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# THE IMAGE OF REDEMPTION



## in Literature, Media, and Society

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2018 Conference Proceedings

Society for the Academic Study of Social Imagery

Edited by  
Thomas G. Endres

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University of Northern Colorado

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Proceedings of the  
2018 Conference of the  
Society for the Academic Study of Social Imagery

March 2018  
Greeley, Colorado

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## Introduction and History

These papers have been selected from among those presented at the spring 2018 conference of the Society for the Academic Study of Social Imagery (SASSI), devoted to the theme of THE IMAGE OF REDEMPTION in Literature, Media, and Society. As the following papers demonstrate, this is a rich and provocative topic with interesting and surprising implications.

Originally, the SASSI conference was known as SISSI (with the word "Interdisciplinary" used instead of "Academic") and was held for 25 years in Colorado Springs, CO. The following historical overview was written by SISSI co-founder Will Wright:

*In the fall of 1990 Dr. Steve Kaplan and I decided to try to hold an interdisciplinary conference in the spring of 1991. We thought Colorado was a place people like to visit and that we should take advantage of that somehow. Although our University was in Pueblo (then University of Southern Colorado, now Colorado State University-Pueblo), we thought the conference should be held in Colorado Springs, about 45 miles north, because flying into Colorado Springs was much easier. We thought the conference should be interdisciplinary because he was a professor of English and I was a professor of Sociology. We decided that the organizing idea of the conference should be Imagery, which seemed vague, abstract, and interdisciplinary, and that each annual event should have a more specific topic – The Image of (Something). We called ourselves, as an organizing structure, The Society for the Interdisciplinary Study of Social Imagery (SISSI), and then we picked the topic of the first SISSI conference, The Image of Crime.*

*We found a great hotel, the Antlers in downtown Colorado Springs, and we reserved a set of meeting rooms and guest rooms. Then we made up and mailed out a Call for Papers, wondering if anyone would come. We decided to hold the conference in mid-March because we thought the weather would be good but that skiing would still be possible, so that people might come to the conference so that they could then go skiing. We asked a friend, the well-known criminologist Travis Hersh, if he would give a Keynote address, and he agreed. We figured out a registration fee, I think around \$60, and a Proceedings fee (around \$20), since we planned to produce a Proceedings, and we planned a two day conference. We accepted about 60-70 proposals, from around the country, and most people actually came, participated in sessions, and told us they had a good time. We could pay our bills with the money from the fees, and so it seemed to be a success, much to our surprise.*

*We began to plan a second conference but this time we would plan for three days and send out far more Calls for Papers. The topic for the second year would be The Image of War, and this time we had about 150 participants, another success. After that we had our routine. We had a mailing list for the Calls of about 2000 universities and about seven departments at each university. We always arranged the conference at the Antlers Hotel, always for three days, and always in the middle of March. And our attendance ranged, depending on the topics, from about 120 to about 180.*

*The Conference in this form lasted twenty-five years. Some of the topics included The Image of Nature, The Image of Technology, The Image of Violence, The Image of the Frontier, The Image of the Road, The Image of America, The Image of the American West, The image of the Outsider. Some of the Keynote Speakers included Vine Deloria, Jr. (Custer Died for Your Sins, God Is Red), Stanley Aronowitz (False Promises, Science as Power), Fredric Jameson (The Political Unconscious, Postmodernism, or, the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism), John Nichols (The Milagro Beanfield War, The Magic Journey), Patricia Limerick (The Legacy of Conquest, Something in the Soil), and Carl Pletsch (Young Nietzsche, Beyond Preservation). Throughout the conferences the presentations were generally stimulating and the*

*sessions were generally lively. It was a rewarding effort and experience, and Steve and I are thrilled that it will now be continued in a slightly different form at the University of Northern Colorado.*

*Will Wright  
Department of Sociology*

Over the years, the SISSI conference became a favorite for our faculty and graduate students here in the School of Communication at the University of Northern Colorado. Upon professor Wright's retirement, we felt a great loss when there was no SISSI conference in the spring of 2016. We contacted Will and asked if he would be willing to pass the torch to us, and he thoughtfully turned over the reins. We have tried to keep intact as much of the original conference feel and structure as possible, e.g. keeping "The Image of (Something)" theme. Upon reflection, we rebranded the association as SASSI as a way to honor the long-standing title while simultaneously making it our own.

While honoring the past, in some ways it is like starting over. Our inaugural 2017 theme - The Image of Rebirth - reflected that regeneration. The two-year hiatus since the 2015 conference, coupled with a new name and new locale (in a town on the edge of the plains with no commercial airport and no nearby skiing) disrupted the established momentum of SISSI. The first SASSI conference, like its forebearer, was modest in size yet dynamic in output. 2018 showed an encouraging increase. Just as Will Wright and Steven Kaplan experienced more than 25 years ago, we are hopeful the conference will grow in both popularity and size.

We thank the SISSI founders for allowing us to carry the discussions of social imagery into its new era, and hope you enjoy these contributions from our inaugural gathering.

Thomas Endres  
SASSI Executive Director  
University of Northern Colorado

July 2018

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## Plenary Session

### **Voices of Women in Prison: A Conversation with Women Constructing Futures, Model Images of Redemption and Restoration**

Vanessa Thompson, Rheann Kelly, Nicole Hayes, Char'dae Avery, Kacey Rucker, Natalie Medley,  
Magdalena Lopez, Constructing Our Future, Indiana Women's Prison, Indianapolis, IN

Jeralyn Faris, Purdue University, West Lafayette, IN

Andrew Falk, Constructing Our Future Exec. Dir., Sagamore Institute, Indianapolis, IN

Dr. Faris and Executive Director Falk used a slide presentation at the conference before introducing the seven women of IWP who represented Constructing Our Future (COF). Images represented the lived experiences of these women and were shown on the slides with the following series of questions: "How does one go from this...[a young girl sitting at a desk in elementary school] to this...[a teenaged girl being arrested]? And from this...[a young woman sitting in a jail cell dressed in institutional orange] to this...[a woman clothed in jeans, a t-shirt, hardhat, and leather construction belt loaded with tools]?" This last image is the vision of Constructing Our Future: a woman given the tools and training to provide not only an income sufficient to support herself and her children but also a home purchased with 5,000 hours of sweat equity.

COF began with one woman, Vanessa Thompson, sitting on her bunk watching the evening news in early, 2015. NPR's *All Things Considered*, brought their story to national attention in November 2017, and we encourage readers of to listen to the account and read the accompanying article.<sup>1</sup> It provides background to understand the transcript of the SASSI conference Q&A in Greeley, CO via Skype between the women inmates and conference attendees. The transcript is included in the following section of this paper. The article also provides a link to the presentation of four women to the Indiana legislature in April 2017 via Skype. Their 10-page proposal which outlines their vision for COF won full approval by both the Indiana House and Senate but no funds.

COF is searching for ways to meet the needs of women who are going home not only through the building trades model but by a more holistic model that includes bringing higher education back into the prison. The vision includes developing the best means of communicating the needs to the larger public. The average citizen needs to be aware of the tremendous costs of our current system—financially and in human capital. Public support is vital for these people who *are coming home*. Will they come home prepared to support their families, be good citizens and neighbors? They need the tools and public support for that to happen.

Jeralyn Faris and Andrew Falk presented data before introducing the women. Current trends include the rapid rise in the rate of female incarceration and accompanying stigmatization, but public fear can be replaced with support. An appeal was made to communication scholars to use their expertise to inform public opinion and provide easily understandable, evidence-based information to educate the American public. Pew Charitable Trusts (2016) reports growing support for reform of our criminal justice system. The time is ripe for communication scholars to put their knowledge and talent to work in ways that will contribute tangibly to much needed change in a broken, costly criminal justice system.

According to The Sentencing Project, from 1980-2016, the rate of growth of women in prison increased by more than 700%. Furthermore, Dana DeHart has shown women have vastly differing needs

from incarcerated men due to the disproportionate victimization they have experienced from sexual and/or physical abuse. Women need gender-sensitive, comprehensive transition programs such as Reentry Court programs (Faris and Miller 141), emergency housing interventions (LeBel), and employment assistance (Solomon), to name a few. Torrey McConnell presents a 5-part examination of the consequences of female incarceration and offers recommendations for comprehensive reform.

The following transcript enables you to “hear” seven women who know these consequences all too well. Their names are in the byline above, and their first names will be used to identify who is speaking in answer to questions (identified with the letter “Q” and a number in order they were asked) by conference attendees.

### **Q&A with Women of IWP**

**Andrew:** Can you please introduce yourselves and maybe tell us one thing you are doing in COF or maybe one thing in particular you appreciate about COF.

Hi, I’m Natalie and I like all the statistics I get to learn from Andrew about female incarceration.

I’m Vanessa. I have a lot of good ideas. COF gives me the opportunity to express and develop the ideas I come up with.

I’m Rheann, and I like the opportunity to be able to participate in something greater than myself and that could potentially extend out into the community to help the community while I’m still incarcerated.

Hello, I’m Char’dae and in COF I like that I get to build unity in here to help better the community in the outside world.

I’m Nicole. I just love working with these women and all their ideas to put something together to help make a difference out there.

Hi, my name is Magdalena, and COF is helping a lot to help me give back. I’m learning so much every day.

Hi, I’m Kasey... [technical issues. Couldn’t hear all she said] ...I think I have insight that will help other people.

**Q1: What has made the difference in your life? [clarification requested] What would you like people on the outside to know that they don’t know?**

**Vanessa:** Even though we are incarcerated, even though we have made mistakes in our lives, given the opportunity to expand our minds, that’s all I’ve basically needed to find my strengths to develop this program. We are more than a number. We do want to make a difference in the world and with the right opportunities, we want to take those opportunities and make a difference. This is not a program we are trying to get anything out of. Yes, we are getting character change, we’re building skills for ourselves, we’re getting those things. But I think giving back to the community and showing that everything that is offered to us here...I just want everybody to know...I don’t know what I’m trying to say here...um...I’m a little nervous and I keep getting a lot of distortion, too...Our characters have changed. We are more than the situations that brought us here.

We’ve been working on this [proposal/program] for three years. We’ve had a lot of push back. We’ve had a lot of disappointments, but this is something we are passionate about. We see the difference we can make for our children and our community. That is our driving force. We want to keep going. And I think I’ve said too much so I’m going to turn it over to someone else. Does that answer your question?

**Q2: As a group of women you *think* you have special qualities. Do you think this program of reconstruction and restoration can also be applied to male incarceration?**

**Natalie:** We absolutely believe this can be applied across the board in facilities across the nation. The facts on recidivism seem to be the same not necessarily being gender specific. However, we are aware that gender-specific policies are going to be required in order to help us stay out of prison, that our needs are different than men's. So therefore, what we have to offer is different than a male population. So, we do believe that there are separate gender issues that need to be addressed in the reentry initiative, but when Vanessa came up with the idea and as we've pitched it this entire time, it's been that we absolutely feel that it could be a model that could be followed across the state and across the nation.

**Q3: Given that this is a specialty program, what other programs are available to you in your institution?**

**Vanessa:** There are several other programs: ICAN (Indiana Canine Assistant Network). In ICAN we train service dogs to help people who have disabilities. PLUS is an 18-month character building program. Everyone lives in one dorm, one community and it's also a faith-based program. It's a very good program for changing character. The kitchen program you can earn a certificate and learn kitchen management. DOL (Dept. of Labor), we have teaching positions. We also have CAD, Computer-Aided Design. [To Char'dae]: Do you want to talk about that a little bit?

**Char'dae:** The CAD program is where you do blueprints for [undistinguishable]...and we put in the elements they need to make it. We draw it out for them, and we send it to them and they make it in the physical sense. I've completed that program.

**Natalie:** But there are not many reentry initiative programs and that's how this program is different from any other program. They have a basic reentry program for people who are being released, nothing that actually assists with education or getting good jobs or housing. We feel that being the population of women we are, most of us mothers, that this specific reentry initiative is important for the DOC to model and to understand.

**Char'dae:** I can personally say that COF is the type of program that has basically not been offered in the DOC because it follows you. It gives you something to take with you—your own home. You build a community within here. Any other program is basically giving you something in but then just putting you out on the streets. With COF it comes with you. It is something you carry with you for the rest of your life, and if we could, I'd like to see more of that within the correction all over the world. We don't have a lot that really pushes you and walks with you, holds your hand, and lets you know that this is your second chance, you're going to make it, and this is how we're going to know that you can do it.

**Natalie:** The program is led by incarcerated women and that also makes it rare. So, that means that incarcerated women are going to understand the needs of the population there. Also, because it's incarcerated people, we'll know how to make allowances when someone has to check in with their parole officer once they're released, or when someone has to take random drug tests, certain fees, certain transportation issues. So, it's very specific. That's what makes this very unique.

**Vanessa:** Another way this is unique is we understand the importance of character development. We know the importance of changing before we reenter society. We want to change ourselves. That part of the program, I always say it's an aggressive approach. COF is an aggressive approach. It's hard work. You have to go through 5,000 hours of training, and character-building classes. There's a lot entailed in that level of our programming. So, I think that's another thing that's unique about our program.

**Q4: How are you chosen? How are the ladies chosen for this program?**

**Vanessa:** COF is open to all ladies here at the facility. We have to have at least 4 years left on our sentence. We know that's a key element because we know it takes time to develop this character we are trying to become. Also, with the building maintenance, it takes a little bit of time to get through that.

Our conduct in here is really important, too. I know from being an offender in here, we can easily get conducts [violations] in here but depending on a case-by-case basis, it depends on the level of conduct. If you conduct yourself responsibly ...um, you want to add a little bit to that? [passed to Rheann]

**Rhaeann:** I think you did well. As far as right now COF is still a "think tank" and we are still developing parts of it. As Vanessa was saying we hope we will continue to keep people who have time on their sentence want to keep it running and keep the community we establish within this program together. We hope to have people who are enough within their outdates that they can go through all of their development of it and get their conduct and character developed so that they can transfer out, take that out into the community and start seeing the progress with the women out there.

**Q5: What's your vision? Is it just building and construction? What do you see COF being in five to six years?**

**Natalie:** It's important to hit on how we began. Two of us in the middle were here at the very beginning of the conception of the idea of the program. The rest of us have joined since then and so we are constantly changing and growing. In five to six years we plan on having a majority of those available to be released and on work crews in a work release center to be working under COF trying to build a home for them and their children. So, they'll be working within the prison. We plan on having at least 20 girls inside of the prison, so that's two female prisons in the state we plan on taking a pull from. We plan on having girls at our home-base center working to build their homes, and then we plan to have at least 10-20 families in homes at that point. So, in five to six years that's definitely our goal.

**Q6: What is the most important quality for being a mentor for you?**

**Nicole:** An important part of this program [thinking in terms of them mentoring others] is that we can know what they are going through. There's so much more to us. The fact that we are in here and we are incarcerated—there's so much more to us, and we are willing to help them in any way that we can. That's important to us. We rely on each other a lot.

**Kacey:** If you are asking about others mentoring us, I came from a place where not everyone in my circle was positive, so as someone said earlier, we need a change of mind. If I surround myself with more positive people, I'll start to be more positive and I'll behave more positively. So, for me I'm looking for someone who will be more positive who can understand my background, where I came from, where I want to be and not just understand it but encourage it—to push me and model that—not just to say it but to show it. I'm looking for strong male or female, someone who's encouraging and wants what I want for me.

**Vanessa:** She made a good point about having positive people around. This little team here, we keep ourselves together by—we feed off each other to keep this going and that's very important in mentorship. For me personally, I feel there's a chance for me. Kelsey Kauffman was a mentor to me because she seen something in me that no one else had ever seen. She seen someone who was smart—somebody with great ideas that can apply. Look what's happened because I had that chance. It was because of her mentorship that I was given that chance, so I feel like it's a chance.

**Nicole:** I think a lot of us have the potential to be able to succeed. We want to, but none of us have ever really had that opportunity from the life we had before we got here, so for someone to see that in us and to push us where we've never been before is a lot for us.

**Q7: How do you remain positive when you have to go back into the regular prison population, when you're not in the room where you are now? How do you maintain your focus and your positivity?**

**Vanessa:** You know what? The first few years of my incarceration, probably even the first 15 years in here, it was very, very hard to stay positive in this negative environment. But through everything I have achieved in this facility—I've gotten a college education; I've gotten a law library apprenticeship; I'm in the ICAN program and training dogs—those kinds of skills that I'm getting for myself is helping me build that character and that I don't have to be negative all the time. I have something positive within myself that I can give back.

Now, do I always not feed into the negative? No, I'm not going to say that. Sometimes I do tend to get into the negative conversations or whatever, but it's all about building better habits for myself and a better way of thinking. I always have to find that other Vanessa that's um...that brought me to the prison in the first place. I know how to do it now. I know how to take that positive self and say, "You know what? It doesn't have to be this way. You know what? Don't worry about what they're talking about. Don't worry about what they're doing, this is what you're about." You know, I think it's all about everything I've achieved since I've been here. That self-esteem in me has shot up and that's through all the programming that I've been through. That helps a lot. That's for me personally.

**Natalie:** I think that when I came to prison in my '20s, I was told I had a chip on my shoulder because I had been given opportunities that I had somehow failed to utilize. So, there are opportunities now that are being given once again and only through this program have I found personally opportunities to actually...to actually begin to achieve again in life, and the way that's possible for me is that I'm actually taken out of the physical space of the other part of the prison environment and I'm transferred to this space. This space allows for idea building. It allows for expression of thought and feeling. It allows for education. So, the physical space is so important for me. If I didn't get the break from the prison environment I would not be here. I'm grateful we have this space in order for me to stay out of solitary confinement and to stay in this program.

**Rheann:** For me, this space is a great opportunity but also being able to maintain a positive mind frame when I'm back on the unit and not in this space. It helps me because it allows me to have a higher thought. It has something I'm looking forward to, something I'm always constantly striving to apply...thinking of an application of what I've picked up along the way knowing that maybe I can't use it in this aspect but knowing that it's growing toward something that I don't know where it might apply in the future—constantly being able to keep my mind on things that are not necessarily immediate now, but what's my higher goal?

And also, through having these types of programs and people who have come in and mentored to us have taught us different things, it's brought me to higher thoughts of what my capabilities are for the future. Ya' know, when I come here, I'm incarcerated, and I don't know when I'm getting out. I have a long sentence. And ya' know, you can get down on yourself, and you can believe in the things that are said about you or the stigma and you ask, "What is my future really gonna' be?"

But the people who come in here to teach us, they allow me to know that there are still things we are capable of, and we *can* help to benefit things outside of us, and we still *do* have an effect. So, it just makes things I didn't think could be in my future—it's now a reality to me to strive towards that. And so, it gives us a new thing we can focus on in here rather than the negative.

**Magdalena:** I also want to comment on what Rheann said. The way I look at it is that through this program we have a purpose. We have meaning. We have to be in this prison, and we're not taking advantage of it. [difficult to decipher due to technical issues] If we take opportunity to learn when the volunteers come

in, we have meaning. Ya' know we feel when they come in, it means so much to us, and we really appreciate what they come in and do for us.

**Andrew:** I'd like to just interject for a moment and try to explain how challenging it is to do research and to have education on the inside. As you might expect, the women have no access to the internet other than very limited email that they pay an arm and a leg for just to send and receive messages. Anything they want to do research on has to be brought in by the volunteers. And the education system--since higher education in the prisons was abandoned seven years ago—it's always a challenge to figure out who is going to accredit anything they are taking. So right now, there are no formal classes that are for credit, and often when they have had them it's often haphazard as to whether they'll be able to get credit for it or not. So those are some of the challenges that the women face even in the midst of the higher education programs that we have.

**Jerri:** Just to help you understand, they are not just about themselves. When I saw them a week ago, they wanted me to bring in articles on human trafficking because they are so concerned for women in the U.S. and around the world. You all realize it's in your backyard, right? They know that, too, and so they are concerned and want to study more. So next week, I plan to bring some articles in for them because they can't access that themselves. So, any books and so forth—they have to be donated. DePauw University has a nice program where they have people donating materials, but their library here is very limited. We are privileged and have access to the worldwide web and can look up millions of articles. So, just so you understand that they have a heart for other people. That's why they're doing Constructing Our Future. It's not just about them, but it's about people coming after them.

