispel "deeply entrenched myths" about inner-city residents.[62] Taking issue with their representation as unmotivated welfare recipients and drug dealers, Porter suggests that there are hard-working dedicated employees to be found in these communities, even if many lack the formal education for anything other than low-skill jobs. He also advocates for redirecting the robust entrepreneurial energy of residents away from social service organizations towards profit-making ends.[63] This far less vitriolic approach advocates for the same neoliberal policies as the Reagan administration such as deregulation, reduction in state and social services, and an end to targeted provisions for marginalized groups. However, they are repackaged as bringing opportunity to the poor in ways that easily overlap with the work of low-income consumer advocates like Caplovitz and Andreasen. Not surprisingly, he urges governments to encourage business to relocate to the inner-city by relaxing regulations, developing needed infrastructure, and, of course, providing security through increased policing.[64] In the context of neoliberal globalization, then, middle-class development yields the creation of spaces of middle-class consumption that justify the increase of security and policing apparent in the intense battles over public space all over the world. Roy et al note that since the 1960s and 1970s the infusion of cash for development initiatives would be replaced expansion of law and order measures.[65] This includes strategies like broken windows policing that targets the signs of poverty (graffiti, littering, pan-handling, public urination). Based in the largely defunct theory that signs of disorder encourage more serious crimes, this invasive police measure criminalizes poverty in a literal sense by increasing fines and arrests for the survival strategies of poor people living in deindustrialized urban communities stripped of public services and affordable housing.[66] William Bratton, one of the chief

architects of this policy in New York City subsequently traveled the country and world to proselytize this policing strategy aimed at making urban spaces more amenable to urban development initiatives that displace the poor to make way for gentrification. Thus, as the role of state in providing social support diminishes, its role as punitive apparatus aimed at quelling the social unrest and degradation activated by neoliberal policies is enhanced.[67] The attacks on street vendors is one instructive example of this globalized criminalization of poverty. Development experts and policy researchers largely agree that the informal economy, and street vending particularly, play a crucial role in poverty reduction by ensuring income and access to goods for poor people.[68] Street vendors' lack of resources means that they have to conduct their business on the sidewalks and footpaths of the city. As development initiatives sought to integrate locations where street vendors thrive, they are subject to state-sponsored attacks for encroaching on public walkways, littering, selling supposedly unsafe and unsanitary wares, and creating unfair competition for brick and mortar stores. Rudolf Giuliani's neoliberal vision for New York City included proposals banning vendors from lucrative, central city blocks.[69] His successor, Michael Bloomberg ratcheted up fines and jail time for unauthorized vendors.[70] Assaults on street vendors become particularly acute when rising Third World nations find themselves on the global stage. Streetnet International, a global alliance for street vendors, began their "World Class Cities for All" campaign in South Africa in the lead up to the 2010 FIFA World Cup. They also organized in India prior to the 2012 Commonwealth Games in New Delhi and were active in Brazil in anticipation of the 2014 World Cup.[71]

Thus, even in developing countries, the poor are subject to isolation and criminalization in the context of expansion of middle-class consumerism. In this sense, the experiences of poor, ghettoized communities of color who have existed as the United States' internal economic peripheries overlap, albeit in locally specific ways, with newly incorporated peripheries of the Global South. This includes men like Eric Garner, Alton Sterling, and Mohamed Bouazizi. All of these men came from minoritized ethnic groups surviving on the fringes of a liberalized economy. Turning to street vending as one of a few avenues for work, they were subject to regular harassment by police that escalated into their brutal and untimely deaths. Garner was selling single, loose cigarettes in front of a corner store and Sterling DVDs outside of a gas station when they were killed. Bouazizi sold produce from a cart but persistent humiliation, confiscation of his goods, and fines left him desperate enough set himself on fire in front

of the governor's office after officials refused to hear his complaints. Video footage of these violent deaths helped galvanize mass-based social movements like Black Lives Matter and the Arab Spring indicating the rising discontents of increased poverty and intensified social control.

Racial Capitalism and Alternative Visions

Racial capitalism offers critical alternative that centers these global connectivites of violence as well as the potential for solidarity. By taking a transnational relational framing of American racism, racial capitalism captures the best of the radical internationalism of Third Worldism that neoliberal globalization sought to eradicate. In a moment when neoliberalism appears to be giving way to more overtly nationalist, imperialist, and white supremacist violence, it is to these alternative visions of human dignity and survival that we must turn.

At the height of US consumer prosperity, intellectuals of color combated the shame and failure that stigmatizes poor Black people in the United States by contextualizing their struggle within a global framework. This global framework challenges the social, cultural, and geographic isolation that poor people of color experience in abandoned urban centers in the wake of middle-class growth and suburbanization. Hence, when Manning Marable states in *How Capitalism Underdeveloped Black America: Problems in Race, Political Economy, and Society*, that "Blacks are an integral and necessary part of an imperialistic and powerful capitalistic society, yet they exist in terms of actual socioeconomic and political power as a kind of Third World nation," he refuses the construction of Black poverty as an American aberration by reframing it in the context of racialized poverty and underdevelopment as a global norm.

Marable couples his assertion of Black American Third Worldism with a critique of Black capitalism and upward mobility via entrepreneurship. He likens Black elites in the United States to those of the colonies that "reinforced the process of Western capital accumulation and the underdevelopment of the African masses."[72] In this sense, Marable notes the pivotal economic and ideological role that middle-classes play in offering the promise of upward mobility in the context of capitalist exploitation. This fundamental critique of middle-class formation offers critical insight into the leveraging of middle-class growth in the Global South as central justification for continued neoliberal expansion.

To approach the current economic disparity in the United States as part of a global crisis of inequality opens up the possibility of transformation amid instability and hardship. US social relations that relied on

a robust middle-class with ample access to consumption to uphold capitalist inequality through the promise of upward mobility can no longer sustain themselves. Hence, to suggest that the solution to inequality lies in a return to these same values is misguided. Rather, the current in crisis in inequality creates an opening to understand the system anew. A framework of racial capitalism urges us to seek possibilities for resistance and revolution to the current world economy from the contradictions of its processes of forced inclusion and violent exclusion.

This is what is at the heart of what Robinson calls the "Black Radical Tradition." He notes how enslaved African people brought with them "to the mines and plantations of the Caribbean and subsequently to what would be known as the Americas..." African "ontological and cosmological systems...presumptions of the organization and significance of social structure...historical consciousness and social experience... And ideological and behavioral constructions."[73] It is these deeply rooted ways of living and being that exceeded the limitations of the dominant social, cultural, and economic order of slavery and capitalism that forged "common task" and "shared vision" of resistance and revolution among "peoples of Africa and the African diaspora."[74] In other words, by centering the violence of forced inclusion in a capitalist world-system, the stubborn refusal of incorporation becomes not a social problem to be resolved but rather the preservation of life worlds that offer alternative visions of organizing social relations.

Against promises of inclusion in capitalist systems, environmental racism scholar Laura Pulido asserts that a framework of racial capitalism emphasizes "capitalism's incessant need to actively produce differences *somewhere*."[75] We can no longer afford, if we ever could, to aim to resolve the exploitation of racialized difference in the United States by outsourcing it elsewhere. Instead, we would do better to finally relinquish American exceptionalist dreams and seek new possibilities for transformation and solidarity from the global capitalist peripheries in the United States and around the world.

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(un)Domesticated Desire: Reorienting to the Nation in Chang-rae Lee's *A Gesture Life*

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ABSTRACT

"Sunny, I'm afraid, always hated the house," recalls Franklin Hata, Sunny's adoptive father and the immigrant protagonist of Chang-rae Lee's novel *A Gesture Life*. A source of pride for Hata, this U.S. home is the grandest material form of his gestures to assimilate and belong within U.S. society, whereas Sunny maintains a steady resistance both to the house and the terms of domesticity Hata pursues. Drawing upon Amy Kaplan's "Manifest Domesticity" (1998), the author reads this home as a signifier of the national domestic space, and interprets Hata's efforts at residential and familial domestication as representative of the violent negotiations over autonomy and subjection at work in the practice of national incorporation.

Uniting Kaplan's work on domesticity with Donald E. Pease's discussion of state fantasy in *The New American Exceptionalism* (2009), the author contends that the fantasied mythos of American exceptionalism is central to Hata's desire for national belonging and identity, and that state fantasy motivates his reproduction of state violence within the home(land). By contrast, Sunny's refusal to gesture or perform socially "acceptable" behavior signifies her rejection of state fantasy-work; she and her son, Thomas, rehearse alternative orientations to nation which Hata eventually begins to recognize and to desire for himself.

KEYWORDS: Domesticity, American exceptionalism, Nation, National violence, Homeland

"Sunny, I'm afraid, always hated the house,"[1] recalls Franklin Hata, Sunny's adoptive father and the immigrant protagonist of Chang-rae Lee's 1999 novel *A Gesture Life*. A source of pride for Hata, this house, located in Bedley Run – an (imaginary) affluent, suburban town in the United States – is the grandest material form of his gestures to assimilate and belong within U.S. society. Among the many gestures he performs, Hata's adoption and upbringing of Sunny in this home is significant for what it reveals about the violent negotiations of autonomy and subjection entailed in national incorporation and affiliation. Indeed, as Amy Kaplan explains in "Manifest Domesticity," "narratives of domesticity and female subjectivity [are] inseparable from narratives of empire and nation building;"[2] thus, scenes of "domestic" and "familial" struggle – in Hata's Bedley Run home, and in the broader socio-political landscape of the nation – illustrate the ways in which national efforts to "domesticate" and "civilize" the state's subjects is effected through intimate relationships and contexts such as the "private" domestic home. Applying Kaplan's ideas about these linked acts of domestication to Donald E. Pease's discussion of the dual states of fantasy (that is, national and psychological) that motivate and sustain violence by and on the behalf of the nation, this essay traces the fantasied nature of Hata's subject formation from Japan to the United States, explores how his participation in state fantasies manifests in his behavior toward Sunny, and ultimately reads her steady resistance to socio-political fantasies and/of authority as an alternative, unfantasied orientation to nation that Hata begins to recognize and desire for himself by novel's end.

While the scholarship published to date offers compelling analyses of the violence associated with Hata's gesturing and posturing in his bid *for* assimilation and national identity,[3] no critic has explored Hata's behavior *as* a national subject – that is, as a man identifying with and embedded within national framework(s). Likewise, the critical work focused on Hata's adoption of Sunny does so in the context of his endeavors to assimilate to U.S. society,[4] rather than as a national subject enacting and reproducing state violence through his parenting. For example, Hamilton Carroll recognizes "the gendered constructions of citizenship on which Hata's masculinist national enfranchisement relies," yet ultimately argues that the novel "shift[s] in perspective from a nationally

oriented, patriarchally centered, narrative of immigration and cultural assimilation to a fragmented, transnational narrative driven by the stories of Kkuteah and Sunny."[5] As many scholars note, Hata's relationship to Sunny is certainly related to his various ethnic and national affiliations:[6] she is Korean, which recalls his own, repressed Korean identity as well as the relationship he endeavored to cultivate with Korean "comfort woman" Kkuteah (or "K" as Hata refers to her) in Japan. Yet, as Anne Anlin Cheng explains, Hata's "desire for belonging, while not surprising for a diasporic subject, takes on a much darker hue in the context of his response to K. The passing and assimilation that Hata practiced during the war was more than just 'fitting in' with his Japanese comrades; it extended to a deep complicity with the horrors of wartime atrocity."[7]

Reading Hata's desire for national and cultural assimilation through Jacques Lacan's 1978 *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis*, Cheng explains "the relation between the subject and the Other is always compromised by desire, need, and the anxieties of mastery."[8] Likewise, Farooq Ahmad Sheikh explains Lacan's theory of desire as it operates through interpellative forces of socio-cultural organization, writing "[i]nsofar as cultural phenomenon is able to interpellate the subjects, it does so by evoking some desire or satisfying an existing one. The Other creates desire which facilitates the interpolative forces to operate on the subject. The desire is necessarily, as Lacan puts it, the desire of the Other," Sheikh writes; "[t]o understand [the] whole mechanism of operation of interpellative forces on subjects we must understand different forms of desire in the subjective economy and operation of culture through them."[9] Scholars who interpret Hata as a man striving for national belonging and acceptance thus frame his desire as a pursuit for national belonging and acceptance among the body politic, whereas I understand Hata's desire as his active intent to reproduce the national, cultural, and social interpellative forces against those to whom he is master – namely, K (in Japan) as Cheng points out by drawing attention to his wartime complicity, and Sunny (in the U.S.), whose relationship to Hata has, as previously noted, garnered significantly less attention from critics. Yet in overlooking the details of Sunny's steady resistance to conform to Hata's desire and perform the "appropriate" social behaviors expected of her, these critics have overlooked the alternative orientation to nation and national identity that she and her son Thomas represent, as well as how these shape and inform Hata's final position at the novel's "conclusion."[10]

Hata's conflation of his personal and national identities begins in his childhood; born Korean and adopted by a Japanese family, there are few

references to his identity not framed by national affiliation. Even the account of his birth identity evinces his early submission to the predominant political order: "[m]ost all of us were ethnic Koreans," he says, "though we spoke and lived as Japanese, if ones in twilight."[11] His early longing to be recognized by the Japanese state is (supposedly) accomplished upon his formal adoption by a Japanese couple, which Hata recalls as a time which "unmasked and clarified my sense of obligations, so much so that I now view that period as the true beginning of 'my life'. This was when I first appreciated the comforts of real personhood, and its attendant secrets, among which is the harmonious relation between a self and his society. There is a mutualism," he says, "that at its ideal is both powerful and liberating."[12] For Hata, this "mutualism" is a bonding between "a self and his society" so complete that it negates any individualism and autonomy. This is evident when Hata describes his upbringing, which he attributes not to individuals but to Japanese society and its body politic at-large:

> I lived with a well-to-do childless couple...who treated me as well as a son, providing me with every material need and advantage...I think of them most warmly, as I do my natural parents, but to neither would I ascribe the business of having reared me, for it seems clear it was the *purposeful society* that did so, and really nothing and no one else. I was more than grateful. And I knew even then as a boy of twelve how I should always give myself over to its vigilance, entrusting to its care everything I could know or ever hope for.[13]

As Sze Wei Ang observes, "Hata does not define what or who provides 'its vigilance' or 'its care,' but takes for granted that 'it' will do so. This abstract institution is the 'wholly other' and the singularity that he recognizes and to which he owes his allegiance for most of the novel."[14]

That Hata accepts the self-abnegating terms of this "mutualism" stems from his persistent belief – in the U.S. as in Japan – that a symbiotic exchange of sacrifice will take effect between a "self and his society": he will relinquish autonomy and submit to the national power in exchange for recognition, economic benefit, and exception from state negligence or harm. Indeed, as Young-Oak Lee explains, "Hata only consciously recognizes himself as a person when he 'becomes' Japanese; but he has to repress the means through which he becomes a subject of the state"[15] – a repression that continues through his immigration to the U.S. Ang remarks that "subject formation depends on the state's positive recognition,"[16] which Hata did not receive as an ethnic Korean living "as Japanese, if...in twilight" nor even as a "model minority" in the U.S. Rather than a "positive

recognition" of heterogeneous autonomy, each nation demands a repudiation of individualism to belong; a "denial of difference" through which Hata simultaneously conforms to and confirms the desired image needed to reflect and uphold the nation's identity. Thus it is not a "mutualism," but a negating subjection to the ever-shifting desires of the state that occurs when Hata is recognized by and incorporated within the nation.

In describing the simultaneous, conjoined activity of desire and repression underlying "the means through which [Hata] becomes a subject of the state," Lee evokes the nature of the state Hata has joined: a fantasy predicated on a citizen's psychological desire and repression. As Donald E. Pease explains in *The New American Exceptionalism*, "state fantasy does not refer to a mystification but to the dominant structure of desire out of which U.S. citizens imagined their national identity."[17] Essentially, Pease outlines the manner by which, in the absence of an embodied state sovereign, the cornerstone of the modern nation-state's socio-political framework became a collective participation in the fantasy of the state's authoritative power.[18] "If citizens are subjected to the state through their belief in the state's authority, it is state fantasy that supplies this belief,"[19] he explains, adding that "[s]tate fantasies incite an operative imagination endowed with the power to solicit the citizens' desire to believe in the reality of its productions."[20] Ultimately, Pease illustrates the two, conjoined states of fantasy at work in the modern nation: the state of national organization and affiliation and the psychic state through which individual citizens understand the nation, its actions, and their role (with)in these.[21]

Indeed, desire is a crucial component of the mediating role fantasy plays between the state and its citizenry. As Pease explains:

> [s]tate fantasies lay down the scenarios through which the state's rules and norms can be experienced as internal to the citizens' desire. Fantasy endows the state's rules and laws with the authority of the people's desire for them. Fantasy does so by investing the state's rules with the desire through which the state's subjects imagine themselves to be the authors of these rules and laws as well as their recipients.[22]

Yet as some desires and actions inevitably conflict with the exceptionalist socio-political narrative that enables the state's operation, Pease highlights the equally crucial incorporation of exceptions (to the state's laws) that ensure the continuation of the states of fantasy and thus the nation-state's presence and authority. "The political efficacy of the *fantasy* of American exceptionalism is discernable in its supplying its adherents

with the psychosocial structures that permitted them to ignore the state's exceptions. These structures of disavowal were crucial to the production of the state's exceptions," he continues, "insofar as they sustained the attitude through which U.S. citizens willfully misrepresented their history as well as their place in the world."[23] In other words, the fantasy of "mutualism" to which Hata subscribes enables his disavowal of the violence he endures or undertakes as a national subject: rather than understand the "model minority" designation as a damaging indication of "other-ness",[24] he treats it as a badge of honorable distinction; rather than see his relationship with Kkuteah in the context of colonial conquest and sexual violation, he views it as a romance burgeoning under exceptional circumstances;[25] rather than consider his role in Sunny's upbringing as subjection to the national order, he considers himself a gentle father guiding her to reach the point of "harmonious relation between a self and [her] society."[26]

While Pease focuses on the U.S., Lee's novel illustrates a similar exceptionalism operating in Japan. The operative fantasy that united Japanese citizens' desire for imperial unity, expansion, and authority in World War II came together in the fantasy of (Asian) exceptionality and exceptionalist responsibility. Ang describes the Japanese exceptionalist attitude internalized by Captain Ono and Hata, as based in "the law of racial hierarchies, where Japan is superior to all other Asian races."[27] As Ang clarifies, "Captain Ono and Hata had believed in the superiority of the Japanese and saw as their mandate the liberation of other Asian countries through colonialism...in the service of progress."[28] Indeed, the similarity in these nations' modus operandi is in part why Hata chooses to relocate to the United States following the war; the terms of belonging in the U.S. seem familiar and justifiable as he works to fulfill his desire for a new home(land) and national identity.

Because Kkuteah most directly embodies the violence and destruction attending Hata's affiliation with Japan, Christopher Lee points out that relatively little attention has been paid to her spectral reappearance in the United States. Indeed, he is the only critic to engage Kkuteah's visitation in Hata's Bedley Run home at length – an event which he argues could be understood in terms of what Kathleen Brogan calls a "cultural haunting."[29] Such an interpretation, he explains, would "remin[d] [Hata] of histories that he has tried to repress and forget" and thus "exemplif[y] the novel's concern with the ongoing effects of history, of the past as a lingering force in the present."[30] In this sense, Kkuteah also operates as what Pease terms a "traumatic image" which, he explains, "remember[s] everything inside the psyche of the state fantasy that it wills its subjects

not to know"[31]; in short, her presence ruptures the psychic state of Hata's national fantasies.