**Q8: You said that you'd like to see more reentry programs in the future and this opportunity building homes, assisting your community. What other reentry opportunities similar to that—not just a job approach so as to not go back—do you think would be possible in the correction center?**

**Vanessa:** Oh man um...there's a lot. [pause] Ya' know, kids come to mind for me—it comes to getting out and being with our children. In a lot of reentry programs, the very few that there are—there's lack of availability to be with their children. [to the other women]: Am I right?

**Kasey:** With COF we're constructing but eventually want to do childcare within the community we're rebuilding to help the mothers because we have to work in order to provide for us and our children. So, we're hoping that reentry programs can help us find companies that will be more apt to take felons. That's what we hope to be a part of—to work for them. It's not just that we're building homes. Homes is the stability part of it. And um, like Miss Jerri said, this is not just about us but about those coming after us—our children are a huge portion of this. With us being incarcerated, the percentage of our children being incarcerated is...I mean, it's high as well, so we want to build so that our kids have some place to be.

Young people are coming to prison. They don't know how to live. They've come from broken families. They've come from addicted families. They don't know how to cook a healthy meal, and then they're having children younger. They don't know how to take care of themselves let alone their children, so we want to give them life skills. We want to teach them life skills. We want to teach them job skills, the importance of education. So, reentry entails all of that, not just a home. Reentry is life and it's teaching people how to live, how to live in a positive way that they're not getting in trouble and that their kids can eventually learn from it.

**Vanessa:** Outside of COF, I know that one of the things people struggle with in reentry is lack of resources, lack of information, lack of mentorship. Mentorship is very important—people who are going to be there in case you need a ride to the probation officer, people who are going to help you find a job—those are two things that I know people struggle with, but the main thing is the housing. Whenever I see people

come back to prison and I ask, “Why are you coming back to prison so much?” “Well, I didn’t have anybody. I had to go back to my abusive husband.” Or, “I had to go back to this neighborhood, and there’s so many drugs around. I didn’t have anywhere to go. Right back in the same spot that got me in trouble to begin with.” So, resources, mentorship, drug rehabilitation programming, stuff like that.

**Natalie:** It’s absolutely evident that people in prison are being trained for low-level job positions. Specific, specialized training can break this feeling of basic restaurant work. Any of these things are possible to support a family and live on; however, we know when we are released we’re going to have to work hard. We’re going to have barriers against us. We’re going to have to show that we’re good. Now, if I’m offered specialized training in specific areas that I know I can be guaranteed a job—when we partner with places like Sagamore or others who guarantee that with this specialized training we will employ you—that takes a HUGE weight off my shoulders: to know that my capabilities as a human being are going to be allowed to be honed and to be used in the work force. I think that is key to keeping ex-incarcerated people down—the fact that there is *not* the opportunity for specialized training—the ceilings, the barriers that exist.

**Char’dac:** I think that brings in another program. There is a program coming to IWP called The Last Mile. I don’t know if you’ve heard about it. They’re training is in coding, computer coding with different technologies. Again, that’s the Last Mile program if you would like to look it up. The Governor [Holcomb] is actually enforcing it to the prison, and it will be starting in April [2018]. It gives us an opportunity to be trained in here already so that when we go out into the community we have an opportunity to get a job immediately—not restaurant work. We don’t have to start at the bottom. We’ve already started in prison getting the resources we need so that now when we do hit the community—it’s no secret that money makes the world go ‘round—so as long as we have the opportunity and we have the money to support our family and to support ourselves that recidivism rate has dropped right there because now I don’t have to worry about how I’m going to put food on the table or how I’m going to put clothes on my children’s backs or how I’m going to put a roof over my head because now I have COF that’s going to give me a home, and I have the Last Mile program now to give the job above minimum wage to get the hassle off my back, to get the struggle off my back.

Going back to the question about staying positive, when you surround yourself with people like COF that are positive and we get people in here like Kelsey Kauffman that pushes us and lets us know we can do this regardless of what may come against us, you basically have your community right there being rebuilt. And we’re gathering everybody together to let them know that this second chance that you do give us, if you don’t give it to us, there’s no way we can prove anything to you. So, I just think um, we just help people get together and come together, and this is what we’re here for. We’re not ready to go back ‘cause if we keep doing what we’ve always done, we’ll get what we always got and stay in prison. And that’s not what we want to do. We want to get out there and let people know we are what we talk about.

**Vanessa:** We’re hoping through our achievements and obstacles we go through and the character we’re building, we’re hoping people inside and outside the prison will see what this is doing for us and that it just filters to and carries on to women around us in here, too.

**Jerri:** When you started this, what do you remember was the percentage chance that this would succeed [your COF proposal to the legislature]? Talk about the various roadblocks that you’ve experienced. How has this positivity that you’ve talked about been worked out?

**Vanessa:** It originally started with a proposal, a writing competition. There’s was no idea that it was going to go to the legislature. The idea was a good idea and we brought it to the [public policy] class. We tackled it. We developed it. We got this paper written and it was sent in. It didn’t win the competition, but a state legislator got ahold of it, and asked us to testify. After Michelle Jones and I testified, and one member of the committee mentioned they knew of the “hardest hit” state fund [for blighted neighborhoods] containing \$100 million dollars, the percentage was a little bit higher than the original 3-4%. But then when

we “lost” the “hardest hit” fund [learned it could only be used for demolition], it dropped. That was one of those things where we thought, “OK! We got this money.” But then we learned the fund could only be used for demolition and we were looking to restore homes.

So that was one of the first obstacles: Where are we going to find the money to do this? And nobody, not even Kelsey knew anything about housing policy in the United States—the history, nothing. So, Kelsey brings in this book which was almost the death of me. I’ve got to tell you. It was ridiculous. I’ve been to college, but I got my GED while I was in prison, so reading that book—I had to have a dictionary in front of me to go home with it! It was a good thing we were doing a chapter apiece, or I never would have gotten through that book. So, that was another one of the main obstacles that was kind of hard. We had to learn from scratch. It was a mess. We had something like 20 women in this room and nobody knew anything about any housing policy. It was bad.

**Natalie:** When Kelsey first came to the prison, she would say, “Natalie, I heard your name from some people and I’m going to need you to take a class.” And she would try to provide some higher education classes working within the Department of Corrections [DOC] through the DOC. The DOC seemed to let Kelsey do that. She had to have a DOC guard or staff person with her in order to allow us the opportunity to have volunteer teachers come in here and teach us. So, she did that. She kept it going. She kept her classes full. She kept us involved, and the disciplinary issues we normally face in other programs were not applied to this program because it was just volunteer. It was not a time cut; it didn’t get you anything special; it didn’t get you a certificate. It was just Kelsey, volunteer teachers, and us learning. So, she had started the public policy program as um...because we’re all very interested in law and the legal aspects of what brought us here. And Kelsey encouraged us to improve our minds and be able to think in that manner. We had the class here, and we were able to do that. That was when this class, COF, broke off from that.

So, Kelsey was pivotal. She was able to work with DOC in the DOC. She didn’t ruffle any feathers. It’s very easy to make officers mad because maybe you need too much, or you have too much power—whatever the case may be with the internal workings of the correctional environment. But you see, Kelsey did that. She was very humble. She was very encouraging. She did not segregate people based on normal things that cause segregation within the prison environment. So, she was very open-minded. She gave everyone the opportunity, so I think that was very pivotal in getting us where we are right now.

**Vanessa:** I think another obstacle was that we lost people who have been here from the beginning by going to other facilities, we lost [them]...or they went home. And finding other people to replace...not that it’s been hard, it’s just that once you build a team and you rely on somebody—maybe this person has an expertise, they come in and they’re good on grant writing, and they do all the grant writing, and we just depend on them, and then, bam! They get uprooted and taken to a maximum facility. Now, somebody else has to step up. You have to find somebody else who’s good at grand writing. So that’s another obstacle that we’ve had to face.

**Natalie:** The reality of incarceration is that we’re not necessarily allowed to have emotional attachments or depend on people, so that’s something we face on a daily basis. When someone is taken out of the group, that is factual. Women in prison earn less money than men in prison jobs, but we have to have prison jobs so getting to classes [where you can’t earn anything] is hard. Women in prison, we are...we face higher disciplinary measures than men based off of the criminalizing of our specific responses and behaviors. We face obstacles to get to classes in order to participate, so it was very nice that we had Kelsey Kauffman, that now we have Andrew, that we have Jerri, and staff members who come in and believe that we’re worth something and provide us access to opportunities.

**Vanessa:** I would say that the percentage of success of this program has gotten higher now (laugh). I think it shot up a little bit. It started like 2%.

## **Q9: What are you most looking forward to?**

**Vanessa:** When it comes to COF, this is my vision—and I say this to Andrew all the time—we want pink hardhats, OK? [laughter] Everyone’s smiling about that. And I see the cutting of the ribbon to our first home is what I’m looking forward to because I just see that happening. I see the community coming together with fundraisers, ya’ know different kinds of things just to build up the community. I’m still looking forward to that.

**Kasey:** I’m excited to see the first family walking through the door. I can see the smiles on kids’ faces who have been tossed and turned around and finally getting to go somewhere and being relieved that they’re at home and they, ya’ know they don’t have to ask where they’re going to sleep, where they’re going to eat [crying], just to be at home and have their own room [weeping] and be able to go in there and say, “This is *my* room!” and not have to worry about what they’re going to do next. So, I’m excited to see that.

**Natalie:** I’m excited for the reentry, for the first home base to be bought and purchased and for us to be able to have women live there and reside there and just go out on work crews and implement skills that they’ve learned.

**Char’dae:** I think I’m excited about the mentor part. I plan on mentoring young girls before they actually get to where I’m sittin’ today. So that puts a smile on my face to know that I have the opportunity to maybe stop someone from going on the path that I have.

**Andrew:** Well, thank you ladies so very much. We appreciate your time. We appreciate you coming over to the education building on a Saturday when you’re not normally there. I hope that the audience here can begin to see a little bit about why I appreciate each of you and working with you so much. I thank this audience, for each of your questions and participation and interest, and hopefully you’ll think about the problem and be involved. Thank you all very much.

## **Conclusion**

The week following this presentation, Andrew and Jerri had the weekly class with the women at IWP. We went through a rough transcription of the questions and the answers. A realistic view was challenged, particularly as to what we could expect the efforts of COF to see within five to six years. But even though the vision we all have needs to have a dose of realism, we know that the positivity highlighted and discussed in this presentation is of utmost importance. A strength-based approach is vital, and these women must be recognized for and encouraged in the vision *they* seek to implement and see replicated by other prison populations.

The women and those working to assist them with their vision all face roadblocks. We need to educate the public, locate means of support and funding, and respectfully navigate the necessary and important requirements of prison administration. We all want and need to continue learning and growing together in relationships that see the value of one another, our families, our neighborhoods, cities, state, and nation. Hopefully, we will leave a legacy for future generations, and together we can be model images or restoration and redemption

## **Endnotes**

<sup>1</sup> NPR, *All Things Considered*, [www.npr.org/2017/11/01/559901323/female-inmates-in-indiana-pitch-plan-to-rehab-empty-houses-and-their-lives](http://www.npr.org/2017/11/01/559901323/female-inmates-in-indiana-pitch-plan-to-rehab-empty-houses-and-their-lives)

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## From Excalibur to Epic Allure: Recalibrating Redemption

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“He’s learning the rhythm of the town.”  
Senator Lindsey Graham on Donald Trump, quoted in “The President vs. The Presidency,”  
*New York Times*, December 10, 2017

### From a Rhetorical Vantage Point

Once upon a peninsula a President stepped into a White House Press briefing room, signaling that an announcement on North Korea was imminent. That evening, from a darkened driveway, a South Korean diplomat shared the news that talks between the U.S. and North Korea had been agreed to, perhaps as early as May.

Redemption typically is treated ontologically and ethically as a static entity, a triumph over the tumultuous. In this exploratory work, we examine redemption as a rhetorical process, replete with its own dynamic and rhythm. Our hypothesis is that this process is inherently linguistic, naming whom or what is “redeemable” and norming what is beyond redemption’s reach.

Moreover, pressures to procure redemption may exacerbate the process, particularly when the stakes are charged, the rhetorical environs energized, and the verdict up for grabs: According to Graham, “Everything’s possible, from complete disaster to a home run.”

Referring to Haberman, Thrush, and Baker’s “The President vs. the Presidency” article as catalyst and case study, we analyze the ways in which redemption is encoded. Our goal is to identify prototypes of redemption in the dynamic deliberative realm constituting the executive branch of the United States government.

### From a Mythical Starting Point

**Resolved:** THW recalibrate Joseph Campbell’s Mythic Structure as a model for mediating redemption.

Definition of terms:

- recalibrate: reconfigure; re-mark, according to a standard scale
- Joseph Campbell’s Mythic Structure: A narrative 12-stage model mapping the heroic quest, beginning with a call to adventure and culminating in return with the elixir. For the purposes of this exploratory study we will focus on stage 9: reward (seizing the sword). The reward may be tangible, such as a prize or honor or intangible, such as a secret revealed or reconciliation.
- model: A template or framework for analysis displaying plot points; analytic code
- mediating: managing or negotiating meaning redemption: from Latin *redimere*-to take, gain, procure

We offer the following three contentions, modeling Ernest Bormann’s Symbolic Convergence Theory (SCT) acronym. Bormann’s contentions provide us with categories developed by Dr. Allen as follows:

First, redemption is suspenseful. As in the case of announcing acceptance of North Korea's invitation for dialog, a sense of anticipatory suspense predominates the action.

Second, redemption is chaotic. A number of variables intermingle, aligning in new configurations, some of which may be contradictory with previous arrangements, expectations, or traditions.

Third, redemption is testimonial. Action alone cannot determine the meaning of seizing the sword. Only narrated testimony, ranging from foreign policy experts to pundits, endows the action with meaning by assigning priorities to possibilities.

The three elements of our contentions are displayed in Landler's *New York Times* article:

North Korea's leader, Kim Jong-un, has invited President Trump to meet for negotiations over its nuclear program, an audacious diplomatic overture that would bring together two strong-willed, idiosyncratic leaders who have traded threats of war.

The White House said that Mr. Trump had accepted the invitation, and Chung Eui-yong, a South Korean official who conveyed it, told reporters that the president would meet with Mr. Kim within two months.

"He expressed his eagerness to meet President Trump as soon as possible," Mr. Chung said at the White House on Thursday evening after meeting the president. Mr. Trump, he said, agreed to "meet Kim Jong-un by May to achieve permanent denuclearization."

### **From a Mythical Staging Point**

Mythical construct is most commonly exemplified using the hero myth, as formulated by Joseph Campbell in his classic work *The Hero With a Thousand Faces*. Campbell's book identifies a lengthy Hero's Journey unwillingly undertaken by unintentional heroes who have commonly been thrust into the "hero situation" by a combination of events they see as improper or unfair or due to an injustice, and they fight back against great odds in an effort to right the perceived injustice. But the hero myth is not the only mythical construct used by the new media in their stories. In other works, such as *The Power of Myth*, Campbell identified other mythical constructs that describe individuals.

Myth scholar Jack Lule drew on Campbell's work to identify five mythical constructs in his book *Daily News, Eternal Stories: The Mythological Role of Journalism*, Lule wrote that modern journalism uses seven common mythical constructs in daily reporting: the Hero, the Victim, the Good Mother, the Scapegoat, the Trickster, the Other World, and the Flood. As Dr. Allen and I have documented in previous research, the news media continually utilize mythical construct in stories about a variety of topics. As we have found, mythological structures have expanded beyond traditional structures to include Ernest Bormann's Symbolic Convergence Theory as previously noted and as extended by Dr. Allen.

In this research, we found numerous examples of redemption in the categories labeled by Dr. Allen, which function nicely as extensions of mythical constructs as noted by Campbell and Lule. These categories particularly fit into the Resurrection stage of the Hero myth. As Christopher Vogler noted in *Excerpts from Myth and the Movies, Stuart Voytilla*, the Resurrection places a hero in the most dangerous of situations, a situation that not only could harm the hero but the entire world, and allows others to help the hero achieve the final victory. As will be noted below, the examples of journalistic content demonstrating each of Allen's categories exemplify the tenets of the Resurrection stage of the Hero myth.

### **Methodology**

To develop data for analysis, we downloaded transcripts of news broadcasts from ABC, CBS, NBC, CNN, MSNBC, and Fox News, as well as NPR, and articles from the *New York Times*, and *Washington Post*. These articles covered the time period from January 1, 2018, to March 9, 2018, but were mainly focused on the blockbuster announcement of the anticipated summit between U.S. President Donald J. Trump and North Korean dictator Kim Jong Un. Once the transcripts and stories were collected a content analysis was performed on each. The basic unit of examination was the paragraph, and each paragraph was coded as either Suspenseful, Chaotic, Testimonial, or Other. The Other category included directional paragraphs—e.g. “Correspondent reports life from London”—and straight news statements that had no mythical construct—e.g. “President Trump announced this morning he is willing to meet with North Korean leader Kim Jung Un.” Ten percent of the instances were coded by another coder and a Scott’s Pi was calculated to test intercoder reliability. The test yielded acceptable results of .85 for Suspenseful, .9 for Testimonial, and .88 for Chaotic. Of the three categories, the most common was Chaotic with 75 paragraphs, followed closely by Testimonial with 72, and then Suspenseful with 39 paragraphs. The total of 186 paragraphs coded in one of the three categories represented slightly more than half (54.1%) of the total number of paragraphs, which was 344.

### **Redemption is Suspenseful**

Unsurprisingly this construct appeared frequently in news stories about the announced summit meeting. Coverage demonstrating this construct centered on the uncertainties generated by the summit announcement: when the meeting will be held, where it will be held, what topics will be covered, what topics will be discussed, uncertainty about whether any preconditions have been negotiated, etc. For instance, in its March 9 article “White House Says Trump-Kim Meeting Contingent on Concrete, Verifiable Actions by Pyongyang” author Anne Gearan noted that “talks would be about denuclearization, but it is not clear that Pyongyang agreed to do anything toward that end before a meeting that South Korea said would take place ‘by May’.” In her article Gearan pointed to two unanswered questions: Lack of an exact date and what preconditions had been negotiated. Similar questions about what items were on the negotiating table were raised by the *New York Times* in its March 6 article “Raising Hopes, North Korea Offers to Talk about Its Nuclear Arsenal.” Authors Choe Sang-Hun and Mark Landler wrote: “North Korea, which has been saying its nuclear weapons are nonnegotiable, did not immediately provide its own version of what Mr. Kim had offered. That initial silence fed cautions that he was raising premature optimism, or perhaps strategizing to buy time.” Appearing on National Public Radio’s *Morning Edition*, *Wall Street Journal* reporter Jonathan Cheng speculated with NPR reporter Rachel Martin about a possible location for the talks: “Well, we don’t have a lot of specifics yet, but one of the venues will definitely be Gangneung, which is a city where all of the ice events are going to be held—so the figure skating and the hockey. And then the other venue is going to be in Seoul, the capital of South Korea.” CBS echoed questions about when, where, and what on *CBS This Morning*, as Lisa Collins from the Center for Strategic and International Studies detailed questions to host Alex Wagner: “...I think there are real questions about, first, what will the two leaders discuss or negotiate when they meet, where will the summit take place, and then do the two countries even agree on the same concept of denuclearization or a freeze of the North Korean nuclear program.”

### **Redemption is Chaotic**

As noted earlier, this construct was the most common of the three, with 75 instances noted. That represents 40.3 percent of the total paragraphs in which one of the constructs was noted. The *New York Times* used this construct to offer commentary as well as news coverage in its articles, particularly in Mark Landler and Choe Sang-Hun’s article “U.S. Opens Door to North Korea Talks, A Victory for South’s President.” For instance, the article’s lead paragraph said: “The Trump administration, scrambling to avoid a rift with an ally, has told South Korea it is open to holding preliminary talks with North Korea...” The second paragraph continued the frame of the talks creating chaos in the administration: “The decision, which came after Vice President Mike Pence attended the Winter Olympics in Pyeongchang, South Korea,

and met with Mr. Moon, reflects how thoroughly the diplomatic channel between the North and South has upended the administration's calculations." The *Times* also opined about Trump's vacillation and willingness to undercut Secretary of State Rex Tillerson: "Deciphering the Trump administration's signals on North Korea is tricky, given the president's unpredictability. Mr. Trump has repeatedly contradicted Mr. Tillerson when he has floated diplomatic openings. But Mr. Pence, officials point out, received his marching orders from Mr. Trump shortly before he left for Asia, and he was unlikely to deviate from them." Fox News also noted the chaotic change, but with less commentary when correspondent Gillian Turner quoted Eurasia Group managing director Evan Medeiros pointing to how the announcement was at least partly due to changes in other countries' policies: "Certainly in the Obama administration, pressure sanctions and then isolation were a key part of our approach to North Korea but we were limited simply because the Chinese weren't willing to do as much as they are today and even the South Korean and Japanese weren't willing to do as much as they are doing today." On MSNBC, political commentator Rachel Maddow used more folksy language but pointed to the same chaotic rumblings noted by others concerning the announcement of impending talks, particularly to South Korean officials: "Inside the Oval Office late Thursday, so last night, President Donald Trump interrupted a trio of top South Korean officials as they analyzed an offer to meet from North Korean leader Kim John Un and outlined possible diplomatic options. Mr. Trump cut short the discussion, saying, OK, OK, tell them I'll do it." She went on to imply disorganization and chaos in the White House as a result of the President's decision: "Well, because of the strangeness of the announcement, and its novelty, today, there was only a half measure of surprise when White House Press Secretary Sarah Huckabee Sanders at her press briefing walked back the president's commitment from last night, saying actually there wouldn't be any summit until North Korea met a bunch of provable preconditions. Interestingly, though, after she said that at the press briefing, some unnamed White House official clarified that, even though Sarah Huckabee Sanders might have tried to take back the president's saying yes, her take-back was itself now being taken back." In the *Washington Post*, reporters Carol Morello and John Hudson pointed to how the abrupt announcement had greatly changed long-standing diplomatic practice as applied to agreements between countries: "With most big international treaties, the leaders of the countries involved swoop in at the end to cap a diplomatic success. But that well-worn script is being upended, despite negotiations that would be inherently more complicated than two previous initiatives to get North Korea to give up its nuclear weapons program in exchange for aid—largely because North Korea now has an arsenal of nuclear weapons in hand." That paragraph followed several outlining how the White House's message about the summit had been confused and, after the fact, added the requirement that "concrete and verifiable steps" must precede any summit.

### **Redemption is Testimonial**

As noted earlier, the Testimonial construct occurs when pundits, commentators, or newsmakers provide opinions about the effect of an action or situation, and/or discuss possibilities and priorities. The media outlets studied for this research used this construct frequently, with the number of instances just a few less than the instances of Chaos. Instances of this construct largely occurred in one of three ways: a) comments by President Trump about the summit; b) comments by pundits/experts about the summit and its meaning; c) comments by media outlet employees such as reporters, show hosts, and the like. Because they are longer and have the room to offer more in-depth coverage, it is not surprising that newspaper articles quoted numerous experts and pundits. The television shows featured experts and pundits on their shows, but the time limitations of news broadcasts limited the breadth of both the number and diversity of viewpoints. For example, in their *Washington Post* article Carol Morello and John Hudson included quotes from five pundits/experts ranging from a former Clinton administration official to current National Security Advisor John Bolton and Republican members of Congress. They included former Clinton official Wendy Sherman, who helped negotiate and write the Iran Nuclear deal in the Obama administration, who encouraged defining expectations precisely: "The mismatch of expectations led to some of the problems in the past. They thought they were getting normalization of relations with the United States, which never happened, and we thought we were stopping their ability to stock fissile material." The pair also quoted

Bolton warily praising the summit: “Bolton, for his part, offered conditioned praise for Trump, saying Friday he expected the president to deliver a warning about U.S. willingness to use military force.” The *New York Times* quoted a combination of named and unidentified sources, including Vice President Mike Pence, U.S. Director of National Intelligence Dan Coats and South Korean President Moon Jae-in, along with other South Korean government officials. Another quote, however, came simply from “analysts.” As with the *Post* articles the array of sources was significantly wider than the television and radio programs. For instance, CBS relied on Center for Strategic and International Studies fellow Lisa Collins as anchors Alex Wagner and Anthony Mason tried to discern the meaning of the summit in terms of the participants’ expectations: “I think what the North Koreans probably are asking for is something along the lines of guaranteeing their security, and then on the United States side I think the U.S. would be asking for some guarantee that the—that the North Koreans are serious about denuclearization, which could be an agreement to stop production of their nuclear materials, fissile materials to stop testing nuclear weapons and ballistic missiles, to stop producing ballistic missiles, so any number of those things could potentially be an ask on the United States’ part.” Similarly, Fox News correspondent Gillian Turner quoted “Little Dragon” author Dean Cheng and Evan Medeiros of the Eurasia Group for her report on “Special Report with Bret Baier.” Medeiros’ response was noted earlier, but Cheng said the U.S. should expect a long list of demands from North Korea: “You have a range of possible things that North Korea could demand, everything from enormous financial payoffs. North Korea feels that it is entitled to reparations for everything from the losses it suffered during the Korean War through the sanctions that have been imposed upon North Korea since 1953.” Longer format broadcast/cable shows tended to feature a larger number of experts, though not always a greater diversity of viewpoints. For instance, MSNBC host Chris Matthews devoted an entire “Hardball” episode to the North Korean summit and its ramifications. However, the sources featured included two NBC journalists, plus a journalist from Reuters and one from NPR. Only two outside sources were featured on the program: former deputy assistant Secretary of Defense in the Obama administration Dr. Evelyn Farkas, and Joe Cirincione, a former national security advisor to Secretaries of State Hillary Clinton and John Kerry. Farkas discussed what she thinks North Korean leader Kim Jong-un wants out of talks and urged people not to get too excited about the talks: “Chris, he definitely wants respect. There’s no question about that. But I would caution everyone not to get overly enthusiastic. I think we’re excited now because again, in the contrast between this negotiating and fire and fury military action, which is what we are hearing out of the White House is scary. And so we are happy to have engagement.” For his part, Cirincione expressed surprise that Kim agreed to the talks without a promise for anything in return: “This is actually a moment that we very few of us thought we would ever see, the North Koreans agreeing to put denuclearization on the table, agreeing to talks with the South Koreans, inviting the President of the United States to have the talks. Agreeing to suspend their nuclear missile tests while they are doing it in exchange for what? In exchange for nothing.” In several instances, television news/commentary programs invited fellow journalists to provide opinions as experts. For instance, Rachel Maddow invited NBC News Chief Foreign Affairs Correspondent Andrea Mitchell to join her for a segment during her March 9, 2018 show. As previously noted, Chris Matthews invited extensive comment from NBC correspondents Kelly Cobiella and Halle Jackson, plus Ayesha Rascoe from Reuters, Tamara Keith from NPR, and Margaret Carlson from *The Daily Beast*. And NPR invited *Wall Street Journal* reporter Jonathan Cheng to join Rachel Martin on *Morning Edition*.

Following the evidence presented above, it is demonstrable that news media coverage of the North Korea summit proposal included all of Dr. Allen’s categories within the construct of myth.

Thank you, counsel. The resolution is submitted.

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## Possibilities of Redemption in Alfred Andersch's *Sansibar*

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Published in 1957, the novel *Sansibar, oder der letzte Grund* (*Zanzibar, or Flight to Afar*) is generally considered to have been his most noteworthy critical and popular success.<sup>1</sup> A semi-autobiographical novel of private resistance to public oppression, the novel recapitulates a crisis of commitment and engagement similar to that which Andersch claims to have experienced himself during and after WW II.

Not unlike the hero in *Sansibar*, Andersch was an erstwhile member of the Communist Party of Germany (KPD) and a communist youth leader. He was imprisoned for three months in 1933 and later claimed to have left the KPD out of disillusionment with the party's lack of any effective resistance to Nazism. Then, in 1944, he deserted from the German Army to spend the remaining months of the war in a Louisiana internment camp.<sup>2</sup>

At first glance, *Sansibar* recounts a daring nighttime escape over water. But I would like to demonstrate how the novel problematizes ideas of desertion, escape, and freedom and how it hypothesizes that the roads of heroism and redemption more often than not begin and end in the banalities of coincidence and the forces of necessity.

In the late fall of 1937 the six main characters of *Sansibar* find themselves by choice, chance, or necessity in the small Northeast-German seaside town of Rerik. Their common destiny—flight from the Nazis—predicates a new kind of imprisonment, a radical interconnectedness and inexorable interdependence upon one another. Such an interdependence reveals various modes of resistance (political, military, religious, esthetic) as well as various modes of the human being *in extremis* (as victim, coward, hero, martyr).<sup>3</sup>

It is the characters in *Sansibar*, I would suggest, who constitute the moral landscape within which the possibilities of individual responses to totalitarian state terrorism are explored. The six characters—a teenaged boy, a young Jewish woman, a disillusioned KP functionary, a pastor, and a small, wooden sculpture deemed decadent and destined for destruction by the authorities—and the multiple points of view made possible by their stream-of-consciousness narratives form a shifting composition of motives and action. Identical events are often narrated from different perspectives and overlap, in that some of the plot already narrated by one character is repeated from a different perspective by the narrative voice of another character.<sup>4</sup> Further, narrative time and narrated time overlap as the plot transpires from afternoon to the morning of the next day.

Two of the characters—a fifteen-year old boy and a young Jewish woman, Judith Levin, fleeing the Nazis—fill the role of the innocent victim. Having long ago lost his alcoholic father, a fisherman, the boy is apprenticed to the fisherman Knudsen and lives in childhood utopian fantasies of escape and freedom: “The Mississippi, that would be the thing, the boy thought, on the Mississippi you could just grab a canoe and paddle away, at least that’s what it said in Huckleberry Finn.”(7)<sup>5</sup>

In contrast, Judith Levin’s flight—not of fantasy but of survival—is set into motion by the last words of her dying mother: “Do you want to wait, until they come and get you?” (18)<sup>6</sup> Having enjoyed a life of privilege up to now, Judith’s crisis is as much one of identity as of escape, in that she is required by circumstances to be clever and appear seductive, as she takes a room in an inn at the harbor in Rerik with the hope of finding passage on a foreign ship, all while she fends off the innkeeper’s demands to see her

passport. Just as her ill-formed plans begin collapsing into desperation, she is noticed by Gregor, the KPD functionary, who recognizes her plight and includes her in his own plans of escape.

Plagued with disgust for the Communist Party, self-doubt, and bad consciousness, the figure of Gregor<sup>7</sup> arrives in Rerik as a Party courier sent by Moscow ostensibly to contact the Party cell in Rerik. But bitterly disillusioned with his Party's inability to mount any real resistance against the Nazi juggernaut, and with himself for a loss of faith in all movements, parties, and ideologies, he decides to desert and escape, just as he is about to enter Rerik on his bicycle.

As he does so, Gregor experiences a moral-esthetic epiphany at the sight of the many church towers of Rerik.<sup>8</sup> Rather than passive objects for human eyes, the towers appear to be gazing at, questioning, and challenging him: "a slate-covered strip from the church towers erupted in red, in back of them, the Baltic Sea, a wall of blue." (21)<sup>9</sup>

But while waiting in the church for Knudsen, his Party contact, Gregor is impressed and moved by the one character of the novel who remains mute yet convincing—a three-foot wooden statue of a seminary pupil reading a book: "The statue depicted a young boy reading and dressed in a long monk's smock. . . ." (42)<sup>10</sup>

As he learns from the pastor of the church that this *Reading Seminarian* is scheduled for deportation, and as he meets Judith soon thereafter, Gregor's personal flight turns into a moral-communal imperative to engage himself for others with the same calculated strategies and tactics—a pragmatics of heroism, or "cold romanticism"—which he had learned in Moscow.<sup>11</sup> Of course, by giving in to the "temptation of the virtuous deed" (in the Brechtian sense), by seeking salvation for others, Gregor opens the possibility of rescuing himself morally as well as physically.

However, any real, physical escape or rescue, any realization of an heroic act of flight over water was predicated upon the banality of a boat, the boat of the fisherman Knudsen. Surly and suspicious, Knudsen has also abandoned his KP membership, as well as any other overt resistance to the Nazis, who are threatening to take away his mentally unstable wife Bertha. To his dismay, his recalcitrance is besieged from all sides 1) by the pastor who is scheming to save the statue by convincing Knudsen to take it to Sweden and a church in Skillinge and 2) by the KP forcing him to rendezvous with Gregor, and 3) by Gregor himself, as he explores his options of escape.

But most extreme is the case of pastor Helander, a WW I veteran crippled by and dying of the festering, now gangrenous stump of his "Verdun leg," his diabetes, and by an ill-fitting prosthesis. A skeptic and agnostic in the service of God, Helander wants to rescue the little wooden statue as a final meaningful act in a world that, for him, no longer has meaning. As he meditates in his study and gazes out at the vast windowless brick wall of the church transept, Helander finds no writing on the wall, no explanation for a *deus absconditus*, a God himself guilty of desertion, of leaving the world in darkness and terror.

As already hinted above, amid the maelstrom of human characters, the wooden figure of a small boy reading remains deafeningly silent. While waiting in the church for Knudsen, Gregor is drawn to this one non-religious object in the church:



“He was just reading. He was reading carefully, . . . with extreme concentration. . . . His arms were hanging at his sides, but they seemed capable at any moment to lift hand and finger and point to the book, as if to say: ‘that’s not true.’ He looked like someone who could close the book at any time and just walk away.” (42)<sup>12</sup>

Not a fiction, the sculpture in question is Ernst Barlach’s *Lesender Klosterschüler* (*Reading Seminarian*), a wooden statue in the modern expressionistic style emblematic for the Nazis’ designation of all modern, experimental, or abstract culture as degenerate art (*entartete Kunst*).

Institutionalized in the infamous Degenerate Art Exhibition of 1937, which traveled for years throughout Germany and was visited by millions, such culture was understood not only as derivative of anomaly and disease (in the medical sense), but also as sign and symptom of everything in German society, history, and politics that stood in the way of the new Germany. By instrumentalizing a latent fear, suspicion, and mistrust toward esthetic otherness, Nazi propaganda sought to manufacture hatred of all cultural expression that could not be readily harnessed to Nazi ideology of blood, soil, the fatherland, and Aryan myth.

The *Reading Seminarian* is deemed degenerate not only because it fails the traditional esthetic criteria of realism, mass appeal, and idealistic affirmation. The little wooden statue must be destroyed, because it provokes both indifference and resistance toward the contemporary order of things. Alone, inward, and independent—conditions all invoked and suggested by the simple act of reading, an act of esthetic resistance<sup>13</sup>—he represents the anathema of the totalitarian-fascist personality, the antithesis of fascist heroism rooted in war, duty, and blind obedience.

As Knudsen’s boat approaches the shores of Sweden, the boy asks Judith:

“Why is he being rescued,” he pointed to the package with the statue. . . .  
“Did you take a close look at him,” Judith asked the boy. “Sure,” he replied. “Doesn’t he look to you like someone who reads all kinds of books?” “He only reads the Bible,” said the boy, “that’s why they put him in a church.” “He reads whatever he wants, that’s why they wanted to destroy him and that’s why he is now going to where he can read as he pleases.” “I read whatever I want,” said the boy. “Better not tell anyone, she replied.” (146)<sup>14</sup>

How do the attempts at flight and freedom ultimately conclude in the novel *Sansibar*? In the end, two of the characters (Judith and the statue) do achieve actual freedom, while the others attain—each in his own fashion—moral freedom and redemption because they involve the will to sacrifice.

While Pastor Helander does succeed in convincing Knudsen to transport the *Reading Seminarian* to safety in Sweden, Gregor gives the impression that he also wants to be on board. Yet, at the final, decisive moment, Gregor—who has employed the tactic of trickery with Knudsen by not mentioning Judith—sacrifices his own physical freedom for Judith by declining to go, thus convincing Knudsen of his sincerity and moral integrity. Returning to Rerik from the peninsula from which Knudsen has departed with the statue, Judith, and the boy, Gregor signals to Helander that the boat has left safely.

Helander's flight now becomes one of personal horror and heroism, in that he is doomed, once the Nazis come to confiscate the statue and discover it missing. But the engagement and commitment Helander demonstrates in saving the statue undergo a final transfiguration through his decision to greet the authorities, with a hail of bullets, as they break down the door. As he dies, Helander feels that God—himself made dependent upon human actions—has returned, not as an abstract, transcendent entity, but as physical and existential sacrifice: "He turned and stared at the church wall and read the script. He hardly noticed as the bullets burned into him. I'm alive, he thought. . . . The bullets him everywhere." (156)<sup>15</sup>

Lastly and almost as an afterthought, the boy, as he is left alone for awhile on the forested shores of Sweden, his Sansibar, intuits for the first time the difference between fantasy and reality. So beguiling in daydreams, just simply disappearing in reality is not possible. He returns to Germany with Knudsen.

During the short afternoon, evening, and night of their ensuing escape, the human characters of this adventure, particularly Gregor and Helander, themselves undergo a transformation, as they become aware that it is not enough to flee, but to know why one is fleeing: freedom *from* must be coupled with freedom *for*. Such a combination of freedom and commitment, as allegorized by the Reading Seminarian, can occur only in the individual located in reality—i.e., what could and would one actually do in such actual circumstances—not in the mythologies of fantasy, faith, or ideology.

By posing and exploring the relationship between flight and resistance, the novel presents the act of redemption as a leap into the abyss, a leap seldom taken in the real world of flesh and fear, but sometimes forced upon us by the necessities of "no way out". Flight and freedom are heroic roads in *Sansibar*, because those fleeing have experienced the consciousness of the consequences that such a flight implies.

#### Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> *Sansibar* was rendered as the radio play *Aktion ohne Fahnen (Operation without Flags)* in 1958 and as a film (directed by Bernhard Wicki in 1986).

<sup>2</sup> Alfred Andersch details his desertion from the German *Wehrmacht* in his autobiography *Kirschen der Freiheit*, 1952.

<sup>3</sup> Drama and urgency of plot are heightened through a modernistic collapsing of narrative time with narrated time, as the whole novel stretches seamlessly from the early afternoon to early morning of the following day. Aside from the unity of time, a unity of place is also achieved, in that all the action occurs in Rerik around the harbor and the adjoining hotel (Wappen von Wismar) and church of St. Gregory.

<sup>4</sup> As Judith Ryan points out in *The Uncompleted Past*, although a modernistic narrative structure, Andersch's multiple, interior narration is not dense or confusable, and the reader is never in doubt as to who is speaking, as can sometimes be the case with writers like Grass, Böll, or Faulkner. The novel places communication over esthetic esotericism and experimentation.

<sup>5</sup> "Der Mississippi wäre das Richtige, dachte der Junge, auf dem Mississippi könnte man einfach Kanu klauen und wegfahren, wenn es stimmte, was in *Huckleberry Finn* stand." All translations mine.

<sup>6</sup> "Willst du warten, bis die dich abholen?"

<sup>7</sup> Throughout the novel it is evident that Gregor represents the fictional double of the author Andersch.

<sup>8</sup> For Gregor the central overwhelming image pregnant with moral significance —apart from the *Reading Seminar*—is the Black Sea at the city of Tarasovka in the Crimea, which, as Gregor’s Red Army tank brigade reaches the heights overlooking the city, resembles a massive golden shield, as the sea is rendered golden by the setting sun reflecting off its waters.

<sup>9</sup> “Aber die Stadt war zum staunen. Sie war nichts als ein dunkles, schieferfarbener Strich, aus dem die Türme aufwuchsen . . . als rote Blöcke in das Blau der Ostsee eingelassen . . .”