Hata's willful refusal to acknowledge the fantasies that predicate and perpetuate the behavior he undertakes for national belonging drives his ongoing relationships with others in this (newer) national context. Kkutaeh's spectral visitation in the residence of Hata's newest home(land) is crucial because it draws our attention to the most recent, specific site where Hata enacts a different kind of state violence: namely, the domesticating work of the nation as Kaplan describes in "Manifest Domesticity." Kaplan suggests that traditional conceptions of "the home as a stable center against a fluctuating social world with expanding national borders"[32] is inaccurate if we understand that, in the United States, domesticity reconfigured ideological notions of foreignness to accommodate the presence of Euro-Americans and the process of colonization.[33] According to Kaplan, what is perceived to be "foreign" or a threat to homogeneity within the private home is likewise encountered and subdued or subjected within this same space; colonizing actions are performed by individual members of the body politic within their own "private homes" in service to the nation's socio-political framework. In turn, as domestication is accomplished through ideological subjection and interpellation, it likewise reaffirms and bolsters what Pease explains as the state(s) of fantasy and exceptionalism by which the nation and its body politic self-identify.

In the aftermath of the fire he sets in his Bedley Run home, Hata ponders the relationship between domestic childrearing practices and the important socio-political function such domesticating or "civilizing" actions serve:

> So much of the public debate and discussion these days is about the alarming fragility of a person's early years, how critically the times and circumstances can affect one's character and outlook and even actions. So the abiding philosophy is to help a wayward child develop into a productive member of the community, or if ignored, risk allowing someone of essentially decent nature to become an adult whose social interactions are fraught and difficult, or even pathological, criminal.[34]

Hata's preoccupation that a child be accepted according to the dictates of the prevailing social order evinced through references to "public debate," "member of the community," and "social interactions," recall the attribution of his own upbringing to the "purposeful society."[35] Indeed, as the national societies with which he identifies share similar pursuits

of progress and exceptionality, it is significant that he is attuned to the socio-political desire for a "wayward child" to "develop" – or be cultivated – into a "productive member" of the socio-political order in which they are situated. Issuing from a man who identifies as a member of the U.S. body politic – who has even named himself after Benjamin Franklin[36] – these rhetorical choices, which gesture most directly towards the United States' historical narrative of progress through a domestication of wilderness and savagery, indicate Hata's ideological alignment with the national and fantasied state.

Yet, as these remarks are brought about by his interaction with the "well-reared" hospital volunteer Veronica, they demonstrate the contrast by which he has "failed" to encourage wayward Sunny to *develop* in a manner worthy of the body politic's recognition and incorporation. Indeed, after describing his own submission to such terms, Hata admits his desire that Sunny would likewise acquiesce to the nation's socio-political framework:

> My Sunny, I thought, would do much the same. Not be so thankful or beholden to me, necessarily, but at least she'd be somewhat appreciative of the *providence of institutions* that brought her from the squalor of the orphanage – the best of which can be only so happy – to an *orderly*, welcoming suburban home in America, with a hopeful father of like-enough race and means.[37]

Hata's words "the providence of institutions" invoke both the ideological basis of the United States' exceptionalist identity – that is, the nation's providential role in the world[38] – as well as the institutionalization of this exceptionalist narrative within the social, historical, and political consciousness. His description of the environment he provided, where such interpellation might occur – "an orderly ... home in America" – resonates with Kaplan's description of how "domesticity's 'habits of system and order'"[39] were used to configure the difference between the "domestic" and the "foreign."

Much to his chagrin, however, Sunny resists his efforts from her arrival. Hata attributes Sunny's aversion to her new American home to its physical dilapidation: "[i]n those days the place wasn't quite as composed as it is now," he explains, "the old structure, nothing more than that, just simply old, and sliding swiftly into a final, dishonorable state."[40] Detailing the physical features that he perceives to be the cause of her unease, Hata says

> I remember first walking Sunny into the foyer, with all that dark wood paneling that was still up on the walls and ceiling, smelling from the inside of rot

and dust, the lights fading now and then, and she actually began to titter and cry. I didn't know what to do for her, as she seemed not to want me to touch her, and for some moments I stood apart from her while she wept, this shivering girl of seven.[41]

It stands to reason that a young girl, newly immigrated and knowing only "some English," adopted by a man she's never met, would become overwhelmed; but as Hata's narrative progresses, her reaction suggests less a child's intimidation than an early indication of her resistance to the context in which she has been placed. Indeed, as Hata discloses the progress of their relationship, this scene indicates Sunny's prescient awareness that the domestic American structure, "sliding swiftly into a final, dishonorable state," portends a similar fate for its inhabitants.

Translating the description of Hata's residential framework into socio-political terms by which we may understand the house to symbolize the framework of the national domestic structure, it seems that Sunny senses her environment for what it is – an *un*exceptional home which, though amenable or accommodating to cosmetic updates, is nonetheless built upon and around a foul history concealed from view – rather than for the fantasied promise of belonging it ostensibly represents. Hata is willing to take up residence in such a domestic structure because he understands the benefits attending a commitment to re-presenting the outward, visible qualities in a socially amenable form. Indeed, his response to Sunny's reaction is to reassure her in terms of impending domestic order: "I asked her not to worry or be afraid, that I would do my best to make a pleasant home, and that she should be happy to be in the United States and have a father now and maybe a mother someday soon,"[42] remarks which, again, iterate social comfort in terms that unite the private home with(in) the nation-state. Yet Sunny will not be consoled: "[s]he kept crying," he says, "but she looked at me and I saw her for the first time...and I could do little else but bend down and hold her until she stopped."[43] Unlike Hata who openly receives and willingly accommodates those who can assist his bid to belong within the socio-political order, Sunny is less malleable; although Hata does not detail any active resistance on her part in this scene, she refuses to be comforted by assurances of her incorporation into his domestic order.

Yet as Hata undertakes the work of beautifying the house, his efforts to impose domestic order and to see these endeavors reflected back upon him reveal both the futility and the violence attending his attempts to achieve full recognition within this domestic space. Recalling his

efforts to improve their home as a means of incorporating Sunny psychically and socially into the domestic order, Hata admits that although he "took up general maintenance of the house with the usual care and thoroughness…as it happened every week something seemed to stall my efforts. Everything would go smoothly," he explains, "until a cabinet door wouldn't catch, or a hinge began to squeak, or a drain was too slow, and then a vise-like tightness came over me."[44] Detailing one incident in particular, Hata tells us

> That time in Sunny's bathroom, trying to rub out a persistent cloudy stain in the vanity, I somehow cracked the mirror, and my fingers began bleeding from the edges of the spidery glass. I must have kept rubbing and blotting, for it was only some moments later than I realized Sunny was watching me from the doorway, her splintered reflection looking up at me. Her round face, pretty and dark in complexion, was serene and quiet.[45]

Noteworthy here is the contrast between Hata's determination to clear his full reflection in the mirror which, presumably original to the house, refuses his efforts to render outward all that is present within its frame(work), while Sunny remains unsurprised and unaffected both by the quality of the mirror's image as well as by Hata's vehement – even violent – attempts to control its reflection and align its (re)presentation with his desired expectations. In effect, this scene again symbolically demonstrates the differences in Hata's and Sunny's orientations to the U.S. nation-state's fantasied domesticity: while Hata pursues a place of recognition within its socio-political frame and narrative (here, the mirror which does not accurately reflect its contents) and demonstrates a willingness to both inflict and receive violence as a means of accomplishing his – and Sunny's – incorporation within its field, Sunny seemingly neither expects nor demands an unclouded (objective or fully revealing) reflection of the body(politic) from a frame(work) predicated upon a concealment of history; indeed, she gazes upon the violence attending such domestic "ordering" and refuses to engage or participate in Hata's endeavors.

Sunny's refusal to engage in or to submit to demands of domesticity is consistent throughout her childhood and persists into her young adulthood. This resistance is a constant source of anxiety for Hata, as she undermines the "model" familial narrative by which he indicates the merit of his desire for social incorporation. As a child, Sunny manifests her resistance to Hata's domesticating efforts through a passive refusal to fulfill his expectations on his terms. This is evident when she will only address

him in the term of intimate familial relations he desires – "Poppa" – when pressed,[46] or when she plays the piano in a manner Hata describes as "utterly perverse to what it should have been, as though she were critiquing rather than exploring the piece" and responds by turning his critique into a self-reflective reproach of his expectations: "'I'm trying my very best, Poppa,' she'd say innocently...'You see that I am, don't you?'"[47] Indeed, Hata himself identifies these instances of conflict in terms that admit his attempts to ideologically domesticate her; referring to such piano performances as "quite shaming," Hata explicitly states that he endeavored to "inculcate the same sense in Sunny," attempts she eluded by "pretend[ing] not to know what I was talking about."[48]

Yet the most direct demonstration that Hata's efforts to interpellate Sunny within the domestic sphere are pursued for social and civic ends occurs during Sunny's late adolescence when, he explains, "[o]nce, in admonishment, I mentioned to Sunny what could happen to young women who strayed from the security of their families, how they would inevitably descend to the lowest level of human society and be forced to sell every part of themselves, in mind and flesh and spirit."[49] This reproach occurs after Sunny has taken up residence in Jimmy Gizzi's house and Hata has searched for her through this house during a party. Though scholarship dealing with this section of the text mentions the sexual voyeurism in which Hata engages at the Gizzi house,[50] the passage also provides evidence of the paradigm through which Hata considers residential domestic spaces to serve as conduits for interpellation.

Referring to the racially heterogeneous mix of partygoers and his own unease in such situations, Hata explains "[b]ut here everyone seemed unconcerned, and I was strangely heartened by the fact, though my next thought was that Sunny *wasn't simply involving herself intimately* with all these men white and brown and black, but was *living with them* as well, with *no other company* but theirs."[51] Tellingly, what most stirs Hata's discomfort here is not the degree to which Sunny may be transgressing mores of acceptable sexual and/or gendered behavior, but that she is within *their* domestic sphere of influence. In other words, Hata's fear seems to be that the racially "other" company she keeps in this house will inculcate in her a different sense of socio-political organization and behavior than he has endeavored to cultivate. In this context, Hata's admonishment is understood not simply as a moralizing condemnation of her sexual behavior, but a caution against the ideological influences which may corrupt her.

As she matures, Sunny manifests her resistance more directly through a defiance of the national domestic framework and its figures of authority.

Hata tells us that "Sunny, if I recall, was particularly hard on Officer Como. At her worst," he says, "she would sit diffidently on the hood of the policewoman's cruiser as it sat parked on Church Street, smoking a cigarette...her favorite mirrored sunglasses perched on her head."[52] This situation escalates, not because of Sunny's violent or outward provocation toward the officer, but because of her perceived indifference toward the figure of authority. As Hata describes Sunny:

> She wasn't the kind of bad girl who cursed or talked back, there being little of that loudness and bluster to her (except on rare occasions with me, who somehow inspired her), but rather she was intimidatingly and defiantly quiet. She just looked at you, or more accurately, she made it that you looked at her. There wasn't a hint of vanity or pride.[53]

Significantly, Hata does not contest the premise whereby Sunny has been socially identified and labeled a "bad girl," but only clarifies the characteristics that engender this designation – behavior which signals his own interpellation into the ideological framework of the nation's body politic. Indeed, only once during the entire exchange does Sunny directly address any outward "hostility" toward Officer Como – and this in response to the officer's provocation;[54] instead, the majority of their exchange details Sunny's reluctant, begrudging compliance with the officer's commands and her defiant passivity regarding Officer Como's delineation of the social transgressions that Bedley Run residents may use to "justify" her exclusion from social recognition and protection.[55]

As Hata's descriptions suggest, it is as if Sunny's very orientation to socio-political interaction summons her critique and censure by those who represent this framework. Thus, I contend that Sunny senses the fantasied basis that such social dictates and figures of political authority represent; moreover, Hata's observation "[s]he just looked at you, or more accurately, she made it that you looked at her" indicates that Sunny not only understands – at least partially – the limits and power inhering in opportunities to reflect such fantasies of authority and its foundation(s) back on those interpellated figures that re-produce them, but leverages such opportunities to insist upon a re-view of the terms conditioning the encounter. *Both* an act of evasion as well as confrontation, Sunny re-places her mirrored sunglasses from her head to her eyes in reaction to Officer Como's account of her at Jimmy Gizzi's house,[56] an indictment of her presence in the company of socio-political "undesirables". Though readers might interpret Sunny's attempt to remove herself physically from Officer

Como's presence as an indication of shame, it is not; instead, this movement indicates her refusal to engage the premise of the officer's condemnation. The diversion of her own gaze is simultaneously an act whereby she beckons Officer Como to *observe herself* in the act of sanctioning and enforcing Sunny's socio-political exclusion on terms grounded in speculation – that is, fantasy.

As Officer Como's indictment indicates,[57] by her late adolescence Sunny has increasingly sought to remove herself from the purview and desires of the prevailing domestic order. Indeed, by the time of his narration, Sunny has grown and left Bedley Run altogether, severing all communication with and relationship to Hata. She lives and works in Ebbington, a neighboring town which, as its name suggests, is a place of active recession. In the immediate sense, Ebbington bears the brunt of this remove socio-economically; compared with Bedley Run it seems a less refined, less desirable place to live or work, and as Hata's narrative reveals, Sunny herself is impacted by the impending closure of the store she manages.[58] Yet as is evident in Hata's own medical supply business – particularly as the Hickey family has fared in their fantasied attempts to revive and sustain its profitability – the linked socio-economic fates of these towns signals the broader failures attending the nation-state's pursuit of progress.

Thus, instead of interpreting the economic precariousness of Sunny's life in Ebbington as evidence that she should live or behave as Hata has done, her move to this place, like her childhood skepticism and adolescent defiance, may be understood as a prescient rejection of the U.S. state of fantasy. Put differently, Sunny's choice to live with the "undesirables" of U.S. society, and at the margins or abandoned spaces within its socio-political landscape, can be understood as liberating. Rather than predicate her lifestyle and identity on what the nation desires of its body politic, Sunny has engaged in an active refusal to gesture and self-efface in service to these fantasies; she has found and embraced a manner of living that is alternative to these state fantasies in a place which suggests a pulling-away from the mainstream establishment.

Moreover, Sunny has quite literally re-produced her alternative orientation to the nation-state and its fantasies in her son, Thomas. This bi-racial boy, possibly the product of Sunny's relationship with the racially-"other" Lincoln Evans,[59] is not only an embodied form of his mother's subversion of socio-political desire, but also of the disavowed, un-exceptional underside of the U.S. nation-state's domestic and international history;[60] his first name, like Hata's, evokes a connection to a U.S. "founding father" – Thomas Jefferson – while Lincoln's (likely) paternity highlights

the destructive irony of the un-exceptional and un-liberating nature of Jefferson's Declaration, especially for women and minorities such as those of African or Asian descent residing in the new nation.

But beyond the embodied nature of Sunny's alternative orientation to the state and its fantasied desires, Thomas's own behavior indicates an orientation to this socio-political framework that not only rejects its fantasied terms (as his mother has), but which anticipates (and even rehearses) its very destruction. This is best illustrated during a trip Hata and Thomas make to the Bedley Run pool. As Hata describes the scene:

> The whole town seems to be here. Thomas and I have set up our chairs on the sand down-shore, under the breezy shade of large maples, the part of the beach preferred by older folks and those concerned with overexposure to the rays, or others, like the handful of our town's black families, who are enjoying their own lively, picnicking circle a few steps from us. Thomas has found them, or they have found him, and he plays with their children with a quiet, unflinching ease, something I have not seen in him until now, overexcitable as he often is.[61]

Since "the whole town" is seemingly present, it is as if Thomas has found a less-structured social space to explore – here, residents from Bedley Run may mingle with those from Ebbington; though separations from racial "others" are evident, the public pool affords Thomas the opportunity to meet and play with whomever he encounters, without strict enforcement of social barriers and boundaries. And in fact, he and his friends seemingly play at keeping these adult-bequeathed categorizations at bay, working together to "build a wall around their talkative mothers" with bucketfuls of sand.[62] Yet Thomas's behavior soon elicits Hata's interference when, as Hata explains "[s]oon enough he's practically performing for his newfound friends, as he holds high aloft a bucket of sand and with some ceremony dumps it on his face and neck and chest. I'm a bit alarmed," Hata admits, "but the other children laugh at this, and Thomas repeats the action and I realize I've seen this from him before, how he often makes a buffoon of himself for others."[63] Recounting several instances in which Thomas's playfulness seems to have crossed into violent or self-destructive behavior, Hata moves to prevent Thomas's continued antics. Yet, Thomas resists Hata's impulses to control him: "[h]e pulls hard away from me," Hata says, demanding, as Sunny did, Hata's self-review of this interfering behavior: '[W]hat are you *doing*? he says, jerking his arm away from me. There's a flash in his eyes that perhaps only I as his

mother's father can recognize," Hata admits, describing it as "a cold light of refusal."[64]

Yet what Hata describes as a "strangeness in the pattern, his obsessive, self-taunting behavior"[65] is Thomas's insightful and anticipatory practice of how to survive in this socio-political landscape. Recalling the first display of such behavior, Hata says

> At the roller rink last week, [Thomas] spilled wickedly several times, falling flush on his back as he tried to whip around a group of children his age, each wipeout a bit more thunderous than the one before. They snickered, but then seemed more frightened than amused; soon after they were ushered off by their mothers...once they were gone, he was perfectly fine as he skated, whipping past my spot with aplomb and cool abandon, his stout little figure apparently unaching, unhurt.[66]

In the second instance, Hata describes how "in the toy store, a floor display of boxed firetrucks fell over on him, though I suspected at the time that he had meant to cause it, if not expected them to fall directly on him".[67] Bearing in mind that even as a child Sunny seemed to sense and resist Hata's attempts to "civilize" or "tame" her, we may read Thomas's behavior as similarly responsive to the kinds of behavior and interaction occasioned by his "undesirable," racially-mixed social position in this domestic order.

Interpreting these "antics" accordingly, Thomas's increasingly dangerous feats suggest to the children around him his own ability to survive and successfully maneuver dangerous social circumstances. Though Hata seemingly interprets Thomas's maneuvers as trying to "keep up" or "outperform" these children with social protections (here, the mothers that whisk them away), it's worth considering his behavior as working to assert that he will not be victimized or reduced by their roles and behaviors. Likewise, in the second instance Thomas seemingly creates a "pocket of survival" through the destruction of imposed order around him: if he has caused the crash of this display of firetrucks and ended up safely "buried alive" within the site of their landing, he has effectively practiced *both* how to undo *and survive in* the undoing of the false order surrounding him. As precursors to this dumping of sand, Thomas has practiced how to remain whole and unscathed despite his exposure on the socio-political landscape, while here he is seemingly practicing a faux self-burial or a "blending into" the landscape itself by pouring the sand over his upper body. These three incidents, taken together, thus anticipate

and contextualize his interest in, excursion into, and survival of the water-space from which Hata retrieves him during this trip to the pool.

Misunderstanding Thomas's behavior, Hata suggests a splashing contest in the pool as a means of deflating the tension of the child's resistance – a maneuver he hopes will prevent further confrontation. Yet here again Thomas challenges the terms of Hata's control and commanding role in the situation: "[s]orry, Franklin, but it's just kids only."[68] When Hata suggests he will remain off to the side and out of the children's games, Thomas again refuses to settle for Hata's mediating presence or terms of conduct: "'[a]dults have to stay on the beach, Franklin,' he tells me... and it's all I can do but sit down again as they stomp and leap their way into the water."[69] As with the sand-constructed wall, Thomas endeavors to keep the rules and structure of the adult world at a remove. Beginning, now, to understand the impact of seemingly small or trivial impositions on another's autonomy and behavior, Hata relents.