<sup>10</sup> “Die Figur stellte einen jungen Mann dar. Der in einem Buch las . . . trug ein Mönchsgewand . . . einen langen Kittel.”

<sup>11</sup> For Gregor, heroism without tactical planning and rational action is doomed to failure, to martyrdom.

<sup>12</sup> “Er las ganz einfach. Er las aufmerksam . . . in höchster Konzentration. Seine Arme hingen herab, aber sie schienen bereit, jeden Augenblick einen Finger auf den Text zu führen, der zeigen würde: das ist nicht wahr. . . . Er sieht aus wie einer, der jederzeit das Buch zuklappen und aufstehen kann . . .”

<sup>13</sup> See Peter Weiss, *Die Ästhetik des Widerstands*, for an in-depth exploration of the possibilities of cultural resistance to political oppression.

<sup>14</sup> “Warum muß der nach drüben? Er deutete auf das Paket mit der Figur. . . . Er sieht doch aus wie einer, der alle Bücher liest, oder? Er liest nur die Bibel, sagte der junge. Deswegen war er doch in der Kirche aufgestellt. . . . Er liest alles, was er will. Weil er alles liest, was er will. Sollte er eingesperrt werden. Und deswegen muß er jetzt wohin, wo er lesen kann, soviel er will. Ich lese auch alles, was ich will, sagte der Junge. Sag es lieber niemand! meinte Judith.”

<sup>15</sup> “Er wandte sich um und blickte auf die Wand, . . . er spürte kaum, wie das Feuer in ihn eindrang. Er dachte nur, ich bin lebendig, als die kleinen heißen Feuer in ihm brannten. Sie trafen ihn überall.”

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**Osler's *Man's Redemption of Man*:  
Preemptive Protection, Attitudinal Inoculation, and Smallpox Inoculation**

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Sir William Osler's *Man's Redemption of Man* articulates a robust defense of humankind's advances in preventive medicine, with special attention to small pox inoculation, its critics, and Osler's defense of inoculation. To that end, he employs a witty allusion to refute anti-vaccination challenges. This clever segment—and the theme of hope that runs through the entire address—likely led reviewers to deem the work “of a most cheerful character” (“Book Reviews” 284), a “little address” that “shows Osler in his happiest vein” (Packard vii). Since its publication in the early 1900s, Osler's address continues to be referenced in anti-vaccination rhetoric analysis (Morgan and Poland), speeches to medical students (Rogers), and other contemporary health communication forums.

Osler—“[t]his remarkable physician, teacher, essayist, lecturer, historian, and bibliographer” (White 80) and of whom “no one will hesitate in placing...in the select circle of great physicians of all time” (Knight 4)—delivered *Man's Redemption of Man, A Lay Sermon*, to students in McEwan Hall at the University of Edinburgh on July 2, 1910 as part of the meeting of the National Association for the Prevention of Tuberculosis. Francis Packard summarizes the address succinctly, as:

Beginning with the statement that to man there had been published three gospels; of his soul, of his goods and of his body, Osler dismissed the first two briefly with a few words somewhat tinged with sadness, but of the third gospel, that of man's body, he spoke with glad enthusiasm, dealing as he did with man's redemption of man by his conquest of nature, as illustrated by the discovery of anesthesia, the discovery and removal of the causes of septic infection, and the wonderful work accomplished in the field of infectious diseases towards the total elimination of diseases such as smallpox, typhoid fever, yellow fever, malaria and tuberculosis, closing with the glad note that man no longer looks back on a Paradise Lost but forward to a Paradise to be regained. (vii)

The address was reflective, in its style and rhetorical devices, of Osler's larger body of work, admired for its thoughtfulness, creativity, and eloquence. One critic noted: “The leaven of science in his literary work served to raise it ‘above the common dough’ and to give it specific as well as universal purpose” (White 80).

One such specific purpose of *Man's Redemption of Man*, I argue here, is to offer an (attitudinal) inoculation treatment of sorts on the topic of (medical) inoculation; that is, to protect positive attitudes toward vaccinations against attacks on vaccinations. Attitudinal inoculation, first introduced by the social psychologist William McGuire in the early 1960s (McGuire), and now, one of the most—if not *the* most—studied theories of resistance to influence (Compton), describes how a belief (or attitude) can be made resistant to future change in much the same way that a body can be made resistant to viral threat: through preexposure to a weakened form of the challenge (Compton, McGuire). It is wonderfully apt that rhetoric on inoculation (smallpox) would parallel a theory of inoculation (attitudinal).

In some ways, Osler's address share similarities with Rev. William Cooper's (1721) *Letter to a Friend in the Country*, which took up the cause of small pox inoculations in the face of attacks on grounds of “scruples” in Boston (Compton and Kaylor). Both Cooper and Osler defend inoculation as a means to protect against small pox against the attacks of others. Where the two works are most notably different, though, are in the rhetorical form used to refute such attacks. As Compton and Kaylor contend, Cooper's

*Letter to a Friend in the Country* follows traditional processes of attitudinal inoculation, including both a threat component (a warning of the influence of anti-vaccination voices) and refutational preemption (a raising and refuting of arguments against small pox vaccination, i.e., presenting a weakened version of the attack) (Compton, McGuire).

Osler's *Man's Redemption of Man* takes a different approach. Missing is an explicit threat component, or indeed, a sense of urgency to respond to the anti-vaccination rhetoric. Osler notes, instead, that "[s]ome months ago I was twitted by the Editor of the *Journal of the Anti-Vaccination League* for maintaining a curious silence on the subject" (Osler 25). The Anti-Vaccination League "provided a nucleus for opponents of vaccination" (Wolfe and Sharpe 430) and launched sharp rebuttals to pro-vaccination arguments.

Perhaps listeners were strategically set up for the tone that would follow, as Osler chooses the verb "twit" to note the challenge raised by the Editor of the *Journal of the Anti-Vaccination League*. Osler offered his take on the anti-vaccination position in a witty taunt, outlined in a hypothetical and building to a morbid, albeit seemingly teasing, conclusion. Unlike Cooper, who offered a point-by-point refutation of anti-vaccination sentiments, Osler launches into a "deal" with vaccination critics, a "Mount Carmel-like challenge to any ten unvaccinated priests of Baal" (Osler 25). This set-up provides an allusion with the story of Elijah, who challenged prophets of Baal in a feat on Mount Carmel—to implore their respective deities to cause a sacrifice to catch fire and burn. He asked for "any ten unvaccinated priests of Baal" (Osler 25) to accept his challenge, to "help in the next severe epidemic" (Osler 26). He continues: "I should choose three members of Parliament, three anti-vaccination doctors...and four anti-vaccination propagandists" (Osler 26). We can only speculate here as to the numbers Osler uses here—the total of ten, and the distribution among politicians, doctors, and propagandists. Perhaps it is of note that, among the three groups, Osler invites more propagandists to his challenge than the others.

Next, after setting up two general sides to the issue of vaccination, warning of counterattitudinal rhetoric and of future health challenges, Osler concludes his description of the challenge with:

And I will make this promise—neither to jeer nor to jibe when they catch the disease, but to look after them as brothers; and for the three or four who are certain to die I will try to arrange the funerals with all the pomp and ceremony of an anti-vaccination demonstration. (Osler 26)

If one were to take Osler's words here literally, the sentiment seems quite harsh. In the context of an address called "cheerful" ("Book Reviews" 284), and the format of a humorous anecdote, however, we can interpret the rhetoric as mocking. We can also, I argue here, interpret the rhetoric as *inoculating*.

Osler weakens anti-vaccination sentiments—not by raising and then refuting arguments against vaccination, as has been the case of other medical vaccination rebuttals to criticism, such as Cooper's work (Compton and Kaylor) mentioned earlier. Instead, Osler weakens attacks on vaccination through mocking humor. Humor has not received much attention from an inoculation theory perspective, although some work has pointed to inoculation's ability to protect *against* (Lim and Ki) and *with* (Warner, Hawthorne, and Hawthorne) political humor.

Such limited attention to humor is indicative, perhaps, of inoculation theory's historical focus on cognitions. Inoculation as a rhetorical strategy was long thought to be a cognitive process—a process of reasoning and logical refutation (Compton). On the one hand, Osler's writing reflects such an attention to logos, to evidence and science. On the other, we see something else reflected,

the sense that a power greater than the individual exists in the universe,  
that the experience of this power is of supreme value, and that through this

experience life acquires a new meaning, although the experience cannot be arrived at through the operation of reason. (Knight 10)

We see this in the general sentiment of the text—the calls to see the world through value lenses, through themes of redemption. Dr. William W. Francis, Osler’s “cousin, student, and great admirer” (Futcher 477), referred to Osler’s approach as “a consummate feat...of tactful tightrope-walking...leaving believers their belief and doubters their doubt and yet being patently honest” (478). We see this non-rational approach, too, in the mocking humor of Osler’s refutation, as mentioned previously.

Similarly, in their analysis of attitudinal inoculation strategies employed to advocate small pox inoculation in Reverend Cooper’s *Letter to a Friend in the Country*, Compton and Kaylor argued that it was more than rhetorical style for Cooper to reflect attitudinal/psychological inoculation strategies to deflect small pox inoculation criticisms, that it was, more to the point, a demonstration of the practice of inoculation itself, of subjecting readers to weakened doses of threatening material to instill resistance to stronger arguments that would come later. Perhaps we see something similar at work in Osler’s address, evidence for Osler’s claim in an earlier essay that “man misses a good part of his education who does not get knocked about a bit by his colleagues in discussions and criticisms” (“The Functions” 74). Osler’s willingness to confront criticism—to include reference to it in his speech—shows a willingness to wrestle in debate, to challenge opponents and not ignore them.

In an assessment of Osler’s speech text, one reviewer concluded: “The monograph, though eloquently phrased, teaches nothing not already known to all physicians, and indeed to the general public” (“Book Reviews” 284). But perhaps this was not Osler’s goal. Instead, I offer this case that Osler’s redemption message was not one of education, but instead, of inoculation.

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## Media Portrayals and Mythic Constructs in the 2016 Presidential Campaigns

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When former Secretary of State Hillary R. Clinton announced her candidacy for another run to become President of the United States she attempted to achieve goals for herself and women across the country, but also to redeem her reputation as a failed candidate who lost her 2008 presidential bid, and her reputation for dishonesty and unfairly escaping punishment for perceived shady actions earlier in her career.

In brief remarks during her video announcement on April 12, 2015, Clinton tried to position herself as an ordinary person, saying that “everyday Americans need a champion and I want to be that champion.” (Clinton, video remarks, 2015) She studiously avoided any reference to a perception of entitlement to the nomination or presidency, rather saying she would “hit the road and earn your vote.” (ibid)

Although this event marked the unofficial kickoff to her campaign, the formal announcement came two months later with a major rally and campaign speech on Roosevelt Island in New York City on June 13, 2015. (Harlow, June 13, 2015)

Media coverage of the campaign would exasperate both candidates and supporters from across the political spectrum. Trump supporters applauded coverage when it publicized Trump accomplishments and developments in what they saw as Clinton political scandals. They criticized what they saw as the media’s lack of effort in covering Clinton scandals in depth and coverage of Trump foibles. Conversely, Clinton supporters railed against the media for what they saw as a lack of coverage of Trump scandals and unjustified coverage of minor Clinton mistakes, and particularly criticized coverage of FBI Director James Comey’s July 5, 2016 news conference and his letter to Congress submitted on October 28, 2016.

For their part, the media coverage of the two candidates varied widely. From the beginning Clinton was covered positively as the first woman candidate and as the woman trying to shatter that glass ceiling. At the same time, the media wondered whether Clinton could overcome past scandals and her reputation as cold and aloof. Trump was covered fairly positively until he became the Republican nominee. At that point, the coverage of both candidates turned decidedly negative, as shown by the magazine covers below:



The purpose of this research, however, focuses on whether and how the broadcast/cable television networks' coverage helped to redeem and rebrand Hillary Clinton as she ran again for president of the United States. To do so, this research attempted to identify language that contributed either to the redemption of Clinton's reputation and portrayed her as somewhat of a hero, or to the perpetuation of negative Clinton perceptions.

To identify redemptive language the author adopted mythological structures first promulgated by Joseph Campbell in his classic work *The Hero With a Thousand Faces*, in which he introduced the twelve stages of the hero's experience from first perceiving an injustice to returning with glory. (Campbell, 1949) Media scholar Jack Lule developed Campbell's work further and directly applied it to how media use mythological constructs as they write stories today. In his work *Daily News, Eternal Stories: The Mythological Role of Journalism* Lule identified seven mythical constructs that commonly appear in news stories. Those constructs are: the Hero, the Victim, the Good Mother, the Scapegoat, the Trickster, the Other World, and the Flood. (Lule, 2001)

For this research three of Lule's constructs were selected and definitions developed because they applied specifically to the Clinton story:

**The Hero:** based on the American Hero, this person perceives injustice and inserts themselves into the effort to correct the injustice. The hero overcomes great odds, fights an inherently uphill battle, and champions the less fortunate.

**The Trickster:** this person is untrustworthy and will say or do anything to get ahead. This person has a history of untruthfulness and even lies about their untruthfulness if they believe it will help them.

**The Scapegoat:** this construct is based on the ancient Jewish tradition of annually conferring all of the nation's sins on an animal—a goat—and then driving the goat away. This mythical construct sees a person taking the blame for others, usually in an unfair and/or undeserved manner. This person can never overcome past misdeeds.

**Redemption:** this construct reflects language about Secretary Clinton attempting to change her image to someone more warm and personable from someone more cold and aloof. For example, an ABC News paragraph concerning her major campaign appearance in June 2015 said: "Husband Bill, daughter Chelsea, right there, too, for this first rally since announcing her second bid for the White House. One of America's most well-known politicians hoping to reintroduce herself to voters. Even getting personal about her late mother, who was abandoned as a child." (Llamas, June 13, 2015)

Using these three mythological constructs the author conducted a content analysis to in an effort to answer the following research questions:

RQ1: Did the five broadcast/cable networks use mythological structures in their reporting of major events in the Clinton campaign?

RQ2: If such myth indicative language existed, was there a difference between the networks in both the type and amount of each category of such language used?

RQ3: Did the networks use mythical constructs in such a way as to constitute redemption for Clinton? If so, was there a difference between the networks in the amount and type of such language?

To perform this research the author secured transcripts of network newscasts broadcast the day of each of four major events in the Clinton campaign. The newscasts were: ABC World News Tonight, CBS Evening News, NBC Nightly News, CNN Newsroom, and Fox News Special Report with Bret Baier. Only newscasts occurring after the event in question occurred were collected. Pre-event coverage was not

analyzed. Special report coverage that was inserted into regular programming was collected if it occurred at the same time or after the event occurred.

Once the transcripts were secured a content analysis was performed with the unit of study being the paragraph. The coders were trained to look for the presence of mythological constructs in each paragraph. They were told that more than one construct could occur in the same paragraph. If such a situation occurred they were to count the paragraph as an instance in each of the categories. Coders were also trained to look for language that indicated redemption of the Clinton image. Not counted were directional paragraphs such as “Thanks David for that report” or “We now go live to Susan with the Clinton Campaign.” The author coded all paragraphs. To determine intercoder reliability a sample of ten percent of the paragraphs was coded by a second coder and a Scott’s Pi coefficient was calculated to measure how closely the coding matched between coders. The coefficient ranged from .83 to .9, indicating acceptable agreement between the coders.

The four events selected for study were the following:

The Hillary Clinton video announcement of her candidacy on April 12, 2015.

The first major campaign rally and kickoff at Roosevelt Part in New York City on June 13, 2015.

The announcement by FBI Director James Comey on July 5, 2016 that he would recommend no charges be filed against Clinton in spite of her carelessness with classified information passing through her personal e-mail server.

The Comey letter to Congress announcing the re-opening of the email investigation on October 28, 2016.

## **Results**

In a nutshell, the data indicated that all five networks used all three mythological constructs and that four of the networks wrote stories containing redemptive language. The scapegoat structure was used the least and that mainly in coverage of the reopening of the investigation in October 2016. Unsurprisingly, some networks used more of one type of construct than others, and some networks used more redemptive language than others. For instance, NBC Chief Foreign Affairs Correspondent Andrea Mitchell spent considerable time differentiating the Hillary of old with the modern Hillary, thereby using considerable redemptive language. Somewhat surprising was the discovery that there was not as much difference in the use of mythological construct between networks as might be expected.

Disappointingly, Fox News did not cover either the April announcement or the June 13 rally after the fact. It carried extensive coverage prior to each event but because of other programming commitments no news coverage was provided after each of those two. Thus, the analysis was not as robust as might be expected. Also of note, CNN carried a special report right after the release of the video announcement that Secretary Clinton would officially run for president. The network then covered the announcement again in a later newscast, thus accounting for more paragraphs coded than for the other networks. The raw data are contained in the following graphs. The author calculated the percentage of each category as compared to the total number of paragraphs for that network to make comparison more consistent.

For this event, it is notable that the mixture of mythological construct was quite diverse. NBC included the largest percentage of Redemptive language, at more than 30 percent of all paragraphs, but the network also used the largest percentage of Trickster language at 21 percent. The most common construct on ABC was the Hero, used far more than any other construct. CNM was the most even in its distribution, using all of the constructs roughly equally, with the exception of the Scapegoat construct. Overall, the distribution of the use of each type of construct was equal, with the exception of the Scapegoat construct.

April Video Announcement

	Graphs	Direct	Redempt	Hero	Trickster	Scapegoat
Network						
CNN	244	38(15.5%)	26(10.6%)	29(11.9%)	30(12.3%)	1(.4%)
Fox						
ABC	19	0(0%)	1(5.2%)	4(21.1%)	1(5.2%)	0
NBC	52	4(7.7%)	16(30.4%)	9(17.3%)	11(21.2%)	0
CBS	39	7(17.9%)	2(5.1%)	3(7.7%)	3(7.6%)	1(2.6%)
Total	354	49(13.8%)	45(12.7%)	45(12.7%)	45(12.7%)	2(.6%)

That pattern changed significantly in coverage of the first big campaign rally on June 13, 2016 in New York City.

June 13 Rally, Roosevelt Park, New York

	Graphs	Direct	Redempt	Hero	Trickster	Scapegoat
Network						
CNN	23	3(13%)	2(8.7%)	8(34.8%)	0(0%)	0(0%)
Fox*						
ABC	17	1(5.9%)	1(5.9%)	3(17.6%)	1(5.9%)	0(0%)
NBC	22	1(4.5%)	3(13.6%)	9(40.9%)	0(0%)	0(0%)
CBS	14	1(7.1%)	0(0%)	6(42.8%)	0(0%)	0(0%)
Total	76	6(7.9%)	6(7.9%)	26(34.2%)	1(1.3)	0(0%)

In coverage of this event, the networks used Hero construct language more than four times more often as any other construct. This time, CBS led the way with nearly 43 percent of its paragraphs featuring the Hero construct with NBC close behind with nearly 41 percent of its paragraphs featuring that construct. But NBC used the Redemption construct in another 13 percent of its articles while CBS used no other construct. CNN also used the Hero construct heavily, at 35 percent of its articles and only featured Redemptive language in another nine percent. Interestingly, the June 13 rally was not covered as extensively by the networks as was the video announcement two months earlier. Likely this was at least partly attributable to another major news story that day about a gunman targeting police at a headquarters station in Dallas, Texas.

Yet another change in the use of mythological constructs came in the coverage of the July 5, 2016 announcement by then-FBI Director James Comey that, in spite of Secretary Clinton being careless with classified information passing through her personal server, the actions did not warrant prosecution and he would, therefore, not recommend any criminal prosecution under the Espionage Act.