Hata's relinquishment of control signifies his developing awareness of and desire for a new orientation to the space and people around him – an awareness brought about by his own re-orienting submersion in the domestic water-space of his Bedley Run home: the bathtub in Sunny's bathroom. Directly following his encounter with Kkutaeh's spectral presence, as Hata enters Sunny's bathroom, he begins to recognize the damaging terms of habitation in such a domestic framework – a sensation he receives from the persisting foulness of the very room itself that he has painfully endeavored to cover over and re-present through a clean, unmarred surface:

> The faint smell was of a shut-off dampness and mold. As with [Sunny's] bedroom, I had completely gone over the surfaces with spackle and paint, and then had the tiles on the wall and floor re-grouted, but the work was still old enough even with the room left unused that it looked quite grim and shabby. A hard crust of greenish scale covered the spigot, which ran very slowly, and over the years the drip had discolored the area around the drain with a watery-edged patch of rust.[70]

Despite his efforts to re-present its surface, Hata returns to find the bathroom bearing the traces of its unwholesome foundation: the faucet's slow, continuous dripping insists against his attempts to contain the evidence of this domestic space's violent history.

It is no coincidence that the water has left its trace in a "watery-edged patch of rust," a stain that recalls the blood-tinged violence of Hata's

national pasts – first with Kkuteah, in Japan, and later with Sunny in the United States. In this domestic space, the traumatic images that signify this history continue to insist by, as Pease puts it, "projecting themselves into the present as images that confront historical narratives with what violates their conditions of representation."[71] This is underscored in Hata's own account: "[w]hen I turned on the hot water the tap shook and coughed, and then with a violent spew a stream of reddish-brownish liquid began to flow."[72] Signifying blood, the spasmodic and fitful manner in which the "reddish-brown liquid" comes forth from the faucet evokes the brutality of Kkutaeh's murder and the forceful removal of her unborn child,[73] as well as Hata's enforcement of and assistance in Sunny's abortion.[74]

Hata remains in the bathroom waiting for the residue of this domestic past to run its course so the water will run cleanly again. Yet although his fantasied gaze perceives the water as entirely clear, once he is immersed within it, Hata detects a mineral quality to the water[75] – an unseeable but lingering residue of the blood-tinged substance that has passed to clear the way for more desirable contents. Seemingly purged of its soiled residue, Hata's immersion into this space is detailed in pleasant, welcoming terms even as the scene progresses into a critical reflection upon the effects of his desire to belong: "I must say I appreciated the feeling. There is something exemplary to the sensation of near-perfect lightness, of being in a place and not being there," he says, adding "such is the cast of my belonging, molding to whatever is at hand."[76]

Beginning to recognize, now, the destruction wrought by his willingness to subject himself to "whatever is at hand," Hata likewise senses the violence of continually desiring this belonging and gesturing to fulfill its terms of inclusion through "being in a place and not being there." This prompts him to move away from the larger domestic space – here, the bathroom – and to rehearse his relinquishment of this partial belonging (immersion in the bathtub) by committing to full submersion in the water.[77] Submerged, Hata experiences a moment of brief, critical remove from the fantasies that structure the national landscape and are reproduced in domestic structures such as his Bedley Run home. Though the bathroom and bathtub constitute part of these larger domestic spaces, his willingness to witness the lingering, traumatic images of his disavowed history (Kkutaeh's presence; the bloody water) enables his submersion to function as a remove from these domestic sites and to temporarily occupy a space located beneath its fantasied landscape. This evacuation permits a glimpse of his role in these histories without the structure of the

fantasied framework as suggested in his description of this experience as "intense," "pure and truthful," and "all-enveloping."[78]

Hata's attraction to this space of remove is so strong that it becomes self-abortive. But though his desire to be "quite unborn," to achieve "an erasure reaching back, a pre-beginning"[79] may be read in a mortal sense, it also signifies his yearning for an autonomy that existed before national statehood or his subjected incorporation within such frameworks. Hata recognizes that he cannot remain a subject upon these socio-political landscapes free of violent or destructive "doings or traces of human-kind,"[80] and so comes to desire not further justifications or fantasy-work ("I did not want innocence"[81]) but his own removal from these states' subjected positionings. Ultimately, though Hata does not seem to recognize Thomas's escapades as such, this bathtub submersion permits him an un-fantasied view of socio-political formation in the national domicile and a rehearsal of how to evacuate from it into a space slightly removed from its fantasied landscape. Though brief, this experience of escape into such a space "sub-consciously"[82] attunes Hata to Thomas's location in the town pool, enabling him to retrieve and rescue the boy – an event which, again, originates in the child's own, blissful stray from normalized social hierarchies and his direct defiance of Hata's regulatory authority.

Significantly, this domestic submersion is also what informs Hata's re-orientation to home and homelands at the end of the novel. While several critics cite Anne Anlin Cheng's interpretation of Hata's position in the novel's final passage – what she describes as "an *active refusal to act any further* in bad faith"[83] – they seem to treat this observation as a sort of sound bite rather than explore the full potential and force of these remarks. As Cheng explains, "[t]he kind of ethical or reparative work that Lee outlines for Hata's future…cannot be visible or active in the traditional sense. Instead, the conclusion embodies an *internal critique* of our desires for liberating and recuperative actions and of the affinity that those actions can bear to acts of subjugation."[84] Reading Hata as an internal participant in the nation's body politic and state fantasies allows us to consider him as a microcosm of the larger exceptionalist nation-state(s) whose actions are similarly represented as gesture of its "desires for liberating and recuperative actions."

Cheng contends that "it is precisely the intimacy between normality and nightmare, between decency and obscenity, that Lee's text provokes…Hata's failure under extraordinary circumstances," she reminds us "is but an intensification of the failures that precondition 'normal' civility and sociality."[85] Thus as an "embodied," "internal critique" of the

nation's orientation to narrative and the violence obscured by the fanta-
sies of "'normal' civility and sociality," Hata's resolution to "fly a flag" and
to be "outside looking in"[86] is not, to my reading, evidence of a man who
has failed at his bid for national incorporation or who embraces a diasporic
existence through a renunciation of fixed national belonging or home.
Instead, as a man who *did* join the body politic, willingly fulfilled the
violent terms of national belonging, and perpetuated its fantasies against
those within his power, Hata's final comments – "I will circle round and
arrive again. Come almost home" – may be read as an indication of his
desire to refrain from belonging to the nation-state on its fantasied terms.
He wants to exist, instead, in the space between a nation's fantasies and
the violent actions that enforce and perpetuate its modus operandi.

While Hata's vow "I won't be seeking out my destiny or fate. I won't
attempt to find comfort in the visage of a creator or the forgiving dead"[87]
could be read as a final gesture for readers' acceptance, I interpret it as ev-
idence of his final disillusionment with the possibility that exceptionality
is an identity attainable by nation or subject; he finally recognizes that it
is only a violent, dangerous fantasy. As this "final" gesture originates in
Hata's engagement with the images of trauma he has disavowed and/or
attempted to re-configure within his own narrative, and "concludes" with
his self-distancing from the socio-political frameworks with which he has
hitherto identified, the book's final passage is an indication of Hata's cre-
ation of and move to occupy such a space of resistance himself. If Hata's
gestures may be understood as endeavors to give form to the nation-state's
desires, then his relinquishment of gesture may be read not only as one
citizen's "*active refusal to act any further* in bad faith"[88] as Cheng suggests,
but as the possibility inhering in any interpellated citizen's inaction.

In short, Hata's refusal to gesture creates a gap or a space between the
nation's fantasy – that is, its desire – and its effects against those within
and without the framework of its incorporated body politic. Thus, the
conclusion illustrates his re-orientation to a fantasied state for which he
no longer intends to gesture and in which he no longer desires to live.
Though Lee's novel does not indicate how Hata may actually live or effect
such a removed existence, its irresolution reiterates his promise to consis-
tently reorient to the nation and its inhabitants without entering through
the terms of its framework; to "fly a flag" suggests his intent to signi-
fy his own place to others without perpetuating the states of fantasy,
while his vow to "come almost home" reminds us that while he might
dwell in a place, he will not submit to or reproduce its destructive terms
of domestication.

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1   Chang-rae Lee, *A Gesture Life* (New York: Riverhead Books, 1999), 26.
2   Amy Kaplan, "Manifest Domesticity," in The Futures of American Studies, ed. Donald E. Pease and Robyn Wiegman (Durham: Duke University Press, 2002), 113.
3   See Young-Oak Lee's article "Transcending Ethnicity: Disporicity in A Gesture Life" which treats Hata as "the ultimate diasporan" (78); or Matthew Miller's "Chang-rae Lee's A Gesture Life: The Recuperation of Identity," *Ethnic Studies Review* 32, no. 2 (2009) wherein Miller writes that "[a]s a complicated diasporic figure, Hata cannot acculturate fully into either the adopted cultures of Japan and America..." (3). Hamilton Carroll writes, for example, that "*A Gesture Life* does not narrate the production of a fully constituted national subject, but the failure of that subject to constitute himself within the bounds of hegemonic US citizenship" ("Traumatic Patriarchy: Reading Gendered Nationalisms in Chang-rae Lee's 'A Gesture Life,'" *Modern Fiction Studies* 51, no. 3 (Fall 2005), 593. A final, though far from exhaustive example of such readings is Seongho Yoon's interpretation which treats Hata's assimilationist mission through the socio-cultural symbol of the "American suburb" ("Being in a Place and Not Being There – Asian America Space, The American Suburb, and Transnational Imageries in Chang-rae Lee's *A Gesture Life,*" in *The American Village in a Global Setting: Selected Papers from an Interdisciplinary Conference in Honour of Sinclair Lewis and Ida B. Compton*, ed. Michael F. Connaughton and Suellen Rundquist (Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2007).
4   See, for example, Jenny Heijun Wills, "Claiming America By Claiming Others: Asian-American Adoptive Parenthood in A Gesture Life and Digging to America," *Americana: The Journal of American Popular Culture (1900-present)* 10, no. 1 (2011), or Mark C. Jerng "Recognizing the Transracial Adoptee: Adoption Life Stories and Chang-rae Lee's 'A Gesture Life'," *MELUS* 31, no. 2 (Summer 2006).
5   Hamilton Carroll, "Traumatic Patriarchy: Reading Gendered Nationalisms in Chang-rae Lee's 'A Gesture Life," *Modern Fiction Studies* 51, no. 3 (Fall 2005), 593.
6   See, for example, Hamilton Carroll, "Tramautic Patriarchy" (609–612); Jenny Heijun Wills, "Claiming America"; Mark C. Jerng "Recognizing the Transracial Adoptee"; Keith A. Russell, II, "Colonial Naming and Renaming in A Gesture Life by Chang-rae Lee," *Notes on Contemporary Literature*, 36, no. 4 (September 2006); and Sze Wei Ang's "The Politics of Victimization and the Model Minority," *The New Centennial Review* 11, no. 3 (Winter 2011), 134., among others.
7   Anne Anlin Cheng "Passing, Natural Selection, and Love's Failure: Ethics of Survival from Chang-rae Lee's 'A Gesture Life'," *American Literary History* 17, no. 3 (Autumn 2005), 568.
8   Cheng, 562.
9   Farooq Ahmad Sheikh "Subjectivity, Desire, and Theory: Reading Lacan," *Cogent Arts and Humanities* 4, no.1 (2017), 7.
10 See Christopher Lee, "Form-Giving and the Remains of Identity in A Gesture Life," *Journal of Asian American Studies* 14, no. 1 (2011), 95-116, doi: 10.1353/jaas.2011.0001 and Anne Anlin Cheng "Passing, Natural Selection, and Love's Failure: Ethics of Survival from Chang-rae Lee's 'A Gesture Life'," *American Literary History* 17, no. 3 (Autumn 2005), for discussions of linearity and narrative structure in Lee's novel.
11 Lee, *A Gesture Life*, 72.
12 Lee, 72.
13 Ibid., 72–73 (emphasis added).
14 Sze Wei Ang, "The Politics of Victimization and the Model Minority," *The New Centennial Review* 11, no. 3 (Winter 2011), 129–130.
15 Young-Oak Lee, "Transcending Ethnicity: Diasporicity in A Gesture Life," *Journal of Asian American Studies* 12, no. 1 (2009), 72–73, doi:10.1353/jaas.0.0029.
16 Ang, "The Politics of Victimization," 128.
17 Donald E. Pease, *The New American Exceptionalism* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2009), 1.
18 Pease, 2–3.
19 Pease, 3–4.

20   Pease, 4.
21   Pease, 2–4.
22   Pease, 4.
23   Pease, 12.
24   Ang, "The Politics of Victimization" for a close reading of Lee's novel with regard to the violence of this designation and the state's role in this violence.
25   See Suk Koo Rhee, "Consumable Bodies and Ethnic (Hi)Stories: Strategies and Risks of Representation in 'A Gesture Life'," *Discourse* 34, no. 1 (Winter 2012), 96.
26   Lee, *A Gesture Life*, 72.
27   Ang, "The Politics of Victimization," 136.
28   Ang, 135.
29   Lee, "Form-Giving," 103.
30   Lee, 104.
31   Pease, *The New American Exceptionalism*, 38.
32   Kaplan, "Manifest Domesticity," 120.
33   Kaplan, 120.
34   Lee, *A Gesture Life*, 67.
35   Lee, 72–73.
36   Keith A. Russell, "Colonial Naming and Renaming in A Gesture Life by Chang-rae Lee," *Notes on Contemporary Literature* 36, no. 4 (2006); Young-Oak Lee and Suk Koo Rhee also make this connection.
37   Lee, *A Gesture Life*, 73 (emphasis added).
38   Pease, *The New American Exceptionalism*, 7–8.
39   Kaplan, "Manifest Domesticity," 120.
40   Lee, *A Gesture Life*, 26.
41   Lee, 26.
42   Lee, 26.
43   Ibid., 26–27.
44   Lee, 27.
45   Lee, 27–28.
46   Lee, 28.
47   Lee, 71.
48   Lee, 71.
49   Lee, 144.
50   Rhee, "Consumable Bodies," 105.
51   Lee, *A Gesture Life*, 102 (emphasis added).
52   Lee, 85.
53   Lee, 86.
54   Lee, 90.
55   Lee, 88–90; 91.
56   Lee, 88.
57   Lee, 88–89.
58   Lee, 215.
59   Chang-rae Lee, *A Gesture* Life, 209. Describing Thomas's features, Hata says "I think the boy must be hers, bestowed as he is with her high, narrowing eyes, and her black hair, though it's tightly curled, near-Afro, and her warm, nut-colored skin (although I wonder why he isn't darker)." As Lincoln Evans' paternity would account for Thomas's features, it seems likely that he is the boy's father.
60   See Wills, "Claiming America By Claiming Others," n. pag., which discusses the repercussions of U.S. involvement in Korea as it informs racial and national identity in Lee's novel.
61   Lee, *A Gesture* Life, 306.
62   Lee, 306.
63   Lee, 316.
64   Lee, 316–317 (emphasis original).
65   Lee, 316.
66   Lee, 316.
67   Lee, 316.

68   Lee, 317.
69   Lee, 317.
70   Lee, 289.
71   Pease, *The New American Exceptionalism*, 38.
72   Lee, *A Gesture* Life, 289.
73   Lee, 303–305.
74   Lee, 282–283.
75   Lee, 289.
76   Lee, 289–290.
77   Lee, 290.
78   Lee, 290.
79   Lee, 290.
80   Lee, 290.
81   Lee, 290.
82   Here I'm using "sub-conscious" to signify the submersive remove from the psychic state
     of fantasy.
83   Cheng, "Ethics of Survival," 571 (emphasis original).
84   Cheng, 572 (emphasis added).
85   Cheng, 564.
86   Lee, *A Gesture Life*, 356.
87   Lee, 356.
88   Cheng, 571 (emphasis original).

The Arts of Immigrant Placemaking: Gentrification and Cultural Production in the Black Mosaic of Washington, D.C.
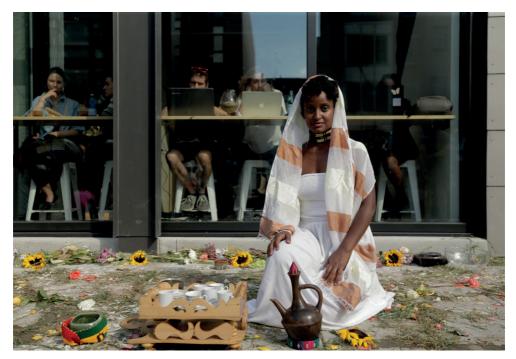
Marta Gierczyk

ABSTRACT

This essay advocates for the urgency of studying gentrification and the politics of place in the American city through literary and artistic insights. I analyze Tsedaye Makonnen's *Common Ground* performance (2016) alongside Dinaw Mengestu's novel *The Beautiful Things That Heaven Bears* (2007) to argue that immigrant cultural production forms a part of a revisionist discourse on urban placemaking. Makonnen and Mengestu tell stories of Ethiopian refugees and their repeated displacement in gentrifying Washington, D.C. The unique spatial insights afforded by this immigrant position of uprooted peoples attached to multiple localities, I propose, reconfigure the question of who belongs in a place and what criteria define the terms of belonging. African immigrants in the performance and in the novel drift as distinct from both the longtime Black residents and the mostly white and monied newcomers. From this space in-between, Makonnen and Mengestu envision immigrant placemaking outside the territorial registers of property and ownership, but also without recourse to the often-counterproductive discourse of authenticity and seniority. The immigrant sense of place begs then a new rhetoric and practice of community protection against the pressures of gentrification; one which makes space for mobile identities and grants validity to place attachment without reverting to essentialism, stigmatization

of outsiders, and calls for neighborhood impermeability. The Ethiopian-American artists who appear in this essay make use of their imaginative prowess to extract from these challenges of urban negotiation a vision of commitment and being together in the city that could work across difference.

Keywords: Placemaking, Gentrification, Immigration, Art, Literature, Diaspora

During the 2016 "Crossing the Street" creative placemaking initiative, interdisciplinary artist Tsedaye Makonnen transformed the gentrifying streets of Washington, D.C.'s Shaw neighborhood into a public site of an Ethiopian coffee ceremony. Her performance, *Common Ground*, enacted the ritual of meticulous coffee preparation integral to the community life of Ethiopia, Eritrea, and their immigrant outposts to launch a conversation about urban development, displacement, and the role of Black diasporic communities in the socio-cultural history and future of the capital city. Makonnen performed in two locations: outside the new hip chain Compass Coffee and the soon closing family-owned Ethiopian eatery Zenebech Restaurant. The choice of location was not arbitrary. However distinct in their local business profiles, Compass and Zenebech are both contested spaces; each represents a different moment of change for this historically African American neighborhood. While the coffee shop marks the area's recently revamped and whitened image, the Ethiopian restaurant stands for the earlier ethnic diversification of D.C.'s Black community. When Zenebech first opened its doors on T Street in the 1990s, the restaurant was one of many Ethiopian-owned businesses revitalizing the area still submerged in the period of disinvestment following the 1968 civil unrest. By the early 2000s, the influence was significant enough for a group of Ethiopian entrepreneurs to attempt to formalize their mark on the neighborhood with an official "Little Ethiopia" designation for a part of the U Street Corridor near Columbia Heights. The proposal collapsed under the weight of contentious press-coverage and protests from the local African American community who felt the immigrants' assertions on Shaw forced new meanings on a place that held special cultural significance to Black Washingtonians. The "Little Ethiopia" controversy had soon faded away, overshadowed by the surge of top-down redevelopment of the neighborhood. In those recent years Zenebech became a magnet for new residents and tourists savoring in the authentic Ethiopian cuisine

Tsedaye Makonnen performing Comon Ground. October 2016.
Photo courtesy of the artist.

on a budget, and so the owners initially welcomed Shaw's makeover as up-lifting for their business. But despite the restaurant's sweeping popularity, the pressures of rising taxes pushed the family into selling the property.