Comey Announcement, July 5, 2016

	Graphs	Direct	Redempt	Hero	Trickster	Scapegoat
Network						
CNN	91	26(28.6%)	0(0%)	2(2.2%)	31(34.1%)	0(0%)
Fox	45	7(15.6%)	0(0%)	3(6.7%)	23(51.1%)	0(0%)
ABC	19	1(5.3%)	0(0%)	1(5.3%)	9(47.4%)	0(0%)
NBC	16	1(6.3%)	0(0%)	3(18.8%)	6(37.5%)	0(0%)
CBS	36	14(38.9%)	0(0%)	4(11.1%)	11(30.6%)	0(0%)
Total	207	49(23.7%)	0(0%)	13(6.3%)	80(38.6%)	0(0%)

In the coverage of this event, note that the vast majority of the paragraphs used language indicative of the Trickster construct. Mainly the coverage pointed to stark differences between the FBI’s findings and what Clinton said on the campaign trail. For example, CNN Anchor John Berman pointed out that: “the FBI director poked holes in the story that Hillary Clinton’s been saying on the campaign trail. She did send classified e-mails, more than 100, she did send e-mails that were marked top secret at the time, eight. This was not one device. It was multiple devices on multiple servers. She told a different story than she’s been telling on the campaign trail, didn’t she?” (Berman, July 5, 2016) Similarly, on Fox News Chief Intelligence Correspondent Catherine Herridge told anchor Doug McKelway that: “FBI Director James Comey’s statement to reporters lasted 15 minutes and uncharacteristically, he did not take questions. The FBI’s findings undercut Clinton’s public statements about her use of a personal unsecured server for government business. Comey said there is evidence of wrongdoing but that’s as far as it went.” (McKelway, July 5, 2016)

Interestingly, the only other construct appearing in coverage of the Comey announcement was the Hero construct, and it was used by each of the five networks. Those paragraphs were all either statements of President Barack Obama or Clinton while making a joint campaign appearance in Charlotte, North Carolina the same day. All of the statements noted that Obama thought Clinton was the perfect candidate or Clinton saying she was ready to take the reins of power and move forward on behalf of ordinary people.

The final event was the October 28, 2016 announcement of FBI Director James Comey that he had sent a letter to Congress notifying them that FBI investigators had found classified emails from Clinton on a laptop used by former Congressman Anthony Weiner of New York, who was married at the time to close Clinton aide and confidante Huma Abedin. The FBI was investigating Weiner because of accusations that he had “sexted” explicit pictures of himself to an underage girl. This time the media used no Redemptive language and only one instance of Hero language. Trickster language was common once again, but coverage of this event was the first to feature any significant amount of Scapegoat language.

### Reopening Investigation Announcement, Oct 28, 2016

Network	Total	Direct	Redempt	Hero	Trickster	Scapegoat
CNN	24	1(4.2%)	0(0%)	1(4.2%)	9(37.5%)	3(12.5%)
Fox	23	5(21.7%)	0(0%)	0(0%)	10(43.5%)	1(4.3%)
ABC	13	1(7.7%)	0(0%)	0(0%)	4(30.8%)	1(7.7%)
NBC	16	4(25%)	0(0%)	0(0%)	3(18.8%)	2(12.5%)
CBS	53	6(11.3%)	0(0%)	0(0%)	11(20.8%)	3(5.7%)
Totals	129	17(13.2%)	0(0%)	1(.8%)	37(28.7%)	10(7.8%)

Of note in these data, Fox once again led the way in the use of Trickster construct language with more than 43 percent of its paragraphs featuring this contrast. NBC used the least Trickster language. All five networks also used Scapegoat structure language. Most of these instances reported Clinton campaign indignation that Comey had announced the reopening of the probe so close to the election, or the announcement’s possible impact on undecided voters. For instance, on ABC, Anchor David Muir quoted Senior Justice Correspondent Pierre Thomas with the Clinton reaction: “The Clinton camp is furious this evening, saying the FBI director should be revealing much more here, that he didn’t explain enough today with so few days before this election.” (Muir, October 28, 2016) On CNN, Senior Washington Correspondent Jeff Zeleny told anchor Wolf Blitzer that Democrats were worried that the revelation might cost Clinton support: “First and foremost they want to see where this is going They want to see if the FBI actually clarifies or streamlines their statement and says exactly what they’re looking at. But they are also calling on Democrats to push back against this. Senator Feinstein is one example raising questions of this letter from the FBI director. They’re not worried about Democrats abandoning her, but they are concerned about some of the voters in the middle who may have been either on board with her or just about to come on board with her suddenly not sure about this.” (Blitzer, October 28, 2016)

### What Does This Research Tell Us?

The data answered all three research questions, but there were some interesting and unexpected findings as well. Research Question 1 asked whether the networks used mythological constructs in their coverage of the four major events identified. The answer is a clear “yes.” The usage was more diverse than expected in two of the events, and about what was expected in the other two. Research Question 2 asked if there was a difference in the categories and amounts used by network. Again, the answer was a definite “yes,” with some twists. Unsurprisingly Fox used the most Trickster construct language in the coverage of the two events for which transcripts were available. In fairness, *all* of the networks used Trickster language in those two events, which were the two Comey announcements, but Fox definitely used more. Another mild surprise came with the finding that the other four networks’ use of mythological construct language was pretty evenly dispersed across all of the constructs in coverage of the two announcements. The only exception was the Scapegoat construct, which hardly appeared until the coverage of the second Comey announcement. Even in the announcements, the networks used Hero and Redemption language as expected. But they also used Trickster language to point out the challenges the Clinton campaign would have to distinguish Hillary in 2016 from Hillary in 2008 and earlier.

Some other unsurprising findings showed that NBC was more likely to use Hero construct language than were the other networks, at least as a percentage of their total coverage. In answer to Research Question 3, all of the networks covering the videotaped announcement and the kickoff rally in New York used Redemptive language fairly extensively. That construct tended to diminish during the Comey announcement coverage. Fox used no Redemptive construct language, but that finding is strongly tempered by the fact that of the four events studied Fox only covered the two most damaging to Clinton because of other programming commitments. It was also surprising that the Scapegoat construction was used relatively little and really only made a significant appearance in coverage of the second Comey announcement in October 2016. The networks' coverage simply did not label Clinton as a scapegoat until they quoted campaign staff complaining about Comey waiting so long and providing so little information about the Comey announcement of his letter to Congress in October 2016.

While interesting, this research carries limitations that suggest further efforts. First, the lack of Fox transcripts for the first two events skewed the outcome at least somewhat. Would Fox have used Redemption or Hero language more extensively if coverage could have happened for the first two events? It is impossible to know, but it is a weakness of this study. It would also be interesting to expand the study to more events during the 2016 Clinton campaign. These events were somewhat arbitrary and were chosen because of their landmark nature. It would be highly interesting to replicate the study by examining additional events and continuing coverage of the campaign. And, finally, it would be interesting to replicate the research examining major events in the Trump campaign. Standing alone, that would provide interesting data. A follow-up comparison between the results of this study and one of Trump campaign coverage would provide additional interesting findings, to be sure.

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## A Band of Angles

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“Music is a moral code.” Plato

“Let’s say you had a government program putting on a - - a festival or a lecture series. We want only pro-Shakespeare presentations. It’s about celebrating Shakespeare. And if you disparage Shakespeare, you can’t participate. Is there anything wrong with that?”

Chief Justice John G. Roberts, Jr. Oyez, January 18, 2017

From Shakespeare’s pronouncement that “a rose by any other name would smell as sweet” to Simon Shiao Tam’s claim to his band’s name, redemption is a rhetorical construct, a mediated negotiation of meaning. We examine various angles of meaning in the United States Supreme Court case *Matal* (formerly *Lee*) v *Tam*, argued January 18, 2017, and decided June 19, 2017. Our analysis draws from the Oral Argument and Opinion in the case, supplemented by various media depictions.

In an interview with Joe Coscarelli of *The New York Times*, band leader Simon Tam responded to the question, “Where did the name The Slants originally come from?” Tam responded:

It came from me asking around friends when I was trying to think of a band name. I said, “What’s something you think all Asians have in common?” and they told me slanted eyes. That’s interesting because, No. 1, it’s not true—not all Asians have slanted eyes and Asians aren’t the only people that have a slant to our eyes. But No. 2, it worked [as a name] because we could talk about our perspective—our slant on life, as people of color navigating the entertainment industry—and at the same time, pay homage to the Asian-American activists who had been using the term in a reappropriated, self-empowering way for about 30 years. We know that irony and wit can neutralize racial slurs, because it shifts the dynamics of power.

In the following interview we address two overarching research questions:

*RQ1 How does rhetoric function to create redemption?*

*RQ2 How do media function to map Petitioner and Respondent’s quest for inscribing ethnic identity?*

### Interview With a Rhetorical Critic

Q1 Edwards: Describe how you became interested in *Matal* v *Tam*.

A1 Allen: When moral, musical, and legal codes align, a rhetorical analysis opportunity is irresistible. Reviewing Cornell’s Legal Information Institute (LII) bulletins provides case synopses. Coupled with listening to The Slants “From the Heart” and “Fight Back” led me to the crux of the case issue in what was originally *Lee* v *Tam*: Who gets to name who I am? This question was addressed in the Oyez before the United States Supreme Court January 18, 2017, and adjudicated in favor of The Slants on June 19, 2017.

Q2 Edwards: Through what rhetorical framework are you analyzing these respective theories of redemption?

A2 Allen: The semantic triangle posited by rhetorical theorist I. A. Richards is pivotal. This mountaineer’s model explicates how each symbol evokes both connotative and denotative meaning.

Richards cautions that a dotted line should be drawn from symbol (placed at the left side of the Triangle of Meaning) to referent (denotative meaning placed at the right side of the Triangle) as a rhetorical reminder that there is no direct and necessary correlation between the two. This tenuous semantic relationship is due to the varying connotative meanings, experientially and emotionally derived, that individuals attach to the symbol.

Q3 Edwards: Why did you select *Matal v Tam* for a conference that has a thematic of redemption?

A3 Allen: The Slants' quest is about redeeming the aesthetic, cultural, artistic and legal code of the band's identity. Taken together, these constitute a moral code of establishing the parameters of persona, a claim of ethotic power.

Q4 Edwards: What is the implicit theory of redemption expressed by Petitioner?

A4 Allen: Meaning is located at the referent (right side of the semantic triangle), fixed, determined, and legally determinable. The Slants' leader, Simon Shiao Tam, notes that the USPTO's arguments are derived in part from [urbandictionary.com](http://urbandictionary.com), featuring a Miley Cyrus entry.

Q5 Edwards: What is the implicit theory of redemption expressed by Respondent?

A5 Allen: Meaning is located at the reference (apex of the triangle), where meaning is dynamic and malleable, subject to the connotative control of the rhetors. As stipulated on "All Things Considered," rather than being disparaging toward Asians, the "Slants" moniker is designed to be "the whole point of his band—and his advocacy—is to empower Asian-Americans and subvert stereotypes."

Q6 Edwards: How do you see this case as constituting a rhetorical contest?

A6 Allen: *Matal v Tam* is a paradigm example of forensic discourse named by Aristotle, disputes that are settled according to legal tenets of testimony. The contest is rhetorical in nature because it weighs claims of names, of how things are to be designated and through what authority this designation shall be derived. The case, according to Tam's interview with Joe Coscarelli in *The New York Times*, provides a rhetorical "double-edged sword": "People will say they've heard about our band, but they say they've never bothered checking out our music. I want to be known for our music, not for an obscure-trademark law that we helped take down."

Q7 Edwards: Are there any analog cases to *Matal v Tam*?

A7 Allen: The most frequently and prominently cited case allusion is to the Washington Redskins, which somewhat annoys band leader Simon Tam. The musician notes that the NFL provides financial backing for the Redskins' legal battle while he has contributed significantly from his own resources, taking on several jobs simultaneously, to prevail in the right to "re-slant" meaning.

### **Interview with a Legal Analyst.**

Q1 ALLEN: As the media reported about the scheduled arguments for the case how did their reports describe the redemptive efforts of Simon Tam to reclaim the racially charged word "Slants?"

A1 EDWARDS: Coverage largely centered around the band's efforts to reappropriate the common slur against Asian-Americans that suggested all had slanted eyes. Founder Simon Tam granted dozens of interviews. In them he said the purpose of the band's name is two-fold. In the *New York Times*, Tam said: It came from me asking around friends when I was trying to think of a band name. I said 'what's something you think all Asians have in common?' and they told me slanted eyes. That's interesting because, no. 1, it's not true—not all Asians have slanted eyes and Asians aren't the only people that have a slant to our eyes.

But no. 2 it worked because we could talk about our perspective—our slant on life, as people of color navigating the entertainment industry—and at the same time, pay homage to the Asian-American activists who had been using the term in a reappropriated, self-empowering way for about 30 years. We know that irony and wit can neutralize racial slurs, because it shifts the dynamics of power.”

In a *New York Times* op-ed piece, Tam said the group “called ourselves the Slants as a way of seizing control of a racial slur, turning it on its head and draining its venom. It was also a respectful nod to Asian-American activists who had been using the epithet for decades.” And Tam said audiences obviously understood because although the group toured extensively, The Slants received no pushback about their name. ““We toured the country, promoting social justice, playing anime conventions, raising money for charities and fighting stereotypes about Asian-Americans by playing bold music. Never once, after performing hundreds of shows across the continent, did we receive a single complaint from an Asian American. In fact, our name became a catalyst for meaningful discussions with non-Asians about racial stereotypes.”

But during oral arguments in January 2017, National Public Radio said some Asian-Americans are offended by the name. In an episode of *All Things Considered*, reporter Kat Chow quoted Asian Americans Advancing Justice Legal Director Cecilia Chang saying many in her group don’t believe “socially progressive reclamation movements are worth opening the law.” Chang also acknowledged that free speech is good, but that the use of slurs shouldn’t be taken lightly. Still Chang tried to take a middle of the road position, saying that there could be ways to address some of Tam’s concerns without striking down the entire Lanham Act protection against disparaging trademarks.

*USA Today* also quoted a statement from the Korematsu Center, which is named after the man who challenged the incarceration of Japanese Americans during World War II. That group opposed the Slants position, saying “while empowering to a young social justice rock band that same mark may be debilitating for those who remember life in American internment camps during World War II.”

Although he understood that other individuals or organizations would draw on the USSC decision for their benefit, even some with whom he might disagree, the action was still worth it because of the First Amendment principle involved. He told the NYT (same article) “It’s a win for all marginalized groups. It can’t be a win for free speech if some people benefit and others don’t. The First Amendment protects speech even that we disagree with. You can’t say you want to shut down the conversation for other people, because that doesn’t advance progress. No one builds better communication by shutting people out.”

Specific to the Redskins, Tam said while they understand the team will benefit from the Slants’ courtroom victory the band still doesn’t like the team name. “It’s a team name that we have disagreed with for some time. We are hoping as people look at our band and the work that we do, that they can also reconsider some of those things. Sometimes there are going to be people who abuse their rights, but it doesn’t mean those rights should be taken from everyone. It just means we, as a society, have to find new ways to address those social ills.”

Tam said the Patent and Trademark Office position was an ironic counter position to that of the White House during the Obama Administration. “A lot of people don’t know this, but last December we worked on an anti-oppression and anti-bullying campaign at the White House, even to the point where we appeared on an album with President Barack Obama. The White House called us champions of the Asian-American Community. Meanwhile, the Justice Department and trademark office said we were racist to Asian people.”

Q2 ALLEN: On what other topics did the media coverage of the decision focus?

A2 EDWARDS: Often stories equated the Slants victory with its likely impact on the Redskins case. For instance, the *Dayton Daily News* led its article about the Supreme Court decision with the following: “The Supreme Court on Monday struck down part of a law that bans offensive trademarks, ruling in favor of an Asian-American rock band called the Slants and giving a major boost to the Washington Redskins in their separate legal fight over the team name.”

Similarly, *USA Today* equated the Slants’ victory to a likely win for the Redskins: “The Supreme Court ruled Monday that even trademarks considered to be derogatory deserve First Amendment protection. The decision was a victory for an Asian-American rock band dubbed The Slants—and, in all likelihood, for the Washington Redskins, whose trademarks were canceled in 2014 following complaints from Native Americans.”

Elsewhere in the same edition, *USA Today* called the decision a “resounding victory for free speech,” while acknowledging its likely positive impact on the Redskins’ suit. The unbylined article said the Supreme Court decision “reaffirmed a bedrock First Amendment principle: that government cannot punish or suppress speech because some people find it offensive.” The commentary said in spite of the offensiveness, “federal bureaucrats should not be in the business of determining what is and isn’t offensive, or protecting people from hurt feelings, which is essentially what the patent office did....The antidote to speech you find offensive is more speech, not getting the government to ban it.”

The commentary said it is likely the Redskins will prevail in court, and that would leave the decision about the name “with the team, the NFL, and the fans, rather than with the government.”

The *Washington Post* quoted a coalition of liberal, minority members of Congress “who say that the First Amendment shouldn’t force the federal government to give a stamp of approval of hateful speech. Today the Slants, the worry goes, tomorrow the n-word.”

Needless to say, Washington Redskins NFL team owner Don Snyder was very happy with the decision. In a tweet after the USSC decision was announced he expressed his elation in six words: I am THRILLED. Hail to the Redskins.” Snyder’s capitalization of the word “thrilled” was obviously meant to emphasize his elation. There was considerable coverage of the Redskins’ reaction given that the Redskins filed a similar suit over the Trademark and Patent office rescinding the team’s trademark. Although the revision was different than the denial experienced by the Slants, the reasoning on the part of the Office was largely the same. It relied on the Lanham Act of 1946 prohibiting trademarks and slogans that disparage persons, groups, etc. A federal district court ruled in favor of the government. The Redskins appealed to the Fourth Circuit Court, but asked that the appeal be held in abeyance until the USSC ruled in the Slants case. Observers expect the USSC ruling to guide the Fourth Circuit decision.

An article in *USA Today* quoted Redskins attorney Lisa Blatt saying the Slants decision “resolves the Redskins’ longstanding dispute with the government. The Supreme Court vindicated the team’s position that the First Amendment blocks the government from denying or canceling a trademark registration based on the government’s opinion.”

In the same edition of *USA Today*, sportswriter Erik Brady focused on the Redskins’ reaction, and did not even mention the Slants until nearly halfway through the article. He quoted Snyder’s tweet of elation, then described the issues of the case and quoted U. S. Supreme Court justices’ reasoning. However, he also included reactions from Native American plaintiff Amanda Blackhorse, who was one of five Native Americans who brought the case against the football team, who obviously disagreed with Snyder’s assessment: “Now they have the freedom to register a racist name. I don’t see what thrilling about that...Our case most likely ends. This is just another day for Native Americans. This is nothing new for us. There is rarely ever justice for Native Americans.”

Q3 ALLEN: Did coverage of the Supreme Court decision focus on these redemptive efforts or on other topics?

A3 EDWARDS: The coverage of all of the USSC ruling focused largely on its effect rather than the language of the opinions. Of course the coverage also explained the ruling, but not in any great depth. Rather the coverage said the Court overturned the 76-year-old law banning disparagement, and sometimes explained the genealogy of the case as it wended its way to the Supreme Court. When a story quoted the actual opinions, it mainly quoted language that reinforced the media outlet's interpretation of the ruling. There were exceptions, of course, but largely that was the trend.

Q4 ALLEN: Did the media coverage of the decision describe the reasoning of the arguments broadly or did it focus more on the broad legal impact of the decision? Do you have examples?

A4 EDWARDS: Generally the coverage of the rulings was explicatory—it explained using generalities what the opinion was and what the issues were before the court. Generally that coverage quoted sparingly at best from the actual opinions, instead opting for paraphrased descriptions of the ruling's basic tenets. In almost every case after this brief explication the articles headed immediately to explain how the decision would impact trademarks in general, and the Washington Redskins in particular.

A prime example is a *Chicago Tribune* editorial published in the Boulder (Colorado) *Daily Camera*. The editorial focused on the free speech victory won by the Slants, briefly explained the Patent and Trademark Office's reasons for the trademark denial and counter arguments in the court cases, and then launched into the effect of the decision. The editorial quoted U.S. Supreme Court Justice Samuel Alito discounting the government's argument that trademarks are government expression, saying that the "government does not dream up these marks, and it does not edit marks submitted for registration. If trademarks represent government speech, what does the government have in mind when it advises Americans to 'make believe' (Sony), 'Think different' (Apple), 'Just do it' (Nike) or 'Have it your way' (Burger King)?" That was the only actual quote in the entire article.

The editorial noted the decision's obvious implication for the Washington Redskins suit and ended with relief that the overall effect is that the government would not be able to punish the Slants, specifically, and all trademark seekers in general.

The Oklahoma City *Daily Oklahoman* was no more descriptive of the Supreme Court ruling in its story, but spent much more space building a case for why the ruling was correct. It noted several examples of institutions that have changed a name to avoid offense and also noted some who did not change their name due to overwhelming support from the individuals or groups who might be disparaged: e.g. Florida State University kept its mascot and nickname—the Seminoles—in spite of activist demands that it change. The Seminole tribe, however, encouraged the university to continue to use the nickname. The *Daily Oklahoman* urged that if changes were necessary it was more appropriate that they be made at the local level and not at the national level or through the courts.

Q5 ALLEN: Does that differ from the coverage of the oral arguments? In what way?

A5 EDWARDS: Generally, coverage of the oral arguments offered detailed coverage of the arguments to be presented by the parties to the U.S. Supreme Court. Sometimes the coverage projected what impact a ruling for each side would have, but because that was only conjecture prior to the argument even taking place, most coverage was limited to the issues raised by the Slants appeal and the government's counter-arguments.

For instance, a *USA Today* news commentary article quoted extensively from an interview with Simon Tam, who explained the Slants' efforts to reappropriate the derogatory term and strip it of its disparagement. The article briefly noted the previously mentioned Korematsu Center opposition to the

Slants' position, but then immediately returned to a description of the band's music, its effort to make a statement on behalf of Asian Americans, and a history of the legal fight to claim the trademark.

National Public Radio's Nina Totenberg provided an in-depth analysis of the issue on the network's *Morning Edition*. She explained the government's arguments that it has the authority to regulate disparagement, "otherwise, the federal government would be required to register, publish and transmit to foreign countries marks containing crude references to women's anatomy, repellant racial slurs, white supremacist slogans and demeaning illustrations of the Prophet Muhammad and other religious figures." Totenberg also pointed to government arguments that other Supreme Court decisions support its position, including decisions banning discussions about abortion in programs that get government funding, and a decision upholding the Texas ban on specialty license plates. Totenberg also quotes the Cato Institute's Ilya Shapiro, who argues that the trademark case is different because here the government is not providing a subsidy. Also, Shapiro argues that the Lanham Act's trademark disparagement language is unconstitutionally vague. That vagueness, Shapiro argues, leads to inconsistent enforcement and interpretation.

But Acting Solicitor General Ian Heath Gershengorn argued the government does, indeed, provide such a subsidy because of the inherent value of the trademark and of government protection. "...the government is under no obligation to provide the band with the legal protection and benefits that comes with trademark registration, such as nationwide, exclusive use of the trademark."

Somewhat unique among coverage of the oral arguments was a lengthy piece in the *Christian Science Monitor*, which focused on the legal issues and background involved in the case, instead of focusing on the arguments and issues raised by either party. The article quoted extensively from legal experts who examined the issues from all angles. This article was one of only a handful that quoted actual questions and answers from the oral arguments, rather than summarizing them in terms of their impact on one arguing side or the other.

Thank you, counsel. The case is adjudicated.

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## Redeeming Celebrity News: *TMZ's* Minority Content

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### Introduction

*TMZ.com*, a celebrity news website and TV show empire, has emerged as an economic leader in the Hollywood news cycle (McNamara 515–530). This website has a unique niche of applying traditional journalistic procedures to the latest celebrity scandals of the day (Albiniak, 12). *TMZ* does not provide the average photo/video based content about celebrities, but takes the medium to a new factual level (Albiniak 12). The use of new media and unique 24-hour reporting makes this site a global destination for the latest on the lifestyles of the rich and famous. The website now supports successful TV versions of the show such as 2007's *TMZ on TV* (McNamara 515–530), *TMZ Sports*, and *TMZ Live*.

The website and TV shows rest in the hands of the creator, Harvey Levin, a lawyer. Levin had failed attempts in the early 2000s to create a show dedicated to exposing the real lives of the Hollywood elite. Little did he know that years later, 2005, he would get the chance to become one of them from an offer by American Online (AOL) to start a news website that would soon make him the million dollar man he is today (Schmidle). *TMZ* took off and became profitable from the start (Schmidle). With the journalism industry in a bi-polar appreciation cycle, this forced the medium to go from print to digital where Kaye and Quinn stress that economic success is not an absolute given. Thus, *TMZ* became a legitimate business venture right away.

Many articles and breaking news stories even received national attention. This content is valid and fact-checked (Schmidle). *CNN*, *The New York Times*, and *The Associated Press* have credited *TMZ* for their breaking news items (Albiniak, 12). From following celebrities exiting a restaurant to schmoozing with star's publicists, *TMZ* focuses on every aspect of the Hollywood lifestyle (Carr). Nothing is off limits for *TMZ's* content potential; sharing a shaved ice, celebrity births' and deaths, original legal documentation, controversial Twitter pictures, celebrity in-fighting, and even more offbeat stories covering the content span (Carr).

*The New York Times* has even labeled *TMZ* as a truly working newsroom (Carr). With so many television ventures functioning at the same time with *TMZ.com*, Levin puts the website first and considers it the soul of the organization (Schmidle). What Levin believes separates *TMZ* from everything else on the market, is this intersection of celebrity news and something akin to old-school yellow journalism (Albiniak, 12). *TMZ* could be seen as redeeming the celebrity news industry through its fact-checked and timely content. Thus given *TMZ's* popularity and status among mainstream journalism, it's content should be analyzed under similar conditions as other media giants. Given the link between celebrity journalism contributing to how race is perceived (Ramasubramanian 123-138), it's important to note how this online domain reports on people of color. This paper seeks to use a textual analysis through Grounded Theory to understand how *TMZ* covers minority celebrities.

### Extra, Extra The Duke Has A Portrait

The United States saw its first sighting of celebrity news in the 19<sup>th</sup> century that used it as a tool to shake up the political status quo, essentially a form of yellow journalism (Feeley 467-482). Ever since, Larry May says that US celebrity news has survived each new technological disruption. However, the idea of a contemporary celebrity was created in the 18th century (Conboy 171-185, Inglis 232) where royalty dramas, instigated by the portraits of Joshua Reynolds, played out in the public square (Conboy 171-185).

Now, the celebrity dramas are corporately sponsored and news is delivered through vulnerable digital cables under the sea as Nicole Starosielski describes in her book *The Undersea Network*. But before

click-bait, Penny Presses created an interest into the hidden lives of famous locals (Leon 81). The first celebrity printed magazines came out in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, like William Griffin's *The National Enquirer* (Cashmore 24) and later, as Henry Scott's book illustrates, Robert Harrison's *Confidential* made celebrity news common. However, it was the OJ Simpson trial that forced celebrity news into traditional news and media organizations in the 1990s (Watson 4).

Digitally native sites, organizations that only exist online, like *TMZ*, started taking over the celebrity news market in the 21<sup>st</sup> century and at this same time traditional celebrity print went down in readership (Turner 11-20). Kaye and Quinn stress this new online space was not easy to monetize. Only when the Internet became more common in the average home, did celebrity news sites find ways to fit the emerging technological delivery system (Turner 11-20).

Understanding how these organizations cater to their audience is what this paper aims to do. They need to assess how the audience wants to interact with them and provide diverse content in terms of access, ease of use, and multimedia capabilities. Many times these sites use breaking news and information from the audience to create content (McNamara 515–530). The paparazzi also provide various stories; so much so that many of them rely on selling to digitally native websites for income (McNamara 515–530) and *TMZ* relies on some of this content as well (Schmidle). What this paper aims to do is look at *TMZ*'s content and how it is published in relation to minority story themes.

## **Theory**

Through data analysis, theory development becomes the goal of the Grounded Theory qualitative research method ("Basics of qualitative" 20-40). Essentially this is, "theory that is grounded in the words and actions of those individuals under study" (Goulding 296). Barney Glaser and Anselm Strauss established this method based off of empirical sociological research methods that helped solidified qualitative research in the academic community ("Grounded theory methodology" 273-285). This thought process allows the researcher the tools to study sociological events ("Basics of qualitative" 25-45) and Glaser and Strauss stress that collected qualitative data then becomes the substance that shapes theory.

Once data is collected the "constant comparative method" then takes data apart and compares it to extract codes and themes from the data ("Basics of qualitative" 30). What makes Grounded Theory stand out is that data is collected first and then the themes and theory emerge from that data, as other methods start with theory and then attempt to answer a formal research question ("Basics of qualitative" 30). Studying online documents (*TMZ.com*) can be used as data, even though the more common type of materials studied are interviews and observations ("Basics of qualitative" 30).

From codes, concepts, categories, and finally the formulation of theory (Bernard et al. 125), this method allows for flexibility and a constant processing of collecting data and analysis during the writing process ("Basics of qualitative" 30-40). Right before theory is settled, that is when constant comparative process is used to shape theory and a "core category" becomes the "major theme of study" ("Basics of qualitative" 30). The core category is chosen from emerging themes (Strauss 20-30). Theory is then grounded to "create a well constructed theory" (Strauss 22). However, it is important to note that Grounded Theory is not generalizable and only applies to the phenomena being studied (Goulding 294-308).

## **Race and Celebrity**

Marginalized groups have been covered in many *TMZ* first-to-break news stories from Michael Jackson to Princes' death. Journalists around the states since have argued that more traditional journalism organizations need to start working like *TMZ* (Jacques 20). Even *Slate*, a digitally native site, stressed that *TMZ* needs to finally be taken seriously (Lilley-Mathis).

Cashmore said that reading celebrity news gives one a sense of intimacy with the celebrities they follow. Fans can essentially use mass media to freely worship their favorite stars and the information received from this interaction shapes their understand of reality (Bandura 110-140). Thus, how race is perceived through these portals can shape policy and attitude, as it, “continues to quietly organize the discursive terms through which the boundaries of the American social, cultural and moral order are made visible and maintained” (Lull and Hinerman 86). Larson (7-10) says that, “entertainment does serious ideological work by avoiding or hiding social issues and problems” (Larson 7). It is not clear, or immediate, what and how the audience will perceive what is presented on mass media portals. However, a content analysis of US television from 1987 to 2009 shows minorities in the US were depicted stereotypically and that those depictions contributed to the attitude of white viewers (Tukachinsk et al. 17-38).

Sports news coverage alone can vary in relation to how the media covers celebrities. Raney and Bryant stresses that, “one cannot always tell the difference between a sports news events and a sports stunt staged for maximum exposure” (Raney and Bryant 150). They also conclude that some sports journalists solely depend on celebrity sources for their stories. And at times these, journalists are part of creating “national identity” (Raney and Bryant 115). This responsibility can have an impact on how marginalized groups are featured in sports news and how African-American sports stars are “underrepresented in sports media” (Raney and Bryant 483). Raney & Bryant also find that in the process of interpreting African-American related sports coverage, one needs to analyze major media representations. Interpreting these representations create meaning through the unspoken language between the participant and the media. Essentially, sports news has a unique set of norms it follows and, those stories that break out into mainstream media can impact the audience (Andrews and Jackson 1-20).

Experiencing just gender, just class, or just race alone, Valdivia says is unnecessary. To truly understand one classification, the other two classifications need to be considered at as well. However, many studies only look at one aspect at a time. For instance, Orin Starn discusses that *race talk* can be thought of as taboo and ubiquitous, at the same time, in daily conversation to mass media. And Squires says that labeling *race* as just a *social construct* can blur its meaning/intention and leave the discussion feeling colorblind. A textual analysis was conducted that looked at a Texas’ social studies standards using critical race theory and found that race, in a subjective manner, was primarily “limited” and or “distorted” in the curriculum. (Vasquez et al. 419). This specifically looked at how marginalized groups were almost invisible in these historical texts and when these outgroups were discussed - their histories were inaccurate (Vasquez et al. 403-424). One experiment had a diverse set of participants look at news clips of African-American crime suspects, white suspects, and non-crime news segments (Hurley et al. 155-170). The researchers found that among all participants, regardless of their race, had created an internal attribution (negative behavior that is connected to the individual) towards the African-American crime suspects presented in the news clips than those that watched non-crime news segments. Another experiment looked at how negative Muslim news coverage directly impacted perceptions of Muslims, and perceptions thus impacted policy preferences of participants (Saleem et al. 841-869). Perceptions of President Obama were tested in Ramasubramanian & Martinez’s experiment. This study revealed that when participants were presented with negative stories of President Obama, this in turn, increased “anti-Black affect and symbolic racist beliefs” in the audience (Ramasubramanian and Martinez 48). Here, it shows that a variety of research methods were able to look at a diverse array of how races are perceived in media and come to similar inter-connected and concerning conclusions.

Srividya Ramasubramanian’s experiment exposed white American participants to African-American stereotypical verses counter-stereotypical celebrity news content. The goal was to see how participants responded to counter-stereotypical material, which showed positive a representation of outgroups. She found that this type of exposure increased support for affirmative action policy. The results showed the null hypothesis was rejected, and exposure to counter-stereotypical content for racial/ethnic outgroups was a strategy to reduce prejudice. Through mediated contact and explication theories, this

experiment was able to provide proof that celebrity content can “influence outgroup attitudes” (Ramasubramanian 126). This experiment used real-world content from Yahoo News and Entertainment Weekly. The paper also looks at media priming, that demonstrates that these images and audio bring the subconscious to the surface and impact a person’s performance and/or actions (Bryant and Oliver 10, Scheufele and Tewksbury 2007, Shrum 66-89). Media priming theory stresses that exposure to media will have a direct impact on behavior.

Thus, Ramasubramanian’s research is vital to consider in this study, because it stresses the importance of looking at how our media is actually publishing said celebrity content and to see if we can use celebrity news to reduce prejudice. *TMZ*, a celebrity news leader (McNamara 515–530), should be analyzed given this new information. Even though Ramasubramanian’s research was based off an experiment, its results naturally point us to a textual analysis to see what is actually occurring at one the most successful celebrity news sites. For this paper, not only African-American celebrities news stories will be analyzed, but marginalized groups in general – or how Ramasubramanian framed it, the outgroup. This leads the researcher to ask:

*RQ: What types of marginalized celebrity content does TMZ publish?*

## **Method**

To understand how *TMZ* covers minority celebrities, the researcher looked at a month’s worth of coverage on *TMZ.com*. The researcher conducted a textual analysis of December 2016 online content. All media elements contained in the articles were read/watched. There were 1,010 articles in total published December 1 to December 31, 2016. Specifically, the researcher focused on stories that featured marginalized celebrities.

Berger (23-33) says that textual analysis brings an understanding of what publishers produce in an implicit and explicit manner. The researcher looked for themes to emerge in the text, the published news stories. This allows understanding of the types of content the publisher prefers (Foss 66-69). Toby Miller says that analyzing text allows one to understand the tone of the published works. It “unearths the meaning of individual” texts and ties them to a larger context of problems (Miller 23).

Berger (23-33) said that one of the two ways to analyze content is to use a theory to build the foundation of an argument, however here we will allow the collected data to shape the theory. Starting with looking for codes, understanding data concepts, formulating categories, and finally, to the development of theory, the Grounded Theory method was utilized in this paper to understand findings (Bernard et al. 125). The researcher read all published December 2016 content during a three-week time frame. The researcher formulated themes, took notes, and then re-read the content. For qualitative analysis, this allowed the themes to be identified after coding the data, and then the data to be organized into those themes (Ezzy 12). After the organizing of data into themes, the researcher was able to write the findings section.

## **Findings**

As with textual qualitative research best practices (Coffey and Atkinson 5), the researcher looked for themes that emerged through a second reading of the texts. This data was placed into themes before creating the findings section of the paper (Coffey and Atkinson 5). Three themes were found when reading the data. The themes the researcher found, in relation to how *TMZ* created content that featured minorities, are: celebrity living, legal, and race. These *counternews* stories allow an alternative narrative to bloom in middle of other dominate narratives (Solórzano & Yosso 23-44).

## *Celebrity Life*

*TMZ* covers a variety of content when it comes to the lifestyle of the rich and famous. Coverage of this lifestyle included many stories that featured famous minorities. The celebrity lifestyle theme includes acts of kindness, the Obama family, the fun side of celebrity, the Kardashian clan, and sports. These types of coverage essentially cover the span of typical celebrity lifestyle news (Carr), however, here, minorities are in place of the dominant white culture experiencing the celebrity lifestyle.

Typical acts of kindness featured celebrities helping local communities and children. For instance, a story focused on Andre Johnson spending thousands on underprivileged children during a shopping spree and included a picture of the massive receipt (*TMZ*). Another story showed members of the Dallas cowboys in a children's hospital visiting with the patients and the story included photos and video of the event ("Dallas Cowboys"). Another children's hospital story focused on Cam Newton, a professional football player, visiting one of his biggest fans and bringing gifts in tow ("Cam Newton"). Antonio Brown is featured giving a large donation to a children's hospital and a photo of the check itself featured ("Antonio Brown cuts"). *TMZ* reports that Ezekiel Elliott planned a sports stunt with the Salvation Army that caused an increase of 61% in donations online and that is to donate as well to the organization ("Ezekiel Elliott").

The *TMZ's* stories on the Obamas are a fixture in a mix of politics and celebrity lifestyle coverage. Presidents are typically covered quite a bit during and after their term in office. However, as mentioned above, negative President Obama press coverage caused participants to have an increase in symbolic racist beliefs (Ramasubramanian and Martinez 36-54). Here *TMZ* not only presents these Obama stories in a positive light, but publishes a series of stories of the family vacation. Here an African-American father is showcased being an attentive parent while still being the leader of the free world. When the Obamas went on vacation to Hawaii, *TMZ* created many photo stories along the way. This story focuses on their departure from Washington D.C. and notices that the former president's eldest daughter included in this trip ("The Obamas"). A later article shows father/daughter quality time, sharing shaved ice, and provides photos of the family outing ("Obama Close"). Here the former president is dining at Nobu, a famous sushi restaurant, and a video clip plus photos provides visuals that he received a standing ovation when entering and leaving the restaurant ("President Obama").

Other articles focused on the fun side of celebrity and that minorities have a place in these types of stories as well. From a Globetrotter doing a trick shot off a stadium roof ("Harlem Globetrotters") to Terron Backhman's video of back-flipping workouts ("Obj's cousin") lighthearted stories were featured. Some articles featured playful reader games like Chrissy Teigen in a before and after photoshopped image to find the differences between the photos ("What's the big"). Ricky Martin is featured on the beach with his fiancé, and a photo feature the two men are in their Speedos and while the article discusses their tattoos ("Ricky Martin"). Slideshows are a common media use, as well, with one article featuring women dressed for an evening at the Men of the Year party ("GQ Men"). Other party stories show Beyoncé performing at her own company party with photos and video, focusing on the drinks she served; lemonade (after her album name) ("Beyonce Holiday"). Celebrities are also featured in other interactive reader games of *Stars and Scars* and *You Be the Judge* asking the audience's opinion on recent stories about Drake and Robert Kardashian ("Stars and Scars").