I offer this story as an entry point into the article that follows for two reasons. First, the role of Ethiopians in Washington, D.C.'s evolution brings to light the paradoxical position of immigrant communities as at once new city actors who prompt urban revitalization and dwellers particularly vulnerable to its dispossessions. The arc of Zenebech's opening, success, and closure captures how immigrant cultural and business activity can inadvertently prime the ground for the later stages of gentrification, and in many instances for the immigrants' own displacement. Second, the attention *Common Ground* brings to the Ethiopian placemaking practices in Shaw situates the desire for spatial belonging at the center of the immigrant experience. For transnational migrants, community is an archipelago – a constellation of places and attachments. This life of transnational affinities roots itself in a distinct sense of place that can reconcile the seemingly contradicting desires for place openness

Redevelopment of the block at T Street into apartment building with retail on the ground floor by Monument Realty. Photo by the author.

and place protection. From the immigrant perspective then, freedom of movement and place attachment are not binary opposites, despite what the flattened image of cosmopolitanism advanced by gentrification would have us think.

In this essay I argue that the unique spatial insights afforded by the immigrant position as uprooted peoples attached to multiple localities reconfigure the question of who belongs in a place and what criteria define the terms of belonging. I analyze, as a case study, Makonnen's *Common Ground* performance (2016) alongside Dinaw Mengestu's debut novel *The Beautiful Things That Heaven Bears* (2007) to argue that immigrant artistic production forms a part of a revisionist discourse on urban placemaking. The performance and the novel discussed here envision a right to the city outside the territorial registers of property and ownership, but also without recourse to the often-counterproductive discourse of authenticity and seniority.

Intervening into gentrification debates of two adjacent neighborhoods of D.C.'s Northwest quadrant – Shaw and Logan Circle – Makonnen and Mengestu theorize a triad model of a community in transition where African immigrants drift as distinct from both the longtime Black residents and the white newcomers. The power of *The Beautiful Things* and *Common Ground*, I propose, rests in the imaginative thrust of their

approaches. The immigrant experience of place in these texts is never cozy or stable, but rather from the beginning fractured, and often wrapped in trauma. And yet, this urban art extracts from the challenges of immigrant placemaking a vision of commitment and being together in the city that could work across difference. These artistic attempts to imagine placemaking without territoriality can be understood alongside Doreen Masssey's analysis of place as a constellation of trajectories: "What is special about place is not some romance of a pre-given collective identity or the eternity of the hills. Rather, what is special about place is precisely that throwntogetherness, the unavoidable challenge of negotiating a here-and-now"[1]. For Massey and the artists alike, in the spatial negotiation of multiplicity that the city forces upon its dwellers, a truly democratic "throwntogetherness" is always spectral – a horizon that may never be reached; and yet it is crucial that this phantom is constantly worked towards, that it organizes and drives collective efforts.

Building upon the scholarly enthusiasm for placemaking initiated by Lynda Schneekloth's and Robert Shibley's *Placemaking: The Art and Practice of Building Communities*, and later advanced by scholars including David Harvey and Arjun Appadurai in their theories of place production and reproduction, I focus on two aspects of placemaking: its connection to collective identity and a sense of community belonging and the ethical slippages between place shaping and replacement (devaluing existing places and their histories in the name of progress and development).[2] While both placemaking and territoriality refer to the practices of assigning shared meaning to physical spaces, and both signal persistent attachment of peoples material environments, throughout this article I situate placemaking as a broader umbrella term encompassing territoriality. In other words, I understand territoriality to be a particular exercise of placemaking – one but not the only way of making places meaningful. In the words of Geographer Robert Sack "territoriality is an attempt by an individual or group to affect, influence, or control phenomena, or relationships, by delimiting and asserting control over a geographic area. This area will be called territory"[3]. Already this well-worn definition emphasizes control and border drawing as fundamental features of territoriality. Such assertions of control over places rely on regulation of social interactions and resources; they also delineate group identity through "us" vs. "them" frameworks. Territoriality as a placemaking strategy then is all about restriction and exclusion. David Delaney links this centrality of boundaries in territorial claims on place to the uneven power dynamics of race, class, and gender – from Jim Crow segregation to the policing of

female bodies in urban public spaces: "territoriality can be thought of as the assignment of a particular sort of meaning to lines and spaces in order to control, at first glance, determinable segments of the physical world. Upon further reflection, however, it is clear that the object of control are social relationships and the actions and experiences of people"[4]. This leads me to the diaspora theorists for whom the concept of territoriality is tainted by the legacies of colonialism and other violent forms of spatial domination. Katherine McKittrick and Clyde Woods, for instance, reject territoriality as a dominant approach to demarcating belonging rooted in the histories and practices of conquest and discourses of ownership. In *Black Geographies and the Politics of Place*, they articulate the potential of Black geographic narratives and lived experiences to move our collective understandings of place outside of territoriality: "Inserting Black geographies into our worldview and understanding of spatial liberation and other emancipatory strategies can perhaps move us away from territoriality, *the normative practice of staking a claim to a place*."[5] My notion of immigrant placemaking is animated by their understanding of Black diasporic struggles as contests to territorial understanding of belonging. The editors rely on the comprehensive definition of African Diaspora borrowed from Carol Boyce Davies – understood to encompass the dispersal of African populations through voluntary, forced, and induced migrations. And yet the collection routes Black geographies largely through the African American/Canadian experience. I expand the framework of Black Geographies by centering *immigrant* Black geographies as a modality for the American city research. A combination of Black identity, non U.S. birth, and the intimate knowledge of place loss informs how migrants negotiate their placemaking practices and sense of belonging in African American spaces undergoing class and racial resegregation.

That is not to say immigrant placemaking is free from the logics of spatial domination. In fact, appropriation of social space as a common strategy for immigrant empowerment has been well registered in American immigrant literature; Paule Marshall's novel *Black Girl, Brownstones* offers the most notable example. The narrative of socio-economic uplift that immigrants are pressured to pursue is itself entrenched in "social systems that reward us for consuming, claiming, and owning things – and in terms of geography this means that we are rewarded for wanting and detracting from 'our place' in the same ways that those in power do (often through displacement of others)"[6]. In the era of creative placemaking and urban "revitalization" that appropriates the consumable and marketable elements of ethnic culture, immigrant communities often become

unwitting foils to gentrification and its displacements.[7] Immigrant place-making can too become captive to territoriality. But I argue that the immigrant perspective might also offer a crucial framework to rethink placemaking outside of the double-bind of territorial exclusions: not only the treatment of land as a commodity that McKittrick and Woods have in mind, but also its most common counterargument – seniority in place as grounds for belonging. When communities face the type of urban re-vitalization that assumes economic power as the only legitimate practice of claiming place, they often turn toward their history and longevity in place as a strategy of protection. This strategy materializes in calls for the closure and fortification of the neighborhood from "outsiders". But such a line of defense has less value for immigrant groups economically vulner-able to urban displacement. Themselves cultural outsiders, immigrants cannot stake legitimacy by invoking place seniority in any straightfor-ward way.

Scholarship of the Global South includes voices that reclaim the con-cept of "territoriality" as a radical and liberating counterforce to the com-modification and exploitation of land by global capitalism. For instance, Arturo Escobar's theory of ontological defense of territories examines territorial struggle of African communities in Colombia and their use of what he terms "ancestral mandate" against "the neoliberal globalizing project of constructing ONE world".[8] While Escobar positions his the-ory as transferable to urban contexts in the Global North, territoriality becomes a problematic framework when we consider the question of the right to place from the *American immigrant* perspective. In the context of U.S. immigration politics, defense of territories through the evocations of ancestrality/seniority and anti-globalization sentiments too often trans-lates to xenophobia, racism, and anti-immigrant hostility to be perceived as the right shield against urban capitalism. The immigrant framework begs then a new rhetoric and practice of community protection against the pressures of gentrification; one that makes space for mobile identities and grants validity to place attachment without reverting to essentialism, stigmatization of outsiders, and calls for neighborhood impermeability.

Toward a global city

I view the cluster of Ethiopian urban art discussed in this essay also as a revision of the conventional narratives that chronicle the capital city. Makonnen and Mengestu extend the work of earlier cultural initiatives that aimed at altering the accounts of Washington, D.C. as a non-im-migrant Black city. Such efforts include the 1994 Anacostia Museum

exhibition *Black Mosaic*. Featuring groups from Central and South America and the Caribbean, the exhibit looked at how immigration of people of African descent into the Washington Metropolitan area has broadened the network of D.C.'s Black community, and how their placemaking connected the nation's capital to other places in the western hemisphere. Much has been written about the place and prospects of the multinational Latinx community in the region.[9] Insufficient critical attention, however, has been paid to the role of groups from African countries specifically and Black immigrants at large in the transformation of Washington, D.C. – the capital's transition from a place resembling a Southern town in the first half of the twentieth century, to the "Chocolate City" of the postwar period, to today's position as a premiere global city.[10] Black immigrant perspective remains understudied in the scholarship of D.C.'s redevelopment even when the focus lands on the capital's shrinking Black population. Derek Hyra's well-received *Race, Class and Politics in the Cappuccino City* offers the most recent example of critical approaches that equate the city's Black culture with African American culture. The book's important analysis of D.C.'s demographic, political, and cultural shift between the 1970s and 2010 leaves out the question of ethnic differences within the city's Black diaspora. I, in turn, argue that it is crucial to consider this aggressive class and racial resegregation of Washington, D.C. in the context of shifting patterns of immigrant settlement.

D.C. began to attract foreign-born populations in the postwar period when the metro area grew through the expansion of the federal government, international organizations, and universities. These numbers increased rapidly from the 1970s when the U.S. government has resettled thousands of refugees in the region, bringing Washington's currently largest immigrant group from El Salavdor.[11] As East Africans, Caribbean Islanders, and South and Central Americans settled in the African American neighborhoods of Northwest D.C. by the 1980s, the immigrants' efforts to assert their presence in the quarter caused tensions with the existing community; the "Little Ethiopia" controversy outlined in my opening section is only one example of such a contest. Eventually, many of the initial immigrants dispersed to the suburban areas in Maryland and Virginia. And while some moved to the suburbs as an expression of their middle-class success, a great many were simply priced out of the increasingly desirable urban core.[12] Ethiopian settlement in the city followed a similar timeline and pattern. The first instances of Ethiopian migration into D.C can be traced to the 1960s, but it was not until the 1980s that

groups of political refugees fleeing the Ethiopian Red Terror began to concentrate in Adams Morgan and Columbia Heights, and subsequently in Shaw/ U Street. While there always has been controversy surrounding the numbers of Ethiopian immigrants in the city, by the early 2000s the community had created a commercial nexus of restaurants, cultural organizations, and other small businesses, marking the metro-area in those decades as a home to the largest community of Ethiopians outside of the African continent. Comparably to the gentrification-induced displacement of Latinos from Mt.Pleasant/Adams Morgan neighborhood previously knowns as El Barrio/Barrio Latino, the clusters of Ethiopian communities in Northwest D.C. have dispersed under the economic pressures of revitalization throughout the suburban areas of Silver Springs and Alexandria.[13]

Finding Common Ground

Tsedaye Makonnen's performances challenge this cultural erasure and systematic disappearance from the D.C. canvas the immigrant communities of her childhood. In *Common Ground* in particular, the artist carried out the coffee ritual from immigrant homespaces to the gentrifying pavements of D.C.'s historic Black Broadway to critique the scope and speed of recent changes in this N.W. neighborhood. But the tellingly named performance also aimed at staging a coming together of three estranged micro-cultures of Shaw – the natives, the immigrants, and the newcomers. *Common Ground* emerged in collaboration with children from the Shaw Community Ministry – a longstanding institution serving the area's African American community. Children participated in the performance by inviting the area's newest residents into a conversation about the neighborhood and its meanings. Configured this way, the immigrant cultural practice emerged as a facilitator of dialogue, if not yet a coming together, between representatives of the area's oldest and its most recent community.

   In the warmth of early Washingtonian fall, Makonnen immersed the neighborhood in a two-hour-ritual, silently guiding the audience through the stages of roasting and grinding the beans, then steeping and sharing the coffee. Her jebane pot sat on a blanket of fresh-cut flowers and grass. She was clothed in white flowing cotton, her feet bare, her head veiled. Emahoy Tsegue-Maryam Guebrou's instrumental hymn of displacement "The Homeless Wanderer" and "Homesickness" played softly in the background. Makonnen did not perform alone. Other black women and children conducted a series of ritual-based and community-building gestures to complement the uniting power of the ceremony. As one of

the performers filled the air with burning incense, and another sprinkled ground cinnamon, cloves, and cardamom, the Ethiopian goods penetrated the air, buildings, and the ground they walked on. Alongside the women, a group of children handed out free cups of coffee inviting passersby into a discussion of their relationship with Shaw. Children attempted to spark the conversation with questions that included: "What do you love about the neighborhood?", "how are the changes in this neighborhood affecting you?", "did you know I too live in the neighborhood?"

The use of Ethiopian exports and the choice of music emerging out of exile invoke the dispersal of African people, resources, and cultures, drawing connections between the coerced migrations of African diaspora and the experience of displacement wrought by contemporary urban revival. With the backdrop of D.C.'s revamped streets, the bodies of black and brown performers – including both Black immigrants and African Americans – became a proxy for the people and cultural histories of the city buried or commodified under the weight of mixed-use developments like The Shay. Invoking Shaw's multiethnic Black history and its reputation as a springboard neighborhood for immigrant communities, *Common Ground* interrupted the usual terms of order in the area now reimagined as whiter and wealthier by the recent developments. Through its creative affirmation of the right to Shaw for the communities systematically removed from this new image, *Common Ground* posed a challenge to the capitalist registers of property and ownership, which grant a place to only those who can afford to pay the increased rent prices or patronize the new establishments. But since the story of the haves and the have-nots in the U.S. context is always already wrapped up in the politics of race, the performance also challenged racial resegregation at the heart of contemporary tactics of urban revival.

As a glistening symbol of D.C.'s gentrification, Compass Coffee provided a powerful backdrop to Makonnen's artistic commentary. The coffee shop is embedded in The Shay – a luxury apartment building and retail hub stretching through Florida and 8th street. Since The Shay was erected on an empty lot, the development did not physically displace any existing businesses or buildings. It did, however, take over a public space previously utilized for a local flea market. Its pricing and marketing tactics are also representative of the kind of urban "progress", which leaves long-term residents feeling like they no longer belong. The market-rate apartments above the retailers are priced as high as $5,000 per month for a one-bedroom apartment. As many other developments, The Shay managed to claim a "mixed-income" status for offering a handful of

Inclusionary Zoning (IZ) units. This proposal currently translates to a scant offer of seven units at 80% of Area Median Income (**AMI**) – six studios and one two-bedroom apartment. ("IZ – Public Dashboard") The unit-sizes themselves target a very specific demographic. But even if one sets aside the issue of livable space, the price tag on these "affordable" units is still out of the financial reach of most families in the area. The AMI metric used to calculate affordability of housing and to determine tax cuts for developers considers metro area's all-encompassing Median Income (which in the case of D.C. includes some of the wealthiest districts in the country – Fairfax and Montgomery counties). Since lower income neighborhoods like Shaw earn only a fraction of the Washington, D.C.'s metro area's income, such calculation system provides a grossly skewed definition of affordability.[14] Alongside monetary barriers, The Shay's self-representation has been equally excluding. The property marketing team has been strikingly blunt about the class and racial profile of the community they envision as the future of Shaw; they advertised The Shay's "modern mindset" and "evolved style of life" with a poster that alienated most of the neighborhood's native community. The infamous "She Has Arrived" banner towering over the streets featured a woman styled a'la Marie Antoinette with a white-powdered face and a peruke, gazing over the area with crystal blue eyes.

When I met with Tsedaye to talk about her performances, D.C.'s Ethiopian community, and the role both arts and immigration play in the city's gentrification, we walked by the sites where she performed *Common Ground* nearly a year earlier. The artist talked about the "invisible border" that separates the block of The Shay from the southern parts of the neighborhood. Many of the local Black children with whom she works at the Shaw Community Center had never before crossed over to where the Shay is located. By centering their presence, *Common Ground* created an opportunity to span this invisible border and offered the children a platform to declare "Shaw is my home too". The ceremony became a site of joy and place keeping for those young residents who otherwise battle feelings of community loss and environmental alienation – -what Derek Hyra terms "cultural displacement".[15] Not only did *Common Ground* allow the children freedom of movement through a space they feel as increasingly out of reach, but it also empowered them to assert a voice in the discussion of Shaw's future. The responsibility to approach bystanders and spark a conversation encouraged the children to not merely enter but actually create discussions about their neighborhood community – to proactively imagine the more inclusive futures they want to see.

The power of *Common Ground* rests in channeling these placemaking practices through a ceremony and a performance format that is most of all about coming together. The traditional Ethiopian coffee brewing is a community-keeping ritual and a symbol of hospitality; it gathers neighbors to discuss everything from gossip to politics. The unspoken rules and proceedings of serving and accepting the drink rely on mutual respect between the host and the guests. Public reenactment of this communal ritual invited members of Shaw's micro-cultures to similarly pause, consider, and discuss what it means to live together, and what it would take to make this "throwntogetherness" work across distinct commitments and desires toward the neighborhood. The performance draws upon the traditions of Tsedaye's upbringing as the child of Ethiopian refugees who have remade their lives in D.C; a community that is familiar with both the pain of displacement, anti-black racism, and the position of cultural outsiders in local African American spaces. This Black immigrant perspective allows Makonnen to advocate for the neighborhood's weaving together of cultures. Her defense of the neighborhood's Black history routes this past through the lens of cultural crossroads and global mobilities. In this framework, Shaw's cultural significance is also about the neighborhood's openness – its track record as a space of opportunity for refugees and other displaced communities seeking to restore their sense of place and belonging. But her performance embraces the porousness of the neighborhood with cultural sensitivity. The power of *Common Ground* rests also in an understanding that immigrant claims to Shaw should remain mindful of the city's African American history. Collaborating with the Shaw Community Center and including the children as performers and dialogue leaders was crucial in that respect.

It is through this participatory format that the performance at once creates a community and refuses its fixity, resisting what Bruce Robbins calls "romantic localism" – the use of essentialist notions of place to ground claims for local belonging.[16] The ceremony was inclusive also of the patrons of Compass Coffee and the neighboring shops, inviting them to partake in the ritual and the discussion. This blurring of lines between the performers and the audience opened up the space also to the newer residents to join in the collective envisioning of a more equitable future for Shaw. This approach attempted to channel Shaw's eclectic community away from reinforcing preexisting class and racial antagonisms – divisions, which deem communities weak and hence vulnerable to the type of urban redevelopment that leaves most everyone worse off. Insistent on the role of place not as a commodity but an intrinsic part of our humanity,

Common Ground pulled all three groups toward a productive negotiation of their commitments to Shaw as a site of life, not profit.

The artistic goal of creating moments of meaningful interaction across established social divides did not come without challenges. *Common Ground* forced each group into the productive discomfort of facing individual and collective barriers that range from civic disengagement to feelings of resentment or defensiveness. Many of the Compass Coffee patrons, for instance, refused the conversation even though it came from a child and with free coffee. For the children, overcoming a sense of unbelonging bred by these refusals served as a crucial exercise in the performance. The newer residents who did partake in the ceremony, on the other hand, had to move past the feelings of indifference – a mistaken idea that the changes do not concern them – or a sense of being attacked and implicated as the wrongdoers.

Through these challenges, *Common Ground* made perceptible how despite the promises of contemporary urban revitalization, income and racial diversification of an area in itself does not guarantee productive interactions across difference. Much will, work, and imagination is needed to move closer to a true neighborhood integration. I propose that artistic production plays a crucial role in such a placemaking project. Tsedaye Makonnen's performance harnesses the immigrant sense of place to facilitate this aspirational being in togetherness. Driven by a similar imaginative impulse, Dinaw Mengestu's debut novel further nuances the barriers of division that gentrification both breeds and feeds off in search of an approach to place that could work across difference.

The Things They Carry into Diaspora

The Beautiful Things That Heaven Bears writes the Ethiopian refugee perspective into the transformation story of Northwest Washington, D.C. The novel centers the experience of Sepha Stephanos who flees Red Terror violence of the 1970s Addis Ababa. Sepha's immigration path in the U.S. takes him from the initial settlement among the Ethiopian community in Silver Springs suburbs to the ownership of a run-down grocery store in Logan Circle, at the time a disinvested African American neighborhood in downtown Washington D.C. When the area gentrifies some decades later, Sepha faces eviction and the likelihood of being displaced back to the suburban fringes that the novel recasts as a scrappy edge rather than a manicured symbol of middle-class aspirations. From the opening pages, the protagonist's sense of place fluctuates not only between Ethiopia and the U.S., but also among the different communities that converge and

clash in Logan Circle at the cusp of gentrification. Sepha shields himself from the potential pain of loss by remaining on the sidelines of communal, social, and civic practices. But his withdrawal from affiliation is never complete. In fact, "we" rather than "I is the dominant pronoun of the narrative and the privileged form of self-identification as Sepha forms attachments and slides between the often conflicting allegiances. As noted by Benedicte Ledent, this collective designation refers interchangeably to the African refugees in Washington, D.C., the community of immigrant shopkeepers, the Logan Circle black low-income residents, and the area's newcomers.[17] The shifting referents of the first person plural pronouns "we" and "our" convey the very predicament of Sepha's incomplete belonging to any single community. His placemaking has to negotiate distinct and often clashing migrant positions: Ethiopian refugee, immigrant shopkeeper, and a cultural outsider of the new African diaspora in historically African American spaces. In what follows, I outline how each one of these immigrant perspectives prompts to imagine a third space of possibility outside property-seniority binary. In my analysis of the text's challenge to this double-bind dynamic of territoriality, I read The *Beautiful Things* for its hopeful and imaginative undertones rather than dystopian sensibilities that dominate in the critical approaches to the novel.

Since its publication in 2007, critics have read Mengestu's novel as an insightful commentary on Black identity, the immigrant condition, and conspicuous consumption.[18] Far less attention, however, has been granted to the textured urbanity of the text. With the notable exception of Sarah K. Harrison's chapter in *Waste Matters*, scholars have largely relegated the issue of gentrification in Mengestu's novel to a mere context, "a first layer of reading".[19] I argue that it is crucial to engage *The Beautiful Things* also as a Washington, D.C. novel and a novel of gentrification; in other words, to consider Mengestu's debut as part of the tradition of immigrant city writing. I distinguish here between novels set in cities – which constitutes the greater deal of American immigrant fiction – and the more restrictive category of a city novel as a genre where, to use Wendy Griswold's phrasing, "the city itself is paramount".[20] In city novels, immigrant authors articulate the relationship between the American urban realities and the immigrant condition as mutually constitutive. The city is then not merely a preferred setting for the immigrant plots but an immigrant plot in its own right. The double play on the word "plot" (as a piece of land and a storyline) is key here. In the genre of immigrant city novels, the American city figures as a land innately immigrant – a space of cultural convergence built on and defined by migratory movements, and a spatial-symbol of

opportunity for various newcomers. By the same token, the American city has captivated the creative imagination of immigrant writers as an indispensable forum for immigrant negotiations of social, political, cultural, and affective belonging. While extending this treatment of urban environments as exceptional if by no means felicitous, *The Beautiful Things* also develop a distinct lexicon of urban maladies.

At the forefront of the protagonist's immigrant experience is the issue of repeated displacement caused by the rise of Washington D.C.'s downtown and redevelopment of the neighboring minority areas in the 1990s. *The Beautiful Things* narrates the aggressive revival of Logan Circle and the subsequent dispossession of the neighborhood residents from the perspective of transnational dislocation. The encroaching eviction sends Sepha back to the original trauma of fleeing the country after the murder of his father by the military regime of Mengistu Haile Mariam. Thinking about gentrification alongside the displacements of war, Mengestu's novel exposes both the danger and the fragility of placemaking that relies on territorial claims. The circumstance of Sepha's exile reveal that under violent political conditions, property ownership and other conventional means of staking a right to place become irrelevant to personal and familial safety. Ripped away from his home in the aftermath of the Ethiopian revolution, the protagonist embodies the scattering of hundredths of thousands of people from the Ethiopian territory after the Provisional Military Administrative Council (PMAC) known as Derg deposed Haile Selassie and grabbed power in 1974. Leading a government-sanctioned campaign of political repression, Mariam has become most notorious for the declaration of *nasa emit*, or "kill freely," in February 1977 against anyone suspected of anti-revolutionary tendencies and/or opposition to the regime. These indiscriminate mass killings conducted mostly in the urban centers became known as Qey Shibir – Ethiopian Red Terror. Student organizations – alongside landowners – formed one of the main arms of opposition to the Derg.[21] In the months before his coerced departure from Ethiopia, Sepha witnessed Addis Ababa punctuated with bodies of young people killed and scattered through the city streets for their real or assumed association with student groups. What sets in motion the protagonist's own exile at the age of sixteen is his political involvement with Students for Democracy. When Mengistu's soldiers invade Sepha's family home in Addis Ababa, they find a stack of flyers for the student meeting, which Sepha volunteered to hand out and brought into the house. The flyers then become an excuse for the militia to batter and take away his father. And even though presumably Sepha's father would have been

killed – and Sepha's life in danger – regardless of the flyers, such trauma of brutal repercussions for teenage political involvement stifles Sepha's engagement in anti-gentrification movements during his later D.C. days. Mass displacements, humanitarian crisis, and personal tragedy are the consequences Speha comes to associate with divisive urban politics, conflict over land, and his own political involvement.

It is also the central role of land and property conflict in the Ethiopian Revolution, as well as Sepha's privileged urban upbringing in an elite intelligentsia family, that drives his later attitude towards the politics of place. Recalling his young reaction to the changed realities of Addis Ababa in the immediate aftermath of the revolution, Sepha reflects: "I remember thinking that I couldn't understand how a city that had demanded so much intimacy could turn on itself."[22] A number of similar childhood recollections of the capital city hinge on a contrast between the vibrant and moving with communal life pre-revolutionary Addis Ababa and its desolate, bloody, and tragically silent "Red Terror" counterpart. These polarized depictions draw the reader's attention to the unreliable point of view of a privileged boy that allows for such a perspective. The naive, romanticizing memory of a shielded child who yearns after the togetherness of city crowds actually reveals the dark side of Addis during Haile Selassie's rule. What young Sepha envies as intimacy appears to the reader in the dire images of urban overcrowding. The city he admires is in fact a place of stark inequality where the selected few – including Sepha's' family – live in homes with servants and guards while the rest of the Addis crowds in "tin-roof shantytowns".[23] The novelistic depictions of this unjust distribution of land invoke the peculiar history of inequality in Ethiopian urban property relations. Pretty much from the incorporation of Addis Ababa in 1886, urban land in the country was held in private ownership of a limited number of elite families. According to Daniel Weldegebriel Ambaye, the first reliable surveys of the city in the 1960s showed a progressive increase in this disparity and the failure of the Haile Selassie government to introduce effective reforms; while in 1961, 58 percent of the surveyed land was held by about seven percent of the population, five years later only five percent of the population in Addis Ababa owned 95 percent of the land in the city.[24] Almost all elite families at the time constructed rental houses for the city's poorest residents as means of investment; due to lack of proper regulations, this housing arrangement led to deplorable living conditions and the exploitation of tenants by their landlords. Similar disparities of the Haile Selassie period caused property relations to become a crucial

motivation for the February 1974 revolution. In the years leading up to the overthrow of the government, a student organization propagated the slogan "Land back to the tiller of the soil" to protest the status quo. This motto was later appropriated by the Derg to lead the final turn against the emperor. Soon after the revolution, nationalization of rural and urban land became the Derg's priority.[25] Despite some promising changes brought by the property redistribution acts of 1974 and 1975 – including significant rent cutbacks – the move towards state ownership of land resulted in the further deterioration of urban housing conditions in Addis.[26]

As an adult, Sepha holds critical views toward the urban inequalities of pre-Revolutionary Ethiopia and identifies Haile Selassie as "a tyrant not a god".[27] As a witness of the bleak consequences produced by the decades of injustice regrading people's right to place in Ethiopia, the protagonist develops a critical eye towards the inequitable approaches to city planning in contemporary D.C. However, his first-hand experience of how the Derg's regime perverted the promises of struggle for equity into years of brutal conflict, abuse, and division causes Sepha to also reject as dangerous any totalizing political activism that vilifies entire groups of people as the enemy; even if that activism is of a completely different scale and kind, as in the case of the neighborhood anti-gentrification movement. This refugee trauma could of course be read as a blindspot in the immigrant perspective, a cause of inaction, a hindrance to political engagement. I, however read Sepha's reservations as productive. There is in his anti-territorial ethos an unassuming yet unceasing search for a more sustainable approach to placemaking.

In the D.C. part of the novel Sepha occupies the position of an immigrant shopkeeper. After a short-lived career as a student and an employee at the Capitol hotel, the protagonist opens up "Logan's Market. A New *Community* Store" in pursuit of "the grand narrative of [his] life".[28] But Sepha is a negligent shopkeeper: he prioritizes reading sessions over customer service, does not uphold regular hours, neglects maintenance, and even abandons his store for the pleasure of city strolls. In her analysis of Mengestu's novel as a critique of conspicuous consumption, Dayo Olopade reads Sepha's progressive descent into bankruptcy as a narrative of initial investment in and later disillusionment with the promises of immigrant uplift understood as capitalist accumulation; Olopade recognizes anti-capitalist resistance in Sepha's business self-sabotage. This perceptive analysis prompts me to consider the novel's invitation to expand the meaning of place outside the typical rubrics of ownership.

The protagonist's attitude toward his store begs an analysis of the inner-city grocer not merely as a place of economic transactions but a node of citiness and a crossroads of communities – a site of placemaking and place-maintaining rather than claiming, owning, and consuming. The label "community store" in the very name of Sepha's shop is of importance here. I propose that the protagonist's investment in shopkeeping has from the beginning been more about the narrative of emplacement than accumulation – about establishing belonging in place and community rather than establishing oneself economically. From its inception, the idea of store ownership carried a collective meaning for Sepha and his friends and fellow African refugees – Joseph and Kenneth – who referred to the business as "our store".²⁹ As the meaning of "our" and "we" fluctuates throughout the novel, the physical location of Logan Market roots all of Sepha's relationships; it becomes his buoy of belonging, a site of the fulfilled and failed intimacies of his immigrant life in the city. The store is where he gathers with Joseph and Kenneth and where he bonds with Naomi – the eleven-year-old daughter of Sepha's white neighbor and a romantic interest Judith. It is also the junction of his relationship with the African American community, particularly the elder longtime resident Mrs. Davis. The store becomes a site where he tries to puzzle himself back together through affinity with different groups rather than via fixed belonging to any single one of them.

This affective and psychological investment in the store as a place – not merely a business – culminates in the concluding paragraph of the novel:

> I'm convinced that my store looks more perfect than ever before. I can see it exactly as I have always wanted to see it. Through the canopy of trees that line the walkway cutting through the middle of the circle is a store, one that is neither broken nor perfect, one that, regardless of everything, I'm happy to claim as entirely my own. (228)

While the "I" and "" entirely my own" seemingly pose a stark contrast to the previous communal approaches to the shop, this final reflection only borrows the markers of personal ownership to shatter the territorial conventions of claiming a place as one's own. Sepha comes to the hopeful sense of individual ownership at the end of a day when he receives the eviction notice for his store, abandons its premises for several hours, and fails to find a source of capital to save the business; a day, which – if understood in line with the logics of capital – essentially strips the protagonist of possession over the store. But the meandering and disorienting

temporality of the narrative stretches the twenty-four-hour period over several chapters and punctuates it with flashbacks to a myriad of meaningful community moments in the store. It is in these shared experiences of place that Sepha locates the importance of his store. Logan's Market becomes a site of potential thrown-togetherness as the distinct groups cross paths or even clash in the store and in Sepha's life. This narrative deferral opens the reader toward the more communal possibility of Sepha's seemingly individual place-claiming. I read the protagonist's unwarranted optimism and refusal to accept the existing conditions of his looming eviction as an act of imaginative audacity rather than descent into delusion. To reinterpret the notion of ownership through collective belonging – "regardless of everything" – is to challenge the treatment of place as a commodity.

But the immigrant shopkeeper is also a contentious figure in the history of urban community relations; along with the commercial presence that various immigrant groups have developed across American inner cities throughout the twentieth century – from New York City to Los Angeles – came tensions with the existing communities over the scarce resources and opportunities. In Northwest D.C. itself, many of the German and Jewish-owned businesses were left in ruin after the 1968 race riots; the destruction was fueled not only by the grief over Martin Luther King's assassination, but also by African American resentment of some white immigrant business owners who treated black patrons as second-class citizens. *The Beautiful Things* negotiates the baggage of this fraught history of urban relations between immigrant shopkeepers, as cultural outsiders, and the African American community when tensions over the changing hue and price tag of Logan Circle escalate toward the novel's end.[30] In the view of a series of evictions sweeping through the area, a group of local residents take to the streets; Mrs. Davis attempts to channel the energy of these impromptu protests into a structured community organizing against displacement. To obtain formal legitimacy for their cause, she assembles the first official meeting of The Logan Circle Community Association. However distinct in tactics, the protest and the community gathering align in their antagonism toward newcomers. The formal meeting hinges on an us/them division no less than the spontaneous shouts of the protesters; both assuming the white and monied new residents as the acting force of displacement – the cause of gentrification rather than one of its manifestations. It is important to note here that the historic Logan Circle Community Association exercised the exact opposite political agenda toward urban development. Formed in 1972, the

organization consisted of newer monied homeowners who led a beauti-
fication and crime-fighting campaign that in effect alienated and even-
tually displaced many older low-income residents; their activity centered
fierce anti-prostitution efforts, and later expansion of the historic district
by purchasing and restoration of Logan Circle's famed mansions.[31] Today,
it gathers mainly white residents and organizes to advance the economic
viability of the neighborhood.[32] By the means of this counter-factuality,
Mengestu exposes the ease with which anti-gentrification movements can
replicate the very patterns of exclusion they critique in the type of urban
renewal that drives racial and class resegregation. An outsider himself,
Sepha struggles to place himself within such framework of neighborhood
defense. His is not the experience of straightforward categories of belong-
ing. Mrs. Davis' interpolates Sepha as one of the locals. Stephanos him-
self, however, holds on to the sidelines of the conflict, reflecting during
the last of such encounters about his unbelonging to Logan Circle and his
ambiguous role in its recent changes:

> I was in no position, though, to say what was right or wrong. I was not one
> of "these people", as Mrs. Davis has just made clear to me. I hadn't forced any-
> one out, but I had never really been a part of Logan Circle either, at least not
> in the same way Mrs. Davis and most of my customers were. I had snuck into
> the neighborhood as well. I had used it for its cheap rent, and if others were
> now doing the same, then what right did I have to deny them? (p. 189).

As the protagonist's run-down store does not comport well with
the neighborhood's revamped image, his future too grows precarious
amidst the impeding changes. Being Black and economically vulnerable
connects his fate in Logan Circle closer to the concerns of his African
American neighbors and customers than the white affluent newcomers.
But the language of closure and fear of outsiders propagated by the Logan
Circle anti-displacement movement alienates Sepha's immigrant identi-
ty. Their insistence on seniority in place as the only legitimate claim to
belonging in the neighborhood excludes the city's new African Diaspora
– the "we" that aligns Sepha with Joseph and Keneth and his family in
Silver Springs. Sepha refuses to proclaim wrongness of the new migrant's
presence in the neighborhood. The idea of policing borders and denying
others the right to remake their lives wherever they find fit, sits uneasily
with an immigrant business owner who himself had sought refuge and
opportunity in this already existing community. To support the logic of
right to place promoted in the meetings and protests would deem also

his being in Logan Circle illegitimate. While without the buying potential of "these people", he also drifts outside the neighborhood's African American cultural history and collective memories. In his being in the place but not of the place – not "a part of" and "in no position to" – the metaphors of rottenness and steadiness authorizing Mrs. Davis's plea are not available to Sepha. Sepha remains outside of the established practices and discourses of place claiming that gentrification debates often figure as the only option; neither property ownership nor asserting a history in place through the discourse of seniority appear as viable options to the immigrant protagonist living at the brink of poverty. But the novel is not defeatist. *The Beautiful Things* exposes the barriers of divisive politics of place to ask: how can those who feel wronged build bridges with those they perceive as wrongdoers for the future of more equitable and inclusive cities? With all those emotions at play, how can we defend a community's right to preservation of place, its cultures and histories, without falling back on exclusion and compromising the right to movement and border-crossing?

Thinking gentrification alongside immigrant displacement and place-making, *The Beautiful Things* expands the notions of the right to the city beyond commodity value while also making place for mobile identities. The novel pushes against the assumption that deems the defense of community and place attachment irreconcilable with celebration of migrant mobility and openness. For a refugee defending his adopted neighborhood against the pressures of gentrification, sense of place security is about freedom of movement that encompasses both the right to mobility and the right to remain in place. This perspective challenges the perceived binary between arguments for place permeability and place protection – the totalizing notions of what Doreen Massey terms "the romance of bounded place and the romance of free flow".[33]

Like Makonnen's performances, the novel prompts its readers to think comparatively and transnationally about the seemingly district experiences of displacement – exile and urban dispossession – to draw attention to the systemic rather than individual nature of changes in D.C. The issue of some people moving into a neighborhood and others moving out is just a visible effect of a process that involves developers backed by corporate capital and requires the complicity of the local government –-intentional and systemic planning that extends to decades of racist real estate policies and politics. This focus on the systemic problems with contemporary urban development that in the end makes most all city dwellers worse off moves away from the perils of division.

To this end, the novel offers a set of spatial analogies shape shifting D.C. into Addis[34]. One such parallel occurs toward the plot's end, when someone plants a brick in Judith's car as a message implicating her fault in the recent evictions and to prompt her to leave Logan Circle. The neighborhood gossip immediately imagines young African American men as responsible for the property damage. On the evening of this incident, Sepha observes the ritual of corner mingling in front of his store and reflects on the possibility of investment in place as a shared and potentially uniting rather than divisive aspiration:

> I couldn't imagine any of them marching down the middle of the street armed with bricks. We all essentially wanted the same thing, which was to feel that we had a stake in shaping and defining what little part of the world we could claim as our own. Boys even younger than the ones standing outside had fought and killed one another all over Addis for that exact reason and they were at it again now throughout more of Africa than even Joseph, Kenneth, and I cared to acknowledge. At least here, in America, they had this corner to live their lives as they pleased, and if a few of them took to throwing bricks though windows, then we could not judge them.[35]

The aphoristic quality of the second sentence about the importance of place security in human experience seduces the reader to open up to the claims that follow. But what follows is not to be taken at face value. By the paragraph's end, the elegant poetic voice asks to excuse violence in the name of the right to place. The unapologetic and beautifully articulated need to feel invested in place and included in shaping its fate clashes against the appeal to accept force, cruelty, and division as the natural means of obtaining and preserving that right. Throwing bricks in protests is of course unlike the ongoing brutality and indiscriminate mass killings that came to define Ethiopia's post-revolutionary era. But the passage identifies the principle of territoriality driving both conflicts as shared and dangerous. Mengestu harnesses the dissonance between the meaningfulness of place and the instances of violence that this attachment can breed to prompt the reader to ponder the shortcoming of territoriality – to question the violent logic of claiming place through siege, ownership, or barring; and finally, to reflect on what it would take to conceive of claim on place that does not revert to violence or exclusion.