The Kardashian clan is a main fixture as well on the site as sagas and lifestyle practices are reported to the fullest extent. This family is part of a slew of trending styles and brands that also counter minority gender and racial norms. From racially mixed marriages, to making their counter body shapes the center of many branding opportunities – this empire has made it hip to be different. This clan shows that even minority celebrates can have access to presidents and have a voice in the political arena. These types of stories can focus on the body, like Khole Kardashian's photos in a recent magazine, with the story about her boots and the photographer forgetting to feature her famous bottom ("Khloe"). New members to the family also get extensive coverage with the saga of Rob Kardashian and Blac Chyna's baby, inter-racial

marriage, and relationship status. One story focused on Blac Chyna's entrance into the family and how the Kardashian sister doesn't want Chyna to use their trademarked name ("Kardashians & Blac", "Kim, Khloe"). Another set of articles goes into the back and forth issues around Rob and Chyna's TV show, like filming the wedding date ("Rob Kardashian"). One Kardashian saga was built around Rob's hospitalization, with family visiting him and seeing who shows up to support him ("Blac Chyna", "Blac Chyna & Kris"). Kardashian adjacent family member's health sagas are also highlighted, for instance in an article about Kanye West. *TMZ* had an article that featured the 911-call audio about how the doctor called the police for backup and for West not to get near weapons ("Kanye West 911"). There were articles about updates on his future concerts that had a photo gallery of his other performances ("Kanye West Concerts"), sightings of him at the Pacific Design Center with a new hair color ("Kanye West Surfaces"), and West and Kim Kardashian first night out, which discussed that their marriage is not on the rocks and focused on her causal outfit ("Kim & Kanye"). West even gets involved in politics with his visit to Trump hotel to discuss life and have "face-to-face" meeting - featuring photos of the president-elect at the time and West ("Kanye West Here").

*TMZ Sports* is a section of the website that concentrates on sports players and the controversies and stardom that surrounds it. However, these stories still show up on the main page and just have an additional *TMZ Sports* logo. Sports celebrities were covered by *TMZ* to a great extent. And among these stories, minorities were prominently featured. Raney and Bryant say this is important to consider because African-American sports stars do not have a large place in sports coverage. Again, *TMZ Sports* can be another type of counter news story because of its extensive coverage of minorities in sport. For instance, a party of DeAndre Jordan, a Clippers basketball player, featured a celebration in a home he just sold and a noise complaint ("Deandre Jordan"). Legends and not just current sport celebrities were covered as well. Ray Allen, an NBA legend, had a *TMZ Sports* article that featured him in a USO tour, in Afghanistan, on a military helicopter and shooting a M-240B machine gun with US soldiers ("Ray Allen"). Another legend, Booker T of WWE fame, was covered as he ran for the mayor of Houston, with *TMZ Sports* predicting the win and an embedded interview video ("Booker T"). Coverage of Rashaan Salaams death, a Heisman Trophy winner, turned into a sports saga with coverage like an announcement of his death in Boulder, Colorado with an overview about his legendary career ("Rashaan Salaam Heisman") to the final suicide police report, and ending the article with information about suicide prevention ("Rashaan Salaam"). Shown above, there is diversity even within the coverage of the types of celebrity minority athletes. Athletes from different professional levels and athletic standing are reported on and their tragedies and triumphs are published.

## Legal

Celebrity legal news is always a hot topic and a priority for *TMZ*. The organization has more reporters at the Los Angeles Courthouse than the *Los Angeles Times* (Schmidle). Legal issues are covered from lawsuits to arrests and usually source actual documentation. Celebrity divorce, deaths and births are announced and scrutinized in articles that span from a couple sentences to longer media heavy pieces with photos and video. Here, negative suspect driven stories are not the main attraction (though there are some), but these types of potentially negative portrayal stories are the sideshow. Here, *TMZ* knows the audience will appreciate these stories as fans of celebrity minorities and not an average user looking for typical legal news stories.

Lawsuits are a source of news content for *TMZ*. For instance, in an article discussing a contract dispute over Tyson Beckford's licensed exercise product, it features the parties involved, a photo of the product and explains the lawsuit is over a lack of celebrity promotion ("Tyson Beckford"). A December 29 article reports a logo infringement lawsuit against Amazon and Wal-Mart for selling Run-DMC merchandise without contractual permission ("Run-DMC"). Another celebrity, Steve Harvey, is reported winning a lawsuit over a private jet in escrow situation, with Harvey winning his initial claim ("Steve Harvey"). Arrests are also reported on, as, for example, one article discussed Trey Songz's arrest for

property damage and resisting arrest and it had updates near the top of the article about bail being set at \$25,000 (“Trey Songz”). Celebrity on celebrity scandal was also seen in this December 7 article about a Russell Crowe and Azealia Banks party fight in a hotel (“Russell Crowe”). Here the article lays out the legal issues involved and that no charges were brought on Crowe for ejecting Banks from his private party (“Russell Crowe”). Other stories focus on celebrity DUI (“Michael Floyd”) arrests and probation sentencing for domestic violence (“Katt Williams”).

Divorce, death, and births were also frequently covered. Here is where documentation takes the lead in discussing major life events for celebrities. Divorce articles covered pending relationships and the legal disputes. For instance, T.I. and Tiny’s divorce was filed and an article discusses if it will go through or not and what might be causing the divorce to begin with (“T.I. & Tiny”). A December 13 article looks at the disputes between Mary J Blige and her ex-husband over property that the husband refuses to hand over, including her awards (“Mary J”).

Celebrity deaths were covered, and *TMZ* noted the oddness of the back-to-back nature and the number of celebrity deaths in 2016 (“Celeb Deaths”). December 31 article included a slideshow featuring minority celebrities such as Prince, Joe McKnight, Tony Burton, Kimbo Slice, Muhammad Ali, Tommy Ford, Jose Fernandez, and Fidel Castro (“Celeb Deaths”). This was a mix of sports, TV/Film, and international political celebrities (“Celeb Deaths”).

Celebrities and their children become a spotlight as well in *TMZ* coverage. Kobe Bryant’s daughter’s birth became the focus of series of stories. One article announced the birth of Bryant’s third child and included photos of his current children while linking to other *TMZ* Bryant related stories (“Kobe Bryant Three”). Another story uses document sources to discuss the birth of Bryant’s baby, linking to the actual PDF of the child’s birth certificate and announcing her full name (“Kobe Bryant Bianka”). Other celebrities make comments on this birth, like a December 9 article of Clipper’s player Chris Paul suggesting that Bryant deserves to have a baby boy one day (“Chris Paul”). The article goes on to say that Bryant’s daughter can actually play basketball very well (“Chris Paul”). Perhaps this is an example of a positive counter narrative, as Bryant is portrayed as a dedicated and responsible father.

## *Race*

These types of *TMZ* stories deal implicitly and explicitly with race and cover celebrity minorities. The way race is covered by the media can be controversial. How *TMZ* talks about race can impact the larger conversation on race and shape future policy (Saleem et al. 841-869). An article from December 8 reports a burglary in the home of Nikita Whitlock, a New York Giants football player, and shows images of racist words and symbols written on the walls of the home (“NY Giants”). A December 9 article looks at hate mail received by Brandon Marshall, a Broncos football player (“Broncos' Brandon”). The letter is filled with racist comments (“Booker T”). The article explains that Marshall took a knee during the National Anthem at a game and that might be related to the hate mail he received (“Booker T”). The letter also links directly to the full letter (“Booker T”).

Another saga story emerged in the texts of Joe McKnight, a murdered former New York Jets football player, with some articles that mentions race as a prime motivator and others that leave out the motivations altogether. A white male, in a supposed road rage incident, shot McKnight. A December 1 article announces the 28-year-old’s death, with updates from the police, and a much more extensive article length than *TMZ*’s other stories (“Joe McKnight Ex”). A December 6 article focuses on the public’s responses to McKnight’s death and *TMZ* lists out the football players with their condolence statements (“Joe McKnight USC”). Another December 6 article shows a segment of a police press conference looking at McKnight’s death and does not mention any racial motivations behind the murder, but specifies that the shooter might have also pointed a gun at a Naval officer on the scene (“Ronald Gasser”). At another press conference, *TMZ* reports that the sheriff’s department has more information on the specifics, lists out the

current known facts of the case, and quotes the sheriff telling the crowd that this case is not about “race” (“Joe McKnight Gasser”). Yet, as reported by TMZ in a December 6 article the sheriff handling the McKnight case is upset at the criticism he got from reading allowed clearly racist expletives that were heard from witnesses (“Joe McKnight case”). In an article featuring the NAACP, protests erupted because the police department did not hold McKnight’s shooter after police questioning, and let him go free (“Joe McKnight NAACP”).

## Discussion

Through an analysis of the data, the themes contributed to a fuller discourse on celebrity news. Analyzation of the text allowed the researcher to see how stories of people of color were actually published. Organizations such as *TMZ*, a media giant and top contender in the celebrity news industry (Mcnamara 515–530), does have an impact on its audience. The way *TMZ* covers marginalized groups can impart a distinctive reaction (Tukachinsk et al. 17-38), especially because of the intimate and personal nature of celebrity fandom (Cashmore, 2006). *TMZ* could eventually influence reader’s perception on public policy (Saleem et al. 841-869). Per to Ramasubramanian’s experiment, celebrity news could even potentially reduce outgroup prejudice. *TMZ* covers minority celebrities, and the issues that surround a celebrity news cycle, in a way that is usually dominated by white privileged stars. *TMZ* covers minorities in a *counter news* cycle that breaks today’s traditional media standards by covering marginalized stars’ *celebrity lifestyle*, *legal*, and *race content* themes.

The *celebrity lifestyle* theme included stories that countered dominant and dangerous race myths (Hartlep 25) about minorities through *TMZ*’s content on fathers, like through its President Obama coverage. The Kardashian saga provided breakthroughs in celebrating the major life events of interracial couples, showcasing the family breaking gender body norms, and even demonstrated how celebrities and political life converge. *TMZ*’s sports coverage alone was able to cater to a diversity of athletes, thus breaking sports class barriers. Raney and Bryant say this is important in particular, because African-American athletes are underrepresented in sports news coverage.

*Legal* coverage of celebrity minorities, on *TMZ*, was able to discuss divorce, births, and deaths of celebrities across the paradigm spectrum using mostly official legal documentation (in theory non-objective) as a source. Race, class, and gender stories gathered in this theme show a diversity of coverage that was not limited in perception because of document based reporting.

Thus, the third theme, *race*, confirms there are redeeming aspects of celebrity media coverage. *TMZ* was able to report on race in a way that most traditional media would just want to avoid altogether. These stories wanted to use source documentation, like *legal* theme, to convey and show evidence of direct racist acts that were hatefully motivated. From posting the actual PDF of Brandon Marshall’s hate letter to creating a story saga from Joe McKnight’s alleged racially motivated murder, racial issues were a hot topic and *TMZ* did not shy away from the controversies surrounding these stories.

The Grounded Theory method here has analyzed how *TMZ*’s coverage through its content intersections of race, class and gender can challenge the dominant texts and finds a potential open solution to account for the direct experiences of minorities. The question still remains; does *TMZ* contribute to tabloid media by offering redeeming values in terms of minority coverage? Under the *celebrity lifestyle* theme, *TMZ* failed to showcase women of color in its sports coverage. Legal themes were able to include race, class, and gender into its documentation-based coverage. The *race* theme was able to discuss racism and documenting what occurred, but did not give any direction on the issue. For instance, in the Joe McKnight stories, not all content mentioned the implications that racism had on the handling of the case and the suspect’s motivations. The term “race” itself was used sparingly.

*TMZ*'s real world content has real-world implications. How *TMZ*'s content is perceived, by its audience, can shape real life policy (Saleem et al. 841-869) towards marginalized groups and shape the larger conversations about these groups (Lull & Hinerman, 80-90). If done right, *TMZ*, and other celebrity content producers, could potentially reduce prejudice based on the quality of its minority celebrity content (Ramasubramanian 123-138). Here in developing theory, the paper finds some of *TMZ*'s redeeming qualities in minority coverage can contribute to a framework to have more encompassing *counter news* features.

Some redeeming suggestions on how do to that, follow. *TMZ*, and *TMZ* like media producers, need to look cohesively at class, gender, and race content and not shy away from accurate terms and topics. First and foremost, content producers need to be careful when creating content that negatively portrays suspects of color. Second, female celebrity minorities lack coverage in news sports stories, thus not allowing fan growth and denying current fans. Third, producers should not be afraid of race issues, especially if it is a vital piece of the story. Producers need to utilize accurate terms and quality issues for each part of a story saga and allows readers to understand all the implications, without having to search for it. And finally, expanding the definition of celebrity, even more so, can bring other thought leaders to merge content and create an opportunity to expand the organization's fan base while appeasing existing clientele. The *counter news* features will allow for healthier coverage that seeks equal representation of minority coverage in media overall.

This research was conducted solely to understand the themes that emerged from the text and how *TMZ* covered minority celebrities. Future research could look into an experiment and see how priming effects, of different *TMZ* minority coverage, increases or decrease thinking on affirmative action, or levels of stereotypic beliefs. The limitations of this textual analysis bars the researcher from making any big conclusions regarding *TMZ* enforcing or dissuading stereotypes of minorities in general. This study perhaps can add to the existing research on media race coverage and how these news stories work towards an equal communication platform for people of color, while influencing audience views of minorities in general. These conclusions can lead to future research about the impact celebrity *counter news* stories have on audience views and how these views morph in relation to policy, stereotypes, and marginalized celebrities all together.

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## **The Redemption of Deep Blue**

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What is it to be human? Is it the flesh and bone of our bodies? Is it the thought processes, the creative spark of the mind and intellect? Since the dawn of the computer age engineers have worked to design artificial intelligence that could achieve a thought process near or equal to that of humans. It was a long-held belief that artificial intelligence could not “out think” a human. A computer named Deep Blue was the first to challenge this and, in its wake, rapidly evolving artificial intelligence could soon challenge what it means to be human.

In 1996 a team of engineers from IBM proposed a chess match to challenge this belief. Their computer, Deep Blue, would challenge reigning world chess champion Gary Kasparov to a 6 match tournament. Kasparov lost the first match to the artificial intelligence, but rallied to win the tournament 4 games to 2 (Bloomfield, Vurdubakis, 2008). The machine had fallen short of the master, but did progress towards the goal of out-thinking humans.

The following year, 1997, Kasparov agreed to a second tournament against the next generation of IBM’s artificial intelligence, Deeper Blue. The rematch began with Kasparov victory, then a victory by Deep(er) Blue, and three consecutive draws. The final, and deciding match, was won by Deep(er) Blue. The machine had surpassed the chess master, but it was a victory tainted by Kasparov’s accusations of cheating by the IBM team. In his mind he had not been defeated by a computer, but by a team of engineers who aided the computer. Deep(er) Blue never played another match and went into retirement as a display at The Smithsonian.

The breakthrough of the Deep Blue team was allowing artificial intelligence to learn from human interaction. At that time the learning process was still slow and individualized interaction with computers. In the twenty-first century, the experience of being human is being documented like never before. There are roughly 6,000 Tweets per second which equals 500 million Tweets per day (Sayce, 2016); additionally, the 2.07 billion Facebook users share 4.75 billion posts daily (Zephoria, 2017). The human experience is being digitalized. Every posting, every Tweet is an insight into who we are, what our culture is, how society interacts, and what it means to be human. In the advancement of artificial intelligence, this digital data serves as rocket fuel compelling the science of artificial intelligence faster and faster into the unknown of the future connection of machine and man.

To better understand the impact of the digitalization of human thought and communication process it is important to understand how computers learn, how computer learning is evolving, the impact of new technologies, and how this is all being applied to change society. Computer artificial intelligence is evolving and worldwide networks, social media sites, and smartphones serve as the classrooms for this rapid growth. The teacher in this virtual classroom is every individual connected to these networks via computer, laptop, tablet, or cell phone. The evolution of how artificial intelligence is learning is well underway and it will change how people interact and communicate with artificial intelligence and each other.

Humans learn through a complex cognitive process that involves gathering data from sensory input, placing that into short-term memory, and through rehearsal loops moves data into long-term memory. To retrieve information stored in long-term memory humans utilize recall and schemas. Schemas are patterns of relationships that link memories in the neural network. This is why a smell or sound can bring back memories that are linked to the event stored in memory (CIA, 2017). The goal of computer artificial intelligence is to find a way to duplicate this process without the errors the human brain encounters in

developing schemas. Such schemas errors are to blame for false memories by linking unrelated memories with each other or are influenced by new information modifying stored memories.

Traditionally, computers “learned” from past events, programs, algorithms, and datasets. This method of learning is commonly referred to as “machine learning” and did have benefits of analyzing past occurrences in order to generate the most favorable outcome. Author Michel Sebag points out that “adaptive learning gives a better accuracy of predictions. This, in turn, facilitates the handling of all possibilities and combinations to provide the optimal outcome from the incoming data” (2016). This form of learning for artificial intelligence is limited though because by nature humans are predictably not predictable. Artificial intelligence based on machine learning struggled to duplicate human interaction because of the chaotic behavior of humans in their communications.

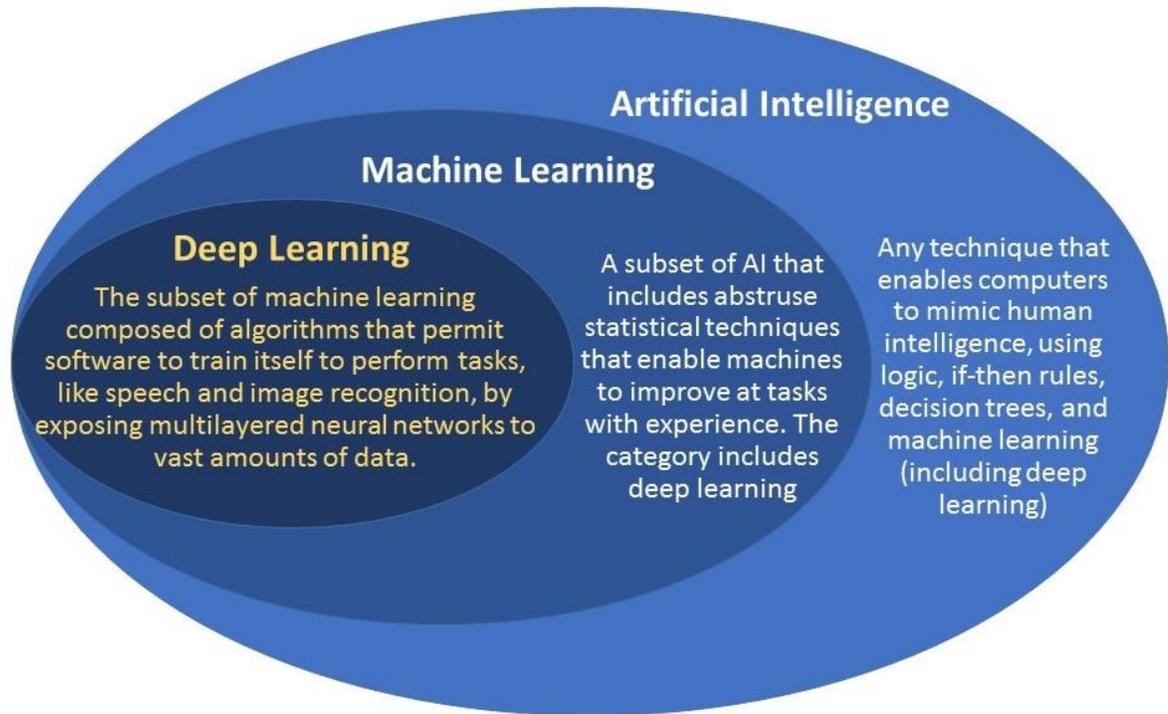
Machine learning is the outer layer of learning for artificial intelligence. Probabilities were difficult for artificial intelligence to calculate using the machine learning process. For a person saying, “I am dog tired,” artificial intelligence based on machine learning would struggle with an understanding because a dog is a noun and it is an animal. The use of the word dog as a verb and status of being was difficult for artificial intelligence to comprehend. That inability to compensate for unique terms or phrases is becoming past tense now that artificial intelligence has evolved beyond the outer layer of machine learning.

Beyond that initial layer of machine learning, artificial intelligence now learns in a method that is called “deep learning.” Sebag (2016) explains “the typology of the system is vital; when learning, it’s not so much about ‘big’ but it’s more about the surface area or depth. More complex problems are solved by larger numbers of neurons and layers. The network is used to train a system, using known questions and answers to any given problem and this creates a feedback loop” (2016). Back to being “dog tired,” in deep learning artificial intelligence does not just look at the literal use of the word but instead examines the probable use of the word based on sentence structure, language usage, and previous knowledge. This is similar to how the human brain processes information.

Meenal Dhande (2017) in an article for Geospatial World provided an illustration of the artificial learning process (2017).