The divided infrastructure of housing activism in Northwest D.C. embodies the challenge of forging allegiances that could reconcile multiple, often clashing, needs and preferences. The previously mentioned Logan

Circle Community Association represents mostly white affluent residents and their efforts to increase property value in the area. In contrast, the Shaw-based Organizing Neighborhood Equity (ONE D.C.) consists mainly of low-income African American members organizing for true affordability and equitable development.[36] Due to linguistic differences, the local Latinx communities form their own associations with similar housing justice agendas. Even with shared interest then, unity and collaboration are not a given. As alluded to in the introductory story concerning the Little Ethiopia petition, the inbetweenness of immigrant communities along with the appropriation of ethnic culture by developers further complicates the racial and class binary in the debates over urban space. Mengestu and Makonnen offer a clear engagement with barriers that deem a truly democratic thrown-togetherness in cities to still appear as an unattainable futurity. But they also reach beyond such critical engagement and gesture toward the importance of imagining that which is not yet. When faced with contentious issues like gentrification, such exercises in critical, but hopeful, thinking are indispensable to model a new discourse of solidarity. Unbounded by the restrictions of realism, art has the freedom to push beyond the limits of perceived possibilities. The Ethiopian-American artists who appear in *Immigrant Cityscapes* make use of their imaginative prowess to envision the immigrant perspective as a step toward, not away from, more equitable, united urban futures. Through performative and literary creations they formulate a migrant sense of place – an approach to urban communities defined by the productive paradox of a need for permeability of borders on the one hand, and a desire to protect neighborhood communities from displacement on the other. This migrant sense of place must be taken seriously in the discussions of urban revitalization because its imaginative audacity eschews place-claiming fundamentalisms of both ownership and seniority that foreclose possibilities of cross-group integration. The central question occupying this essay is about the unique insights immigrant cultural production brings to bear on the discussion of America's urban affordability crisis. *Common Ground* and *The Beautiful Things* are rooted in the specificities of Washington, D.C. – the exceptional position of D.C. as a district, the city's government profile, its African American history, and its recent transition into a global city. It is an important part of Mengestu's and Makonnen's projects to revise the established accounts of the nation's capital as a non-immigrant Black city. But the framework of migrant sense of place through which they revise these conventional narratives of D.C. is applicable to other urban contexts. The insights afforded by the

unique position of Ethiopians in Shaw/U Street could be read alongside the role of Mexican immigrants in the latest expansion of East Harlem's Latinidad, or the efforts of Miami's Haitian community to preserve their presence and cultural impact in the hyper-gentrifying Little Haiti/ Lemon City. This openness toward a comparative trans-urban framework situates the here locally rooted question of immigrant placemaking in lieu of gentrification as a broader issue for American city research.

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Notes

1   Doreen Massey, *For Space,* 140.
2   For a comprehensive overview of the history of placemaking theories, see: Edward Relph, *Place and Placelessness.*
3   Robert David Sack, *Human Territoriality: Its Theory and History*, 19.
4   David Delaney, *Race, Place, and the Law,* 6.
5   Katherine McKittrick and Clyde Adrian Woods, *Black Geographies and the Politics of Place,* 16.
6   McKittrick and Woods, 12.
7   Because of the recent use of the "creative placemaking" concept by developers to attract the monied creative classes to urban centers, placemaking as a theoretical framework has fallen out of the graces of many anti-gentrification activists, scholars and artists. Many of them urge to focus instead on placekeeping or placeguarding. See the work of Stephen Pritchard.
8   Arturo Escobar, "Thinking-Feeling with the Earth: Territorial Struggles and the Ontological Dimension of the Epistemologies of the South, 20.
9   There is much to be said about the literary representation of the LAtinx-D.C. connection in the work of Mario Bencastro. Specifically, his 1998 novel *Odyssey to the North* narrates a Mount Pleasant and Adams Morgan of the 1980s as barrio Latino through the story of a Salvadoran immigrant named Calixto. Important analysis of the Latinx presence in Washington D.C.can be found in the work of Terry Repak, Olivia Cadaval, and Gabriella Modan.
10   Due to the "white flight" from urban core into suburbs in the postwar period, Washington D.C. became the first major U.S. city that was predominately Black. In that period it has become known as "Chocolate City".
11   Gabriella Modan, *Turf Wars: Discourse, Diversity, and the Politics of Place.*
12   Olivia Candaval, *Creating a Latino Identity in the Nation's Capital: The Latino Festival***.**
13   See: Solomon Getahun, *History of Ethiopian Immigrants and Refugees in America, 1900-2000: Patterns of Migration, Survival, and Adjustment.;* and Elizabeth Chaco, "Identity and Assimilation Among Young Ethiopian Immigrants in Metropolitan Washington"
14   "Save McMillan Park" campaign serves as one example http://www.savemcmillan.org/legal/
15   Derek Hyra, *Race, Class, and Politics in the Cappuccino City,* 128.
16   Robbins Bruce, *Cosmopolitics: Thinking and Feeling Beyond the Nation*, 3.
17   Bénédicte Ledent, "Reconfiguring the African Diaspora in Dinaw Mengestu's The Beautiful Things That Heaven Bears",107–118.
18   See respectively: Chude-Sokei Louis. "The Newly Black Americans: *African immigrants and black America."*; Irr, Caren. *Toward the Geopolitical Novel : U.S. Fiction in the Twenty-First Century;* Olopade, Dayo. "Go West, Young Men: Conspicuous consumption in Dinaw Mengestu's *The Beautiful Things That Heaven Bears*, as prefigured by V. S. Naipaul's *A Bend in the River.*"
19   Ledent, 110.
20   Wendy Griswold, *Bearing Witness: Readers, Writers, and the Novel in Nigeria,* 144.
21   Getahun, 16-45.
22   Dinaw Mengestu, *The Beautiful Things That Heaven Bears,* 167.
23   Mengestu, 165.
24   Daniel Ambaye, *Land Rights and Expropriation in Ethiopia*, 64-67.
25   UN-HABITAT, Situation Analysis of Informal Settlements in Addis Ababa, 10. mirror.unhabitat.org/pmss/getElectronicVersion.aspx?nr=2332&alt=1.
26   Gérard Prunier and Ficquet Éloi, *Understanding Contemporary Ethiopia: Monarchy, Revolution and the Legacy of Meles Zenawi,* Hurst, 2015.
27   Mengestu, 118
28   Mengestu, 147
29   Mengestu, 145
30   T*he Beautiful Things* resists the unrealistic and ahistorical expectation of solidarity imposed on black communities. As argued by Louis Chude Sokei, the nove*l* reconfigures

the dominant paradigms of African diaspora studies that assume straightforward affinity in blackness – what he identifies as "forced kinship". *See* Chude Sokei.
31   For more information about the association: http://www.logancircle.org
32   Hyra, 10.
33   Massey, 175.
34   Caren Irr and Chude Sokei discuss in details the multiple parallels the novel draws between D.C. and Addis.
35   Mengestu, 211.
36   Hyra, 10.

"Placeless People": An Interview with Lyndsey Stonebridge

Professor Lyndsey Stonebridge is the Interdisciplinary Chair in Humanities and Human Rights at the University of Birmingham. Her work focuses on twentieth-century and contemporary literature and history, Human Rights, and Refugee Studies, drawing on the interdisciplinary connections between literature, history, politics, law and social policy, and she has long been concerned with the effects of modern violence on the mind in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries (*The Destructive Element* (1998), *Reading Melanie Klein* (1998) and *The Writing of Anxiety* (2007). Her more recent research has focused on the creative history of responses to that violence (*The Judicial Imagination: Writing after Nuremberg* (2011), *Placeless People: Writing, Rights and Refugees* (2018). The interdisciplinary focus of Professor Stonebridge's work is key to her wider project to re-cast global histories of human rights and justice across a broad and comparative modern moral and political canvas, such, for example, as in her current collaborative Global Challenges project with refugees and their host communities in Lebanon, Jordan and Turkey, Refugee Hosts. She is co-editor of Oxford University Press's *Mid-Century Series*, and has held visiting positions at Cornell University and the University of Sydney. She is a regular media commentator, and tweets about literature, history, and human rights @lyndseystonebri. In 2016, *The Judicial Imagination* was awarded the *British Academy Rose Mary Crawshay Prize for English Literature* and in 2017, she was elected as a Fellow of the English Association.

In this interview, Stonebridge discusses her most recent book – *Place-less People: Writing, Rights, and Refugees* – which focuses on the creation of a new class of person in the twentieth century: the placeless people; those who cross frontiers and fall out of nation states; the refugees; the stateless; the rightless. Unlike genocide, the impact of mass displacement on modern thought and literature has yet to be recognized. For writers such as Hannah Arendt, W.H. Auden, George Orwell, Samuel Beckett, Simone Weil, and Dorothy Thompson, among others, the outcasts of the twentieth century raised vital questions about sovereignty, humanism, and the future of human rights.

How did you arrive at this project?

I wrote a book called *The Judicial Imagination* on how writers and thinkers responded to the Nuremberg and Eichmann trials and the emergence of the new human rights projects of the mid-twentieth-century. Writing that book, it became clear that the traumas of statelessness and displacement were as much, if not more, a feature of intellectual concern as genocide. As Eric Hobsbawm once pointed out, the twentieth-century was so appalling we had to invent new words to describe what we were doing to one another. One of those words was genocide, the other was statelessness. Nobody now doubts genocide is an atrocity, but statelessness and displacement were soon accepted as the moral price to be paid for a world made up of sovereign states. I wanted to track how the placeless condition emerged, and how it came to be disavowed in the years that followed. So that's how I arrived at placelessness.

You make it clear how the configuration of author, their circumstance, and how they write through that circumstance, results in a more or less Western European focus for your book. That said, the US seems to be influential for several of these authors. Perhaps keeping the focus on Hannah Arendt, I was wondering if you might speculate on how her war years in New York City might have informed her thinking on place, citizenship, and rootlessness?

A former student of Arendt's told me recently that just before she died she said regretted that the whole story of her generation of refugees had yet to be told. Her own statelessness, I think, ran through her work like, as she would have said, a thin red thread. But in the war years, it wasn't New York that informed her thinking on place, citizenship, and

rootlessness but the vexed question of Palestine. Arendt rejected any idea that identified the state with a national group, and saw in revionist Zionism a dangerous resurgence of European-style nationalism. Where the US was influential, particularly on her later thinking, was in its forgotten revolutionary legacies which, she thought, provided the conditions for an active and participatory political life, at least potentially. That said, the specters of statelessness and de-citizenship never left her. Through the fifties, during the Make America More American campaign, for example, McCarthyism, and faced with the McCarran-Walter Act, she fretted about what exclusion and restrictive immigration policies meant for American democracy. As late as 1957, she wrote: "As long as mankind is nationally and territorially organized in states, a stateless person is not simply expelled from one country, native or adopted, but from all countries – none being obliged to receive or naturalize him – which means he is expelled from humanity."

When discussing Dorothy Thompson's advocacy on behalf of Palestinian refugees, you note that she was confronted with two bitter truths: "first that the politics of brute nationalism still trumped efforts to realize a global sovereignty based on humanist principles, and that as a consequence, second, the mass displacement of entire populations was set to continue" (160). Yet she also appears to have held on to a notion of the superiority of American democracy, and as a "defender of liberal America, struggled to see why a new post-war egalitarian politics might need to embrace a more radical form of political plurality" (164). In what condition do you find these bitter truths to be truths today? And what possible forms of political plurality are imaginable?

Thompson also wrote, as early as 1938, that liberal America was "committing suicide – out of despair and a bad conscience," which has echoes of our present troubles too. In many respects Thompson was a liberal conservative who held onto the ideal of American democracy for the same reason as she clung onto the idea of natural law – she believed passionately that a moral politics was not only possible, but had to happen because it was, in a sense, divined. What she could not see well was the politics of race and nor, like many liberals, could she conceive of liberalism itself as contributing to a political problem. The "bad conscience" of liberalism has played a huge part in landing us where we are today, and is the cause for much despair, it could be said, precisely because what it is difficult for

some liberals to see is how the continued creation of social inequalities can only end in an attack on liberalism itself. There's a disavowal at the heart of our current malaise, in other words, which Thompson saw in her own time but couldn't quite grasp in terms of its long-term implications for her own beliefs.

There are, of course, many forms of political plurality possible out of this mess that we can imagine, and imagine we must. But in our current crises I think we're better off identifying and acting alongside the political pluralities that are already now organizing and building resistance. I'm thinking here of the forms of transnational emergency citizenship that are driving pro-refugee and migrant activism, as well as the new progressive green deal movement. These communities of shared interest don't cluster around nation states, popularism, or established ideologies: what they share instead is a commitment to a politics of moral action and a determination to fight ethnonationalism. I think Thompson, maybe, and Arendt, definitely, might have approved.

You refer to Edward Said's "Reflections on Exile" as a "key text in the literary history of modern statelessness because of Said's refusal to concede the political experience of mass displacement to literary humanism" (10). Yet your book feels to me like a very well-structured graduate seminar I would want to be in. How do you approach this conundrum in your teaching?

I'm glad it's a well-structured graduate seminar, and would be pleased to have you there! Said also said that we had to work towards a humanism that didn't "banalize the mutilations" of exile, dispossession, and statelessness. That imperative – to forge a humanism that does not appropriate the suffering of others for its own good, but that instead embraced the discomforts of moral and political complexity – was Said's great legacy and one, I think, that inspires many of us teaching today. So I wouldn't say it is a conundrum so much as an injunction to think and practice a different kind of being together – Paul Gilroy calls this planetary humanism. For me, as I argue in the book, that entails eschewing the easy virtues of literary humanitarianism, and the conceit that by responding to suffering aesthetically somehow excuses you from being one of the (to use Bruce Robbins' apt term) beneficiaries of that suffering.

Could you say some words about your involvement with Refugee Hosts?

Refugee Hosts is a project that examines how refugees are hosted not by nation states or big international organizations, but by communities, often made up of refugees themselves, such as the Palestinian camps in Lebanon that are hosting Syrian refugees. Working with the poet, Yousif M. Qasimyeh, we have been tracking how an "undisclosed poetics of care" (the phrase is Elena Fiddian-Qasmiyeh's) turns the placeless condition into the human condition in situations when emergency citizenship is often the only option. The project began in 2016, when I was about two-thirds of the way through writing *Placeless People* so it really played a role in how I finally came to understand statelessness and displacement as central to the dilemmas and possibilities of contemporary political morality.

I am very interested in your forthcoming *Writing and Righting: Literature in the Age of Human Rights*. What might we expect from that book?

Brevity – I hope – it's a short book that develops the themes of my classes on literature and human rights, and some of my journalism. I want to affirm how writing can help us think about rights both historically – different literatures have been part of rights conversations throughout modern history – and politically. One of the challenges for human rights just now is to re-align collective and individual agency with a political morality that demands more than humanitarian compassion. Where empathy is often the term evoked for thinking about literature's contribution to human rights, I begin instead, with Arendt, with thinking and judgment, as a preconditions for moral and political responsibility in a complicatedly hyperconnected world. I'm interested in those writers who change the terms of engagement when in comes to rights. The best writers, and the ones we might learn from today, do not confirm humanity, whatever that might mean they challenge it.

Placeless People: Writing, Rights, and Refugees is available from Oxford University Press (https://https://global.oup.com/academic/product/placeless-people-9780198797005).

Book Reviews

Eric Lott, *Black Mirror: The Cultural Contradictions of American Racism*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2017. ISBN: 9780674967717. 288 pgs. HC. $31.00

Eric Lott's *Black Mirror: The Cultural Contradictions of American Racism* (2017) engages the mirror's polyvalent representational possibilities to demonstrate how American culture signifies self in racialized terms. The book in many ways extends the argument of Lott's landmark 1993 study of nineteenth-century blackface minstrelsy, *Love and Theft*, which theorizes new frameworks for thinking about racial constructions and appropriations in U.S. cultural history. "'Blackness' in the minstrel show indeed generated a conflictual intensity, occasionally unsettling the notion to its roots," Lott argues in *Love and Theft*, adding: "We might have expected nothing less than conflicted messages from such a cultural mediator, despite the fact that minstrelsy attempted precisely to mute conflict" (*Love and Theft* 37). This terrain has been taken up forcefully by thinkers from Saidiya Hartman's vital *Scenes of Subjection* (1997) to Simone Browne's powerful recent book, *Dark Matters* (2015), both of which cite Lott's *Love and Theft*.

 Just as *Love and Theft* demonstrated how powerfully blackface minstrelsy performed a kind of "cultural work" (in the sense deployed by Jane Tompkins less than a decade earlier), *Black Mirror* carries on the groundwork of *Love and Theft*. It does so through a demonstration of an evolution of identificatory cultural processes by which those singularly "American" touchstones of individuality, agency, masculinity, and domesticity, rely

on a process that promises to complement and complete the ego-ideal while always threatening to enact or reveal a shattering of that figure in the mirror.[1] *Black Mirror* explores the supremely long Lacanian mirror stage through which U.S. culture continues to elaborate fantasies of *unheimlich* racialized doubles whose Other-ness is nothing if not entirely familiar and intimate. Freud demonstrates how crucially the uncanny operates to hide its founding genesis: fear of that which is intolerably intimate and therefore terrifying. Uncanniness also disguises itself as a property of the terrifying object when, in fact, it is more properly understood as an affective response by the terrified individual in response to an object one finds terrifying. Reflection of an object (or subject) facing a mirror and refraction of fantastic projections are, therefore, as Lacan demonstrates, part and parcel of the same identificatory processes. In this sense Lott is particularly interesting right now as we once again confront the subtle interlacings of race, gender, and class in the American cultural unconscious.

The backbone of the book emerges through post-*Love and Theft* publications that continued to explore the cultural reverberations of black minstrelsy and a critical framework voiced from the Obama moment of the 2010s when not only race but our historiographies of racialized identification were shifting not only in academic journals but also, notably, on SNL and in presidential addresses. *Black Mirror*, which presumably went to press right around the time of Trump's election and inauguration, opens and closes in an Obama moment and tells its story from that position. As a reader one yearns for the name "Trump" to cross its pages and whisper to us about our future.

Within this skeletal frame, the book's formulation of a theory of *black mirror(s/ing)* develops its critical intervention through the sections added to the collection for the production of this monograph: in Chapter One's engagement with the twenty-first century and Obama's presidency in particular; parts of Chapter Three not previously published, including outstanding readings of blackface and blackvoice in filmic and acoustic registers from *The Jazz Singer* to Barbra Streisand; and with particular brilliance in Chapter Six's analysis of the appropriation of counter-cultural signification through black mirroring in Joni Mitchell and others. Tracking the reframing of material as much as twenty years old in Lott's book only demonstrates the prescience of his earlier work on Twain, John Howard Griffin, Elvis, Bob Dylan, and Sinatra. In fact, it is interesting to think about this book as symptomatic of the gradual great (re-)

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1   Jane Tompkins, *Sensational Designs: The Cultural Work of American Fiction, 1790–1860*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1986.

awakening of American culture to our persistent return to our racialized primal scene even as we define identity, citizenship, freedom, representation, etc. in determinedly different terms every twenty years or so.

Lott elaborates perhaps the most fascinating element of this "black mirroring": the affective processes by which imaginatively constructing white selfhood embeds, or even introjects, the racial Other. This process requires the misidentification of the source of terror and the projection of a terrifying quality onto the racial Other. Continuing along familiar pathways that Lott himself helped lay down two decades earlier, *Black Mirror* demonstrates how persistently vaunted "American" qualities like masculinity, nationalism, and individualism rely on racialized identity formations even where race would seem to be entirely irrelevant. One of the most compelling elements of Lott's work has been his insistence that the appropriations of blackface, blackvoice, and black mirroring are complex and that privilege aligns differently from one artist to another from Twain to film noir to Bob Dylan to Fred Armisen playacting Obama on SNL and beyond. In this vein, Lott's extensive analysis of Joni Mitchell's evolving oeuvre is a theoretical centerpiece of this book.

Some of the book's most original moments operate along an intersectional axis, demonstrating how hegemonies of whiteness and masculinity mutually support and reproduce each other. He investigates what he terms Joni Mitchell's "blackface drag": "Traversing gender, racial, and class binaries, looking at them from both sides of the street, cruising between them as it were, Mitchell hits on the difference, or is it the sameness, of 'being' and 'having' the phallus, as Lacan's writings elaborate it. White woman and black man are twinned in the U.S. racial imaginary as threats to white masculinity – it's why their coupling is taboo, and perhaps why Mitchell wants to inhabit them both" (154). A reader cannot help but note, however, that there are very few black women in *Black Mirror*. Certainly, this is primarily because Lott's focus is precisely on white appropriative mechanisms, and so the book is concerned with the colonialist appropriations of whiteness and the narratives this spawns, as in the book's analysis of *Candyman* (dir. Bernard Rose, 1992), in which white narrative frames become spaces for reflection that splinter to refract the unconscious narratives of introjected Others.

While gendered identities are a secondary focus for Lott, and generally in relation to masculinity, the book's work provides some very suggestive grounds for a reconsideration of how black womanhood operates in the popular cultural imaginary and, in particular, what modes of identification are open to racial Others. Within a culture that hypersexualizes

blackness and makes this available for exploitation in white subject-production or different registers of trans-identification, what kinds of traction are possible for the production and representation of blackness and of black womanhood in particular? This question allows us to examine the psychic and cultural positioning of black female subjectivity and to perhaps uncover transgressive pathways through and beyond the hegemonic territories Lott's work continues to excavate and examine. Browne's project in *Dark Matters*, for example, returns to the cultural contexts of minstrelsy with Lott's earlier book in mind in examining how "the captive black female body asks us to conceptualize the links between race, gender, slavery, and surveillance" (*Dark Matters* 32).

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Anders Engberg-Pedersen (ed.). *Literature and Cartography: Theories, Histories, Genres*. **Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2017. ISBN: 9780262036740. 480 pgs. HC. $35.00**

Early in the introduction to this extravagant and weighty (in all senses of the word) collection, editor Anders Engberg-Pedersen speaks of the "ubiquity of maps in contemporary everyday culture" (2). That maps "surround us" to the extent we require a "critical cartographic literacy" (3) is the jumping off point for an edition in which maps, mapping and the mapped are examined through a range of literary and theoretical lenses. Certainly, in my own teaching and research, maps serve as a catchall metaphor for analysis, discussion and debate. My American Studies colleagues and I ask students to explore texts as if they are moving through complex written spaces and we use maps and cartographic representation as a means of developing understandings of cultural and critical contexts. The map itself is a visual text that lends itself to analysis and its aesthetics and constructedness offer plurality to the narratives we find within the pages of our set texts. What we rarely do, though, is ask ourselves why the politics and processes of the so-called "spatial turn" in our discipline have become such an everyday part of our practice and pedagogy. It is in articulating this question and posing a range of possibilities that this edition seeks to make its contribution and, mostly, it is effective in doing so.

Suitably, for a collection so focused on measuring and recording shape, the chapters are carefully organized into three discrete sections that explore "Theories and Methodologies," "Histories and Contexts," and "Genres and Themes." This means that ideas are established early on and applied, complicated and problematized in more specific contexts and exemplars as the edition unfolds. The majority of chapters are illustrated with plentiful color plates in which maps of many types sit amongst the text. The sheer range of visual material occasionally overshadows the writing and creates something of a "coffee table" impression but this is a small sacrifice to make for what is a satisfying and multi-sensory reading experience.

What is particularly interesting in the book's curation is the positioning of the chapters themselves. Ideas are often juxtaposed in adjacent contributions meaning that there is a critical and theoretical tension underpinning much of the material. In the opening section, for example, Barbara Piatti introduces and outlines her research methodology for what she terms "literary geography" (45). This process is one that provides specifics where before there have been "unmanageable number[s] of studies,

anthologies, collections of essays and even travel guides" (45) and these have only served to create ambiguity and obfuscation. Piatti makes the relationships between imagined textual spaces and their geographical analogue "visible in their fascinating intermediate status between reality and fiction" (46). This is achieved through the creation of cartographic representation that demonstrates the spatial scope of literary works such as Fitzgerald's *Tender is the Night*. The results are visually arresting and offer novel notions of what can be achieved by moving through the ambiguity of cliché and metaphor towards a tangible output. The chapter that follows, however, appears to destabilise such specificity altogether and the resultant tension makes for lively reading. Robert Stockhammer opens his chapter entitled "The (Un)Mappability of Literature" with the potentially dismissive claim that 'mapping literature is fashionable' (73). His chapter argues for a "careful critique' of 'maps that claim to cartographically represent the setting of fictional narratives" (73). This, of course, is the very process explained only a few pages earlier and the editorial decision here is both dynamic and provocative.

It is this critical and analytical tension that makes the collection frequently engaging. The sequences of oppositions, contradictions and paradoxes are highly appropriate considering the paradoxical complexity of the material itself. Cartography and mapping offer the humanities a curious double bind in that maps offer ways of reading and representing text while also being textual in their artifice and construction. This instability offers uncannily mirrored pairs of questions regarding the ways that maps offer analytical gateways to text while themselves being the object of fevered reading. An object that ostensibly offers accurate representation and a means of guidance is frequently revealed as a conduit for complex debate regarding language and epistemology. Bruno Bosteels' reading, for example, of that most noted of map commentators Jorge Luis Borges makes clever switches between the infamous and "absurd limit" (119) of maps and the lesser-discussed idea that, for Borges, the open potentialities of language mean that words themselves are cartographic tools that expend and contract as the world does too. The chapters that express and engage with such methodological fluidity are where the collection is at its strongest.

It is the moments when such open potential is not realized, however, that make the later chapters a touch disappointing. Martin Bruckner's survey of cartography in American literature, for example, poses some fascinating ideas regarding maps as a "central trope" of the "narrative form, literary genre, and the role of the literary marketplace" (325) but the

sheer historical scope of the research and the tight confines of the shortish chapter mean that suggestions and provocations never go quite far enough. They operate well as a springboard for any Americanist thinking about their own reading but perhaps some more precise parameters for the work would make for a more fully realized argument. The editor's own chapter on the "cartographies of war" is the final contribution and this is more successful. It touches on the same tensions and ambiguities detailed above and the notion that the "war map is a symbolic tool for the management of future events" (411) opens the way for analyses that always seek to address complexity. Cartography here is both strategic process and an opportunity for "metareflection on the very possibility of representing...war" (412). The open and unanswered discourse that lies in this chapter is metonymic for the strengths of this collection. As a practitioner and researcher with exploring the same discourse, this reader seeks complexity and opportunity for further debate. When this edition offers this, as it often does, it makes for a worthy and attractive companion to critical and analytical discussion.

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Eli Berman, Joseph H. Felter, Jacob N. *Shapiro with Vestal McIntyre. Small Wars, Big Data: The Information Revolution in Modern Conflict*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2018. ISBN: 9780691177076. 408 pgs. Illus. HC. $29.95

In a 1961 Pentagon meeting, a senior scientist told Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara that "while World War I might have been considered the chemists' war, and World War II was considered the physicists' war, World War III ... might well have to be considered the social scientists' war." Indeed, even in 1961 social scientists were already at the front lines of the Cold War. Agronomists, economists, anthropologists and political scientists traveled to Vietnam, where they lent their expertise to the U.S. military in an effort to find solutions to the vexing problem of insurgency. Both these social scientists and the military they partnered with displayed a great zeal for counting: crop yields, public opinion, market prices, insurgent attacks, body counts were all measured and tabulated in the hope that the data would provide an answer to the challenges posed by Vietnamese insurgents.

Even though these efforts did little to prevent American defeat in Vietnam, social scientists have proven equally enthusiastic about advising the U.S. military in the counterinsurgency campaigns of the post-9/11 wars. Perhaps the most well-known collaboration has been the ill-fated Human Terrain System – which embedded anthropologists in units deployed to Iraq and Afghanistan – but social scientists of virtually every disciplinary persuasion can be found advising commanders throughout the military chain of command.

Among these advisors are Eli Berman, Joseph Felter, and Jacob Shapiro, economists associated with the Empirical Studies of Conflict (ESOC) project at Princeton. Partnering with the U.S. military, they have conducted innovative quantitative research on the micro-foundations of conflict and attempted to provide guidance to counterinsurgency practitioners. In their new volume, *Small Wars, Big Data: The Information Revolution in Modern Conflict*, they have published their first tranche of findings. Leveraging their unique position as a halfway house between the military and the academy, they have worked to declassify vast reams of data on the conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan, while also tapping into historical databases from conflicts in the Philippines and Vietnam in order to provide a rich set of material to work with. In many ways, the volume represents an attempt to solve the problem identified by terrorism scholar Marc Sageman: that "academics understand everything but know

nothing, while government analysts know everything but understand nothing." It is clearly the fervent hope of Berman, Felter and Shapiro that practitioners will know something after reading their work.

And indeed to a great extent they succeed in this ambition. The book's key organizing idea is "information-centric" counterinsurgency, as the authors argue that contemporary asymmetric conflicts are competitions over information rather than territory. Through careful econometric analysis, they map out information flows between civilians, insurgents and the government to show how these flows affect the dynamics of violence. In doing so, they present a series of findings about what works and what doesn't in counterinsurgency. Some confirm the conventional wisdom: civilian casualties cause a decrease in support for the combatants responsible for them. Some provide a new wrinkle on what we already know: government aid projects can help decrease violence, but only when small-scale, responsive to local needs and conditional on the presence of government troops. Some are very novel: the presence of cellphone towers decreases insurgent violence, as it allows civilians to pass tips to the government with relative anonymity.

A great strength of this volume is the efforts that the authors take to make their work readable. Though the working papers with full methodological explanations are available to those who want them, the book itself is careful to explain the rationale behind the approach in layman's terms. With remarkably few exceptions, the research is very comprehensible to non-specialists, and the authors even provide useful primers on how standard social science methods like natural experiments work. As part of their effort to make their work accessible, the authors insert themselves into the narrative. They talk about themselves in the third person (and use their first names) and tell the reader about the stories behind the experiments and the data-gathering. We learn of their contacts with the Filipino military, their time spent advising General Stanley McChrystal in Afghanistan, and of their efforts to declassify information on U.S. aid in Iraq.

At times, this approach is more revealing than perhaps the authors intend it to be. In one particularly arresting passage, "Jake" is at a meeting in Kabul where he is briefing ISAF commanders on his preliminary research on how the presence of cellphone towers reduced violence in Iraq when he is approached by "a dapper American gentleman in a suit and tie" who turns out to be an executive who had spent the previous four years helping the Iraqis build their phone network. He immediately produces the business cards of senior executives at every Iraqi cellphone provider, who

in turn are all happy to talk with the research team about how they rolled out their networks. The book is full of stories of longstanding connections with military leaders paying off in helping to unlock valuable data that otherwise would never have seen the light of day.

These passages reveal both the core strength and weakness of the book. Within the parameters they have set for themselves, the authors are highly successful. They provide a series of actionable, empirically-grounded insights into insurgency that practitioners can usefully apply to their own contexts. But in doing so, they take a deliberately narrow view of conflict dynamics. Ideology and belief systems barely figure in their analysis; as is typical in economics, all actors are rational self-maximizing individuals who will use a cost-benefit analysis to guide their decision-making. Of course, there is much we can learn from this approach, but much is excluded. After all, econometric analysis deployed on a vast scale in Southeast Asia did little to prevent the United States from losing the Vietnam War (although the authors rather sniffily declare that while social science's partnership with the military gets a bad rap from its Vietnam experience, the war did produce reams of useful data). Similarly, the authors make much of their work advising the U.S. counterinsurgency effort in Afghanistan, but for all the brilliance of the young academics deployed to the COMISAF Advisory and Assistance Team, they do not seem to have been able to solve the fundamental problems of that war either. The fact that people will fight and die for ineffable things is one that cannot be captured easily by big data, but it is nonetheless true all the same.

Ultimately, this book provides a series of valuable insights into the dynamics of insurgency and a set of practical lessons for counterinsurgents about the efficacy of aid, the flow of information and the limits of coercion. What it doesn't do however is take these insights further and make clear exactly how costly and protracted these wars are likely to be. This is a book that has been written for those already immersed in such conflicts; on the question of whether or not Western states should engage in these wars in the first place, the data has seemingly little to say.

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Heather Ann Thompson. *Whose Detroit? Politics, Labor, and Race in a Modern American City*. Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2017. ISBN: 9781501709210. 259 pgs. Pbk. $ 26.95

During recent decades, scholars of diverse fields have tried to comprehend deteriorating living conditions in those American cities that once were prosperous and economically striving, but are now home to high levels of poverty and crime. With her book, Heather Ann Thompson offers an intriguing reexamination of already accepted theoretical concepts about the fate of America's inner cities by turning to Detroit. She claims that the Motor City can serve as prototype if one wants to understand what has happened to cities across the nation that, as she states, were striving with economic prosperity in the 1950s, but by the 1960s, had become "the epicenter of countless rebellions for greater racial equality and, then, by the 1980s, bastions of crime and decay" (ix). While her analysis of the once striving and now decaying urban space includes all groups, her specific focus belongs to the African American community.

For her, Detroit can serve as a microcosm that shows urban African American struggle in general throughout the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. It means, for example, that the Detroit Riots of 1967 were not just the results of a locally isolated rage of African Americans who perceived themselves as victims of ongoing police brutality and abuse and of discriminatory hiring practices by the city's motor companies, but were caused by an anger that could be found among any other urban African American community as well. Like many other Northern cities in the U.S., Detroit had received large numbers of Southern African Americans already during the First Great Migration in the early twentieth century, but experienced tremendous growths with the Second Great Migration in the early 1950s that was part of nationwide postwar promises of prosperity. Therefore, according to Thompson, it is possible that, if one wants to understand current urban decline in general, one could start by understanding Detroit.

For her analysis, Thompson offers eight chapters that all follow an intriguing organization: she uses the court case of James Johnson Jr., an African American 35-year-old autoworker who faced murder charges in 1970 for killing three people in his workplace, and starts every chapter with a specific aspect of Johnson's life, be it his early childhood, his later migration from the South to Detroit in the 1950s, his hopes for meaningful employment, his mistreatment by supervisors and line managers, his trial, and his sentencing. With the help of these specific excerpts, she

moves to an in-depth analysis of a variety of social, political, and economic discriminatory conditions African Americans in general had to deal with in Detroit. With extensive details, she proves that throughout the decades, African Americans in Detroit had to face widespread systemic racism in all civic institutions as well as the labor market and companies' hiring practices. Her discussion includes, among other ideas, the city's police force, racially biased courts, schools, and workplaces, Lyndon Johnson's War on Poverty, and the later announced War on Crime, white flight, deindustrialization, the rise of the private prison industry, and its connected mass incarceration. Thompson shows that all of these different aspects were "cause and effect" for each other in their intertwined existence. Her intertwined observations are one of the truly strong features of the book. For each chapter, she, then, takes the microcosm of Detroit and turns the chapter's subtopic into a central thematic concern that can be observed nationwide.

Detroit remains a city in crisis. Yet, with its solid and convincing discussions, Thompson's book presents an important contribution to the current discourse on ongoing systemic racism in America's once-thriving, but now decaying urban centers and to the search for solutions that might begin to turn around these conditions.

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Matthew Powers, *NGOs as Newsmakers: The Changing Landscape of International News*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2018. ISBN: 9780231545754. 224 pgs. Pbk. $30.00

Matthew Powers makes a timely and prescient contribution to current debates about the nature of journalism, advocacy, and the relationship between the media landscape that is still adapting to the possibilities and potential dangers of the digital era.

While Powers uses the somewhat elastic term "NGO" throughout, his study focuses on organizations concerned specifically with humanitarian and human rights advocacy. This book is concerned with three big questions: Firstly, what role do NGOs, and specifically their increasingly sophisticated and professionalized publicity and communication efforts, currently play in the world of international news? Secondly, how can we explain the exponential growth (in terms of resources and reputation) of the NGO communication sector as a news source in recent decades? And thirdly, how might a better understanding of the impact of NGOs' communication efforts, as well as the limitations and sometimes unintended consequences of that impact, inform the practice of both journalism and NGO advocacy in the future?

The book is especially valuable for its sincere and successful efforts to bring a historical perspective to the ongoing debate about the future of international news-making. Chapter Two historicizes the recent explosion of the NGO sector's contemporary communication efforts, arguing that the processes of expansion and professionalization which have boosted its role in the landscape of international news were well underway "before either the dawn of the Internet or the decline in foreign correspondence" (28). For Powers, the gradual professionalization of NGOs, in part resulting from their greater integration into (and funding by) international political bodies, as well as the development of increasingly fierce competition within the advocacy sector, are just as important as more recent technology-led changes in explaining how NGOs grew to become key global communication organizations. His analysis deftly demonstrates how NGO communication practices are, in large part, products of the relationships which they have developed with a diverse range of stakeholders since at least the 1970s. Not least among these stakeholders are international news organizations themselves, who rely on NGOs to provide information for stories while providing NGOs with a way to publicize their campaigns.

The opening chapter outlines the reasons why Powers believes a new understanding of the role of NGO communication is required, asking

whether we are living in a new era of NGO-driven news, and framing the ongoing academic debate about the potential benefits and dangers for both journalism and advocacy of the growth of the NGO as a key contributor to the international news-making scene. Chapter Two traces the historical factors which contributed to the nature of contemporary NGO communication structures and norms, while Chapter Three explores how effective these developments have been in heightening the status of humanitarian and human rights issues within the broader international news agenda. Chapters Four and Five focus in particular on the ways in which digital tools have altered NGOs' communication strategies and their relations with "legacy" media organizations, emphasizing the continuities as well as the changes inherent in these developments. Chapter Six is an attempt to explain the contemporary reality of NGO – journalist relations through the case study of contemporary reporting on humanitarian efforts at the Turkish-Syrian border, arguing for the persistence of journalistic norms, despite recent economic and technological transformations in the business of newsmaking. In his final chapter, Powers expounds his overall argument that the growth and institutionalization of NGO communication is best understood as a "double edged sword," succeeding in expanding news coverage of humanitarian and human rights issues, but also leading to the acceptance and adoption of "news norms" within NGOs, which limit their ability to act independently and innovatively.

Methodologically speaking, Powers draws mostly on data derived from interviews with over seventy professionals engaged in the field of NGO communication. This material is supplemented by three additional data sources: NGO annual reports and publicity and campaigning literature; content analysis of humanitarian and human rights coverage in leading U.S. news outlets over a twenty-year period; and interviews with reporters and editors at international news outlets. The book contains a clear and helpful methods appendix, outlining the semi-structured interview questions and protocol followed, as well as details of the coding protocol and practices used for content analysis. This section represents an excellent resource for introducing graduate students or interdisciplinary researchers seeking to deploy these commonly used research methods in their own work.

Recent scholarship on the subject of NGO – journalist relations has largely focused on the role that NGOs have played in filling the informational gaps left behind as established media organizations shrink their newsrooms and their network of foreign correspondents (Schudson 2011;

Sambrook 2010; Zuckerman 2013), and the impact of this development on journalistic practice. Powers' focus on this phenomenon from the other point of view, focusing predominantly on the effect that working closely with journalists has on the practice of advocacy and humanitarianism, is a valuable contribution. This well-supported and well-argued call for NGOs to be wary of diminishing their efficacy by adopting communicative norms and practices developed to suit the purposes of journalists, rather than campaigners, is one that deserves serious consideration.

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Peter Knight. *Reading the Market: Genres of Financial Capitalism in Gilded Age America*. Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2016. ISBN: 9781421425214. 336 pgs. Pbk. 24.95

In America today, millions of ordinary citizens are connected, in one way or another, to "the market." For some, this is the stock market: an opaque battleground where "bulls" battle "bears," and the winner pushes prices up or down. For others, "the market" denotes an unknowable but all-powerful entity: the economy, perfect when unrestrained. For all, "the market" is a mixture of confusion and fear, always beyond our comprehension. As Peter Knight shows in *Reading the Market: Genres of Financial Capitalism in Gilded Age America*, everything has a history. It is not just modern Americans who fruitlessly desire to understand "the market," men and women of the Gilded Age and Progressive Era, too, wrestled with understanding that force that more and more crept its way into their lives.

In his new work, Knight unpacks the role financial capitalism played in the lives of those living through the turn of the nineteenth century. The main thrust of the work is dedicated to analyzing the ways in which those of this period went about understanding "the market," a term that in this study primarily means the stock market. In an important way, the mere premise of Knight's work is built off of a new finding of the field, as he exposes a common Gilded Age fascination with a market that the lay-American supposedly did not interact with until after World War I. In one of his many interventions, Knight shows that our understanding of the average American's engagement with the market is limited by incomplete data that focuses only the New York Stock Exchange (NYSE) or the Chicago Board of Trade (CBoT). Though it is true that nearly no common American could trade on the NYSE or the CBoT, smaller exchanges were accessible to smaller traders, and "bucket shops," pseudo-exchanges where clients could bet on a stock going up or down without actually buying shares, saw an estimated volume of seven times the volume of trades on the NYSE. People were unquestionably finding ways into the market. While fascinating, Knight's work on how people "read the market" stands with or without this intervention. Whether or not most Americans were financially invested in the market, the sheer volume of market-based reports, novels, and illustrations suggests that they were emotional invested.

Having established early that Americans were dedicated to the market by the Gilded Age, Knight uses the majority of his work to analyze the

different ways that Americans understood the market. In Chapter One, Knight studies the beginnings of financial journalism, during which time dry market reports took on a gossipy feature that drew in the public, and helped to create a space for the market in everyday life. Chapter Two focuses on the period's advice manuals, capitalizing on the development of the ticker tape, which merged a scientific approach of pattern recognition and chart-reading with previous "vernacular" modes of reading the market. The representation of the market in the different forms of literature featured in Chapters One and Two served to normalize capital gain through speculation, rather than labor, shifting how Americans understood financial success.

In Chapter Three, Knight transitions to image analysis in order to tease out how Americans responded to a market made less visible and more abstract by the new power of the ticker tape, the globalizing of markets, and the exclusion of the public from most trading floors. Knight argues that the absence of a visible market allowed illustrations to take its place, and that these illustrations helped to personalize the market. The market increasingly became a singular thing, and a living thing at that, while corruption too came alive in the form of the various titans who many saw as controlling the market for their own ends.

Corruption and collusion become the theme. Chapter Four focuses on the role venality played in the market. Knight pushes back against the narrative that the growing market of the Gilded Age replaced trust with contract, that relationships no longer mattered. On the contrary, many during the period found the opposite to be frustratingly true. Knight shows that during the Gilded Age, the market of personal relations was not replaced by an impersonal market, but rather merged with it, and indeed cons and insider trading flourished because a trust-based market still existed. In many ways, Chapter Five is the culmination of the previous four chapters. Frustrated and confused by an unreadable market, and seeing the greed, corruption, and failures said market produced, Americans crafted conspiracy theories in an attempt to gain some level of understanding as to what exactly was driving the market. In a brief epilogue, Knight shows that many of the vexing questions of the Gilded Age and Progressive Era still exist in our modern era, and our attempts to answer them are strikingly similar.

Throughout the entirety of his study, Knight shows an interest in the duality of the period he studies. When describing representations of the market in literature and popular culture, he does an enviable job of showing that these depictions did not just represent the market, they helped

to shape it as well. Similarly, Knight finds the transition to a finance economy was one of merger, rather than transition; the old ways did not disappear, but instead were incorporated in the new system. Finally, Knight shows how the market was both abstract and concrete in the minds of Gilded Age and Progressive Era observers, at once both a cold system of rules and a fickle animal moved by whims.

Though building on works such as Mary Poovey's *Genres of the Credit Economy*, and in some respects Jonathan Levy's brilliant *Freaks of Fortune*, the number of interventions in *Reading the Market* shows the need for greater attention to financial history. Knight does exemplary work showing the fascination and confusion the market created during this period, while perhaps exposing a similar confusion (and hopefully growing fascination) with a period experiencing a resurgence in the literature.

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Annie McClanahan. *Dead Pledges: Debt, Crisis, and Twenty-First Century Culture*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2017. ISBN: 9780804799058. 248pgs. HC. $85.00

In 1968 Jean Baudrillard claimed that "all key objects" appeared "under the sign of *credit*" (Baudrillard 2005, 169; original emphasis). Following Annie McClanahan's 2017 book *Dead Pledges*, one could argue, however, that the cultural dominance of credit is a symptom of periods of capitalist expansion only. In periods of stagnation it is not so much credit as debt, "a figure for credit that is unpaid, defaulted, foreclosed, bankrupted, written off, unredeemed," that serves as a "historical hermeneutic"(15). It is our crisis-ridden historical moment, then, that provides the background for McClanahan's powerful study (a well-deserved co-winner of the 2017 ASAP Book Prize). While not a work of political economy, *Dead Pledges* distinguishes itself by its author's ability to provide an impressively lucid and critical account of the socioeconomic processes that resulted in the U.S. subprime mortgage crisis in a manner seldom seen not just among literary critics, but, indeed, also within the discipline of economics. In addition to telling the story of the events leading up to the crisis, including the "institutional, regulatory, and technological changes" necessary for the expansion of consumer debt, McClanahan draws on the Marxist tradition to grasp the structural logic underlying these surface phenomena (10). Recent decades have witnessed a shift from "productive enterprises to financial markets," because manufacturing no longer produced sufficient profits and available money was channeled into stock and capital markets (14). Those dependent on wages were henceforth forced to increasingly rely on consumer debt to reproduce themselves and their households in the context of wage stagnation and widespread un- or underemployment. At the same time, the fall of industrial profit rates made owners of capital turn to financial markets, where investments were more profitable (12). In short, the function of debt is structural rather than a product of the subjective desires and decisions of consumers or investors.

Yet, *Dead Pledges* is not primarily a book of economic history. Instead, McClanahan analyzes how the totality of socio-economic relations is mediated with "the scale of the visible, the experienced, and the everyday," arguing that consumer debt connects the two levels. And its "dual face," she argues, is "mirrored by cultural forms" (4). The book's two parts sketch how debt has managed to transform the notions of subjectivity and (domestic) property, respectively. In the first two chapters, McClanahan provides readings of "credit-crisis novels," conceptual poetry, and visual art,

addressing articulations of the relationship between individual and totality. What emerges is that the financial crisis cannot be grasped from the perspective of individuals—as attempted by behavioral economics, which McClanahan subjects to a brief but devastating critique (25–30)—and that the effects of indebtedness are not so much a matter of "shame," as suggested by Maurizio Lazzarato (80). Instead, indebtedness is a condition both "impersonal" and "collective" that is sustained, in the last instance, by the material violence of state and economy: "the debtors' prison or bankruptcy court or unemployment line" (95). In her readings, McClanahan analyzes the perspective techniques and forms of characterization or personification employed by the novels and poems as indices of subjectivity under the sign of debt, concluding that what remains is "an empty and impoverished personhood" (25) subsumed by the "structural agency" of capital itself (176). In the following two chapters, McClanahan shows how "dominant ideologies of property ownership" have been rendered "incoherent, even contradictory" (148). Her readings of documentary photography of evictions and their aftermath suggest that the home itself can be easily turned from "a symbol of financial security...into an emblem of speculative risk" always threatened by a "violent unhousing" (115). The photojournalists' "voyeuristic entry," then, formally mirrors—and is materially dependent on—the power of the police to invade the domestic sphere (114). McClanahan finally turns to feature films that use "the language of horror and haunting" to express "the context of real estate lending, mortgage speculation, and foreclosure risk" (143). Again, she emphasizes the material effects of indebtedness and mortgage securitization – given aesthetic form by "the formal mechanisms of suspense" and "the visual excesses of gore" (149–50) – that are irreducible to (individual) feelings of "shame and guilt" but rather result in conditions of radical "economic precarity and vulnerability" (144) which the horror genre is particularly well suited to representing.

 While this short summary can hardly do justice to McClanahan's nuanced readings, it should be evident that she is committed to the project of critique whose usefulness within literary and cultural studies has come under attack in recent years. But while she does not explicitly engage with the proponents of postcritique, her book itself can be seen as a reminder of the power of cultural analysis attentive to what Fredric Jameson influentially called a text's "political unconscious." However McClanahan suggests a slight revision of Jameson's position by pointing out that the examples she discusses usually offer only "unresolved and overdetermined responses" to real social contradictions (16). This might be because the crisis is "terminal" this time, according to the Marxist tradition of "value

critique" that McClanahan draws on (14–15), so that successful (imaginary) resolutions seem impossible. This proposition could well be employed for the analysis of contemporary cultural production, including cultural forms that do not explicitly thematize debt or financial speculation.

Dead Pledges concludes with a short coda that shifts from the realm of culture to the material contestation of the present state of things; that is, the question of revolution. McClanahan sees a shift from class struggles waged in the realm of production to reproduction struggles, in which the flows of circulation are blockaded and sabotaged. She turns to student debt and posits the emergence of a "crisis subjectivity" that eschews belief in the fantasy of upward social mobility guaranteed by – ever more expensive – higher education and begins to grasp the mechanisms and limits of the capitalist economy instead (196). In the final pages of her book, McClanahan suggests that the refusal to pay one's debts, if turned into a collective practice, could "throw a wrench into the very machinery of social reproduction" (197). While this political argument is presented rather tersely (but see McClanahan 2011), it resonates with much recent radical writing on the contemporary period (see Benanav and Clegg 2019; Clover 2016), and it is one of the many merits of McClanahan's book that it shows how the mediations provided by culture can make visible the workings of a socioeconomic totality that often appears impenetrable from within.

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Roy L. Brooks, *The Racial Glass Ceiling: Subordination in American Law and Culture.* **New Haven: Yale University Press, 2017. ISBN: 9780300223309. 256 pgs. HC. $35.00**

Brooks focuses on the socio-legal and socio-cultural race problems that confront even economically, professionally and politically successful black Americans, since other scholars have dealt extensively with socio-economic racism. The first half of the book addresses legal arguments and court cases, while the second half addresses the socio-cultural issues that feed into legal problems. He argues that ending racial inequality is good policy, which should be the goal of the law.

Although Brooks sees his work as fitting alongside Critical Race Theory, he differentiates between racists and what he calls subordinators. He agrees with CRT that both types of acts are detrimental to racial equality. He insists, though, that subordinators are not moved by traditionally racist beliefs and stereotypes, but defines certain policies, goals, and standards as too essential to be trampled upon in order to create racial equality. According to Brooks, Mark Cuban subordinated racial equality and the fight against racism to a righteous belief in the sanctity of private property when Cuban downplayed Sterling's racism as inconsequential because it was words said in private about wealthy, black athletes and objected to attempts to force Sterling to sell his NBA team. In this post-civil rights era, such arguments resonate with many, insist that the nation no longer needs to worry about race because Oprah Winfrey, President Obama, and other visibly successful individuals are proof, to them, that the United States has moved into a post-racial era. He does believe that racial subordination creates a damaging "glass ceiling" limiting racial advancement and needs to be resolved.

Brooks defines four different approaches in the legal fight for racial equality. He sees the Supreme Court justices split between a belief that the law should be color-blind and omit reference to race (traditionalists) and those who believe in racial integration through racially conscious decision-making (reformists). Post-Jim Crow cases over college admissions, job opportunities and similar concerns have tended to dilute major decisions of the Civil Rights era by moving toward the color blind approach. For example, Justice Clarence Thomas argues that affirmative action taints the reputation of those it is supposed to benefit. Brooks sees civil rights scholars as supporting a third approach – the maintenance of black identity organizations as important tools for providing opportunity to blacks within a black community. He calls these "limited

separatists." These arguments support the maintenance of historically black colleges. Finally, he argues that CRT theorists support a fourth approach – "social transformation." Brooks argues that none of these approaches offers the best legal option. Rather, he believes that the courts should be guided by "the spirit of Brown."

The first chapter examines the series of court cases which the Brown decision repudiated. Chapter Two looks at cases since Brown. Brooks notes the tendency for post-civil rights era cases to define race-conscious affirmative action plans as being racist – simply by including a discussion of race. This abhorrence of any mention of race limits the ability of successful blacks to address racial problems, as the accusation of "playing the race card" damages their credibility.

The second half of the book ties cultural ideas about how to achieve racial equality to a similar typology as he created for the judicial approaches. He argues that only pluralism, (the limited separationist approach), can avoid subordinating race to white, middle-class, culture. He connects assimilationist thinking with color-blind, racial omission jurisprudence. This is essentially the old version of the melting pot, in which everything melts into one culture. The problem with this is that cultural attitudes that are uniquely black will be lost entirely as white middle-class hegemony will continue as the only standard culture. He sees bi-culturalism, where blacks enact white, middle-class culture in public while retaining black culture at home, as problematic as well. The point of bi-culturalism is to offer a temporary cultural home as one learns the dominant culture. This he ties to the reformist, integrationists' agenda. CRT's trans-culturalism can be compared to the salad bowl metaphor which replaced the melting pot in immigration arguments.

The book has many good points. Brooks addresses the types of racism experienced by African Americans who, despite racism, succeed professionally in the United States. He gives a good overview of the legal cases which solidified slavery and later segregation. He also explains the legal arguments that have, since Brown, dismantled many of the opportunities created by Brown, showing that there are problems with both "racial omission" and "racial integration" as the basis for judicial decisions. He explains in ordinary language the claim that affirmative action discriminates against whites and stigmatizes blacks. He illustrates how color-blind claims are based on assumptions of white, middle class culture as the norm, leading to discrimination against blacks. Subordination is a valuable theoretical addition to understanding these ideas.

The book is aimed toward a general audience, rather than the legal profession, although his main conclusion is that Supreme Court Justices "should" use the "spirit of Brown" in their judgments rather than racial omission or racial integration. He assumes the Justices want to "promote good social policy" and argues there is agreement that good social policy means racial equality. These are questionable assumptions in the current political climate. Brooks may be too quick to criticize Critical Race Theory for seeing racism as the central problem. Certainly, some of the problems faced by middle and upper middle class blacks can be ascribed to subordination, in which other more important goals get in the way of racial advances. However, his description of the effects of how damaging "playing the race card" can be to the careers of individual blacks can also be seen as legal and cultural racism as well as subordination. More analysis of the effects of the few differences he finds between black and white middle-class cultures would strengthen the second half of the book. Finally, there could be greater clarity in the terminology used to define his typologies – in both the legal and cultural chapters. Despite these flaws, this is a useful exploration of how race continues to be a problem – even for those who are professionally and economically successful.

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Robert S. Levine. *Race, Transnationalism, and Nineteenth-Century American Literary Studies.* **Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2018. ISBN: 9781107095069 249 pgs. HC. $105.00**

Robert S. Levine's ten-chapter monograph offers inspiring and thought-provoking reading for literary scholars and students of literature who appreciate the author's wide-ranging perspective on theories and practices in nineteenth-century American literary scholarship since the 1970s. This book offers in-depth analyses and thrilling lines of argumentation regarding specific literary texts. It also illustrates the development of the field of American literary studies, the vagaries of canonization, and the distortions resulting from blank spots in literary historiography. Accordingly, Levine highlights the ways in which New Historicism, "race theory, slavery studies, and African American studies" (3), and transnational American studies have been shaping research on nineteenth-century literature, not just by extending the range of authors per se but also by casting new light on canonized authors. While the chapters reflect Levine's scholarship of several decades and can be read independently, he rightly regards them as returning to a set of central inquiries: "interracialism, tensions between nationalism and transnationalism (or the local and the global), book history, literary form, the complicated and shifting nature of race, and the importance of close reading" (9). Moreover, the chapters share a sense of "the nation's failure over one hundred years to live up to its egalitarian revolutionary ideals" (10).

The first chapter offers readings of "classic" texts with an awareness of their relation to race and slavery discourse, as suggested by Toni Morrison when she argued that nineteenth-century American literary texts, whether they mention race or not, share its "haunting presence" (13). Levine then focuses on how James Fenimore Cooper's *The Last of the Mohicans* (1826) and Edgar Allan Poe's *The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym* (1838) quite directly engage with the overall theme of slavery and race, even if this has not been foregrounded in the critical reception of these texts, whereas interpreting these thematic threads in Herman Melville's *Benito Cereno* (1855) and Nathaniel Hawthorne's works requires antennae that can sense the Dickinsonian "slantness" (21) in conveying the topic. Levine goes into more depth regarding Cooper's legacy when he discusses the complex argument laid out by the various volumes of the *Leatherstocking* series (see Chapter Two) which, he finds, can be grasped when reading all volumes through the lens of *The Deerslayer*, which was published last but which presents the earliest fictional plot and sets the

stage for basic issues like colonization and racism. If Cooper wrote *The Deerslayer* as an instrument to direct readers' perspective on the entire series (see 31) and if readers were to follow his advice to read this novel first, then Cooper's trajectory can be perceived to be the depiction of racial categories as unstable and constructed. Having consulted Cooper's prefaces of the 1850s and studied his friendship with George Copway, an Ojibwa minister, Levine argues that readers/scholars should indeed follow Cooper's advice when (re-)reading the *Leatherstocking* series. While this does not exactly answer the question as to how Cooper may have thought about Indian affairs in the 1820s, it does show possible changes of perspective when delving into an author's entire oeuvre, literary and beyond.

In contrast to discussing canonical authors particularly within their own historical time frame, Levine also studies Poe, Hawthorne, and U.S.-based schools of thought that contemplated imminent apocalyptic scenarios through their engagement with extinction—that is, with issues that we connect more readily with contemporary disasters like Hurricane Katrina and climate change (see Chapter Four). Remarkably, both Poe and Hawthorne imagine and contemplate extinction outside a biblical framework as they explore alternate epistemologies with which they "challenge progressive concepts of history" (79). In this context, it would have been interesting to compare the impact of twenty-first-century evangelical thought to the influence of Great Awakening thought in the 1830s and 1840s.

Levine's discussion of Hawthorne's transnational take on Rome and Catholicism in *The Marble Faun* (Chapter Eight) sets out to dismantle the transatlantic perspective in American literary scholarship that, for the longest time, privileged the England–U.S. axis. Hawthorne's engagement with Italian Catholicism as a cohesive social force then serves as a method to reflect on the lack of such a sense of unity. Levine pursues a similar train of thought in his discussion of Melville's *Israel Potter* (1855) as a nineteenth-century version of what is currently discussed as a "transnational aesthetics" (Chapter Seven) which pits a variant of the Kantian sublime against exceptionalist hubris during the American Revolution. The novel, Levine explains, thus argues against mid-nineteenth-century idealizations of the revolutionary era as providing clear-cut ideas and an emblem of national grandeur. This chapter, to my mind, is the most innovative and mind-boggling one of the entire volume.

Several chapters serve the equally commendable purpose of recovering previously ignored writers. Nathaniel Paul, an African American Baptist

minister, was a precursor of currently well-known abolitionists with transnational careers like William Wells Brown, Martin Delaney, and Frederick Douglass (Chapter Three). Paul was active in the U.S., Canada, and England; he married a white woman in 1833; and he rejected the goals of the American Colonization Society. As is also not widely known, the African American author Sutton E. Griggs used Edward Everett Hale's story "The Man without a Country" as a point of departure for two of his novels in a manner that eerily prefigures notions of oceanic rather than national belonging (Chapter Nine).

The volume closes with a discussion of Frederick Douglass's role in "post-1960s novels that address race, transnationalism, and the legacy of John Brown" (169). Just as Douglass responded to Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* possibly with his 1852 "What to the Slave Is the Fourth of July?" speech and with his novella *The Heroic Slave* (1853), Beecher Stowe possibly modeled the title character of her subsequent anti-slavery novel, *Dred*, after Douglass (169). Discussing depictions of Douglass in novels written in the last half century concludes the argument regarding the nineteenth-century roots of current debates about transnationalism and about race in American literary studies. Levine convincingly illustrates numerous intertwined facets of nineteenth-century literary culture as much as he proves the desiderata of assuming a historically informed perspective on the present and of being willing to reread the past.

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