Understanding the concept of deep learning is important when weighing the impact of the digitalization of the human experience by social media, analytics, and digital communication. Prior to the internet, and mass electronic communication, computers learned by a tedious, labor-intensive process of data entry. A published book would have to be re-entered into the computer to be accessed by artificial intelligence. For this reason, information shared with artificial intelligence was limited and selective in nature. Through the internet and electronic communication, artificial intelligence can now access information, which is nearly unlimited in content and source, on what it is to be human. This means a deep learning artificial intelligence can project probabilities based on billions of streams of information per second. In deep learning, only a portion of that learning by artificial intelligence is monitored, but learning in deep learning also occurs without human monitoring or parameters. Deep learning is a large jump in the evolution of artificial intelligence.

Another aspect of how computers learn is supervised, unsupervised, and reinforced learning. Supervised learning is where the learning objective is already determined, the computer artificial intelligence is tasked to reach a learning object via an algorithm that is written for it. This is similar to the kindergartener who may have a goal to be able to recite their alphabet by the end of the school year. The student learns based on the teacher’s lesson plan. It is an outcome-based system.



Unsupervised learning is more complex; it is where computer “teaches itself.” In the example of the kindergartener, it is all the unstructured learning the child gets while in the classroom such as the social interaction skills or tasting the mud while at recess. Unsupervised learning is accomplished by categorizing and sorting new data. This is how the human mind categorizes new information it encounters. The goal of unsupervised learning is for “artificial neural networks (which tend to just refer to as “neural networks” in computer talk) aim to mimic the thought and decision-making process of human brains” (Marr, 2017).

Reinforced learning is giving an artificial intelligence the desired outcome and letting it through trial and error develop a process. This permits the artificial intelligence to be creative in its approach to problem-solving. For the kindergartener example, this would be giving the child a bag of Legos, some Lincoln logs, and other toys and saying to them “build a house.” The process is outcome based but without the human written algorithm. Along with deep learning and neural networks the artificial intelligence often develops solutions unthought of by engineers (Knight, 2017). In reinforced learning, the artificial intelligence is developing its own algorithm and programming.

Through the process of machine learning, deep learning, supervised learning, unsupervised learning, and reinforced learning, artificial intelligence is beginning to problem solve in ways similar to the human brain. Artificial intelligence is developing neural networks, creating imaginative solutions to problems, and designing its own solution algorithms. In this way, artificial intelligence algorithms are becoming much like the human brain’s schemas. Artificial intelligence is beginning to think like the human mind.

The technology of deep learning artificial intelligence would appear to be a valuable commodity and protected corporate asset. Corporations understand the advancement of the technology for commercial use will evolve more rapidly if the technology is a free, open-source utility. Google’s Tensorflow is an example of such an open-source utility that is advancing artificial intelligence. Tensorflow is a deep learning platform that is being utilized in the creation of applications for cell phones and computers for everything from facial expression interruption to crop rotation for farming (Louridas, Ebert 2016). Tensorflow is also the backbone of programs that seek to increase the human and computer

communication interaction and the development of “bots” to accomplish this. The Tech-Term dictionary defines “a bot (short for “robot”) is an automated program that runs over the Internet. Some bots run automatically, while others only execute commands when they receive specific input.”

Bots serve not only as a source for interaction but as a source for artificial intelligence learning. A commonly referenced application of the Tensorflow platform in the creation of an interactive bot is the story of Eugenia Kuyda. Kuyda is a Russian program developer that used Tensorflow to duplicate the word style, interaction, and Tweeting habits of a recently deceased friend. Her friend had died suddenly after being struck by a car on a busy city street. She accomplished digitalizing his social media personality by having a computer application access all the public, and in some cases non-public, electronic communication her friend had compiled during his lifetime. This social media bot could then be interacted with by grieving friends and family in a therapeutic way. The first exchange between Kuyda and the bot of her deceased was eerie and went,

“Who’s your best friend?” She asked.

“Don’t show your insecurities” came the reply

It sounds like him, she thought” (Newton, 2016).

What is important in this exchange is that the bot demonstrated an understanding of the relationship, not just the question. Based on electronically compiled social interactions, deep learning, and advancing artificial intelligence Kuyda’s initial program demonstrated how the Turing Test will become obsolete in the near future.

Kuyda’s initial program was based on openly shared conversations and interactions shared primarily on a social media platform. There is a degree of self-filtering that happens when it is known that what is shared will be viewed by friends, family, and a personal circle of colleagues or acquaintances. Such self-censorship does limit the learning process of an artificial intelligence program, but there are now apps that overcome that self-censorship by allowing users to directly teach the program to be more like them. Kuyda’s initial program evolved into an app called “Replika.” What a user shares with the app will not be public, and will remain between them and their app, which increases the ability of artificial intelligence to digitalize the communication process of that person.

“Replika is an AI friend that’s always there for you. Grow your own... This is an AI that you nurture and raise” that is the invitation to those who visit Replika’s web page (Pardes, 2017). The saying that “people like people who like them and who are like them” is a familiar one and that is the basis of Replika. Nurturing an artificial intelligence to be your “perfect friend” does create cultural and social concerns for debate. On the positive side, according to Wired’s Pardes with knowledge of “individual preferences, mannerisms, and patterns of speech, it could act as the ultimate assistant, replying to emails on your behalf” (2017). It could also function as a personalized motivator at the gym, a therapist, or counselor in times of grief. On the negative side, it could be a master manipulator understanding what motivates you, what rewards you, and what scares you. Like Tensorflow the app Replika is free to use.

How computer artificial intelligence learns, its parameters for learning and its source of information for learning is all changing. Billions of communication interactions that occur over the worldwide web, social media, and cell phones are now sources of information for computer artificial intelligence neural networks to learn from. How this information is applied is going to have a large impact on future society. Societies understanding of artificial intelligence will also have to change with the evolution of artificial intelligence.

With the understanding of the evolution of artificial intelligence, there are many ways it is currently being applied in our society. One of the ways it is being applied is in economics and marketing. In the

traditional economic model, the scarcity of resource increases the value of the resource. In the digital economy, the model is flipped, the abundance of a resource increases the value. An example of this is in the digital economy where more followers of a product, site, or social media link increases the value and increases the power of the owner of the webpage.

According to the Harvard Business Review, “Digital is not just part of the economy — it *is* the economy” (Wladawsky-Berger, 2017). An example of the Digital Economy also found on Harvard Business Review is how companies who are utilizing the digital world are more profitable than those who do not. In fact, companies that utilize digital technology in promoting their business are 26% more profitable than those that don’t. An example would be a fictional Joe Smith is researching tools on Google and clicks on the Sears webpage. Well, suddenly Joe is going to see ads or special deals on what he was looking up even though he never “subscribed” to see them on multiple platforms from email to social media.

In corporate world artificial intelligence bots can be found in many different businesses. Dell Technologies, in promoting their own bot software, informs perspective clients of several interesting statistics. According to Dell Technologies;

1. Facebook chatbots are developing 70% faster than did iOS apps (mobile phone operating apps).
2. By 2020 80% of respondents to their business said they will be using some form of chatbot.
3. In 2022 business will see an 8 billion dollar savings in banking and healthcare alone (Alger, 2017).
- 4.

Dell Technologies identifies the services that chatbots can provide to an established or beginning business. Chatbots are already well established in customer services for two-thirds of customer service interactions. They can also handle pizza orders, hotel concierge services, and many banking transactions to include credit card payments. Additionally, chatbots can assist human resources with daily activities. Chatbots can handle employees calling in sick, time off requests, and scheduling.

The goal for the chatbots at Dell Technologies is to eventually provide each manager and employee with their own artificial intelligence bot as a personal assistant. Dell Technologies chatbots on a business trip could schedule a flight, reserve a rental car, book a hotel room, and even set a schedule for the trip. At the office one of Dell Technologies chatbots could reorder supplies, request for repair of broken office equipment, schedule meetings, and notify the employee of important dates.

To complete their promotion Dell Technologies promotes affordability of chatbots. They can also customize chatbots for a company, departments within the companies, even have the capacity for understanding and using multiple languages. Dell Technologies does admit that chatbots have a way to go before providing human-like interactions, with only a 30% success rate to responding to human requests on Facebook. In closing, Dell Technology reminds the business consumer that “much like the internet 20 years ago, we’re on the brink of a tech disruption that may soon feel like a part of our daily lives” (Alger, 2017).

There are already examples of learning artificial intelligence personal assistants in our society. Today, we already have in our society devices we enjoy and depend upon like Siri, the Echo Dot, Alexa, Cortana, etc. You can speak directly to these bots and give them a task or ask them questions. “Hey Siri, set an alarm for 8:30 AM and she will set an alarm for 8:30 AM. You can ask Alexa to make a grocery list and she will make a grocery list. There are endless things that can be accomplished through what we already have in our technological world that aim to serve us. These devices enhance our lives by providing reminders, playing music we enjoy, and keeping us up to date on weather and news

In addition to use as a personal assistant, bots are also being used in customer service. Many companies such as T-Mobile, many different banks, Verizon, Comcast, Dollar Shave Club, and even the Department of Human Services have automated robots that serve users. A customer log on to an app or call in to an automated bot who will answer questions or guide the customer to the proper department for help.

Initially, many of these artificial intelligence customer service agents were time-consuming and slow. Entry of information was based on keypad entry of data; systems have now advanced to voice recognition. Systems are now also capable of identifying customers by their telephone number and linking it to their account and identifying possible reasons for calling. With the advancement of artificial intelligence, these bots will soon be able to track and identify preferences of callers and make the interaction more meaningful. Do callers prefer being addressed by full name, a nickname, or by title? Is their preference to speak to a male or female customer service agent? It will become a highly personalized experience in the future.

Personnel assistant and customer service based on artificial intelligence provide a future of comfort and ease for people. What of application of such artificial intelligence for more professional level services than personal? There are now therapy applications of bots. The benefit of such bots is that they can learn and develop communication style familiar and inviting to a patient. These bots can also draw upon advance diagnostic algorithms that help in treating the patient. Additionally, they do not sleep, do not charge by the hour (maybe a subscription cost), and you can never catch them on a bad day. Connected to a Fit-Bit or similar device such apps could analyze sleep patterns, quality of sleep, heart rate, exercise routine that could be indications of depression, anxiety, or insomnia. The more a patient uses these apps the better it will be able to assist them.

Woebot is your “charming robot friend who is ready to listen 24/7” is a more therapeutic application which helps people feel better when they are facing difficult feelings. As anything, there are positives and negatives that go alongside each other. On woebot.com you can track your mood, get insight, feel better, learn stuff, and Woebot is there for you 24/7 as mentioned before. Testimonies state that humans really seem to like Woebot! This could be a great app because the less socially interactive (introverts) can get help without feeling the pressure of being in public and talking to someone, but it also contradicts that statement because some people really do need help with being social. With the interaction being limited to the patient and artificial intelligence it reduces the social stigma many fear with seeing a traditional clinician.

Beyond grief therapy and basic psychotherapy advancing online technology and artificial intelligence is beginning to provide basic medical support for people. Apps are now appearing on cell phones and the internet to assist patients with medical concerns and illnesses. Some of these apps that popped up on online are “Doctor on Demand” and “My Doctor Online”. Currently, patients can Skype with a doctor for a fee and not even have to go and visit a clinic. These online real live doctors can refer to a physician for prescriptions as well. Future technology will evolve these online based interactions to a screening process where artificial intelligence permits an online doctor to interact with hundreds of patients in a day.

Virtuwell is an online clinic launched in 2010 and as of 2015 in Minnesota handled more than 40,000 cases (Carrns, 2013). Through the augmentation of the online system Virtuwell staff is able to provide 24 hours a day service that is both efficient and effective. Most patients save about \$88 dollars and two and a half hours on each visit. If the online access is unable to provide for proper diagnoses, such as lab work or X-Ray, the nurse practitioner is able to refer the patient to a more traditional clinic for evaluation. They have done so in approximately 56,000 cases, meaning the online access works for a bit less than half of the patients. However, with the advancement of technology, these online clinics will become more common and efficient.

Technology is becoming integrated with the user with devices like smartphones, fit bits, and I-Watch. This integration will soon lead to “doc-bots” with streaming data on the patient. For diagnostic purposes, these bots will be able to examine heart rate, blood pressure, glucose levels, run an electrocardiogram and other vital signs over minutes, hours, days or longer in moments to determine a patient’s condition and provide potential treatments. At some point this information could warn a patient about a heart attack or stroke before it occurs and dispatch an ambulance in time to save the patient’s life. Artificial intelligence is well on its way to completely eliminating the use of having a physical location for doctor’s offices or counseling offices.

There are many advantages to the advancement of artificial intelligence and bots. Application for an artificial intelligence that is personalized and develops an understanding of the user can be incredibly useful. Such bots are the perfect personal assistant able to predict possible purchasing preferences, personalize your news feed, provide therapeutic feedback based on your history, and even help you locate the best match on a dating website. The artificial intelligence of the future is the best friend who understands you, can communicate with you, knows you better than you know yourself, and can keep a secret. Except for that last part, while these bots will not share your secrets with your friends the information it gathers on you is not your property. That information is analytics and is data owned by the company that produces the interactive artificial intelligence. Your new best friend does not work for you.

In the world of marketing, individualized analytics are very exciting; sellers can now quickly reach their target market with the aid of your information. Marketing money is only spent on those most likely to buy, and the buyer only sees products that interest them. However, your information goes beyond just what you like and want. This information includes when you are most likely to impulse buy, what marketing gimmicks cause you to buy things you don’t need (like an ad with a pretty girl in a bikini), or even what emotions trigger buying for you. Fear is the most powerful motivator for marketing when a company knows what frightens you they can get you to buy regardless of actual need.

Bots can also pretend to be human on social media sites to gain more information and influence over consumers. A bot acting as an individual on social media can appear to be a friend sharing or recommending a product that a person may have some interest in. The mere appearance of the support of a product by another person, a social media friend, could be enough to tip the person into purchasing the item. People buy items that people they like or admire purchase. Social media traffic of bots is divided into two primary categories. The first is “good bots” which are easily detectable and can be determined to be artificial intelligence. Good bots collect and track user data. The second classification is “bad” bots which are difficult to identify and are used to influence users. (Girard, 2016).

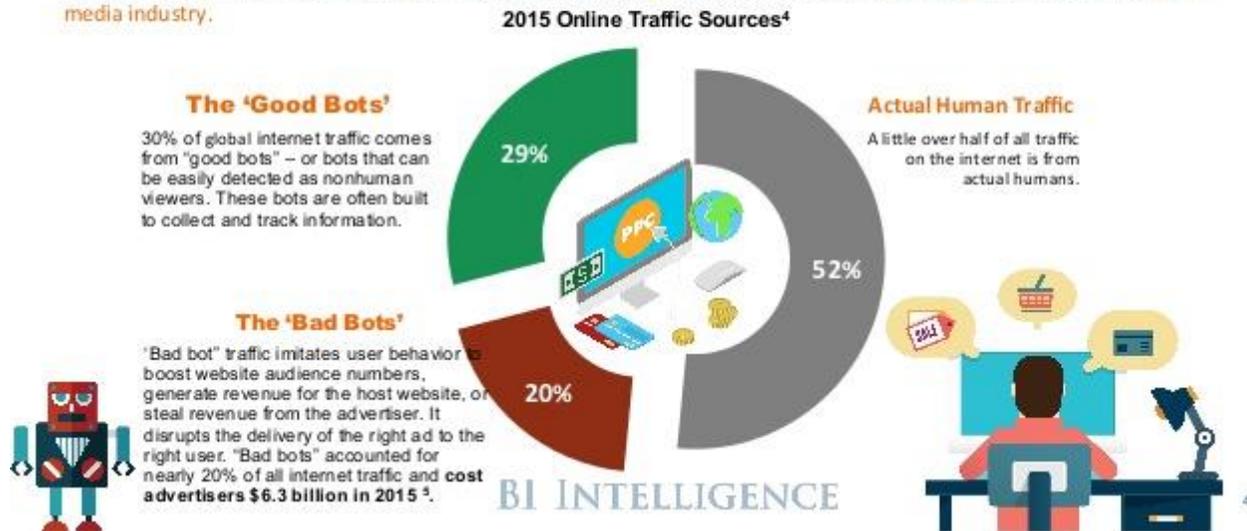
Mark Twain once said, “a lie can travel halfway around the world while the truth is putting on its shoes.” In the day and age of social media, a lie can circumvent the world several times before the truth even sits up in bed. Artificial intelligence and bots can flourish on social media, where it is not necessary to actually know your friends or even to have encountered them in life. People on social media do not check news stories that come across their feeds; instead, they either accept them or reject them based on personal preference. The influence of these bots will increase as the reality of our world is constructed by interactions on social media. Our world is now connected through, and dependent upon, the world wide web and its becoming the super highway for half-truths and lies.

Deep Blue’s legacy can be found in IBM’s newest generation of artificial intelligence named Watson. Like Deep Blue, it was in competing against humans that Watson first found fame in 2011 on the television show *Jeopardy!* Unlike Deep Blue, during the competition, Watson did not require a team of engineers to interact with the host and contestants; instead, it was able to independently analyze human speech and respond during the contest. Watson’s victory was undisputed. Following the win on *Jeopardy!* Watson began to become an accepted partner in human endeavors. Will Knight writing for MIT Technology

Review points out that the artificial intelligence behind Watson is being applied to “related applications— everything from natural language processing to medicine, voice recognition, sentiment analysis, business analytics, and more” (2016). IBM’s commercial promotion of Watson is not as an image of a tool, like desktop computers or cell phones, but as a partner working with humans to achieve success in business, medicine, and personal lives.

## DIGITAL MEDIA: The rise of the bots

Programmatic advertising — or the automatic buying and selling of ad impressions — has exploded in recent years, as the digital shift has led to an increase in ad inventory. But the rise of programmatic has also led to a massive ad fraud problem in which traffic bots are penetrating the ecosystem, mimicking human behavior, and siphoning billions from the digital media industry.



The shift of consciously viewing artificial intelligence as a partner, rather than a tool, creates interesting questions for those studying communication. The communication theories of cybernetics and the symbolic convergence theory offer a lens through which to examine communication between humanity and artificial intelligence. Understanding this dynamic is going to be important as artificial intelligence becomes more entwined in human life professionally, personally, and socially.

Cybernetics is a communication theory developed by Norbert Wiener. “Cybernetics is a theory of information, self-regulating machines, computers and the physiology of the nervous system. An important concept of cybernetics is that of a machine which recognizes stimuli, learns, adjusts itself automatically upon receiving feedback about its performance and moves through a determined number of possible states” (Communications Theory, 2015). The theory was developed in the 1950s and the technology of the time was limited so much of the theory is based on the neural network and the functions of the human mind. Application of this theory demonstrated how in communication the human mind recognized stimuli and adjusted communication style and content to meet feedback. Feedback is defined as actual response to a message rather than the expected response to a message. While artificial intelligence, like Watson, does provide a subject for study of cybernetics remaining focused on the human side of the equation is important in the application of this theory and artificial intelligence.

Daily, people interact with customer service bots, cell phone applications, and assistant artificial intelligence like Watson, Siri, and Alexa. Are these interactions modifying how the human mind encodes and transmits messages as suggested in the cybernetic model? In human to human interaction formation of messages can become lazy with a lack of emphasis on pronunciation, clarity, and utilize slang terms or phrases. In the interaction with artificial intelligence, these lazy habits can create a barrier to successful transmission of messages. The expected feedback in interaction with artificial intelligence is for the computer to complete a task, when the actual response is different the sender modifies how they are encoding messages. Artificial intelligence provides immediate feedback and need for clarification that is often lacking in human to human interaction. There are rewards and punishment system in communication with artificial intelligence. This frequent interaction, according to the cybernetics theory, is providing stimuli by which the human mind is learning how to encode and transmit messages in a new way based on feedback from artificial intelligence. Interaction with artificial intelligence is changing how humans communicate.

Bormann's symbolic convergence theory is the theory that reality is a communitive construct based on shared interpretation of the world around us. These interpretations are not fixed but change based on communication within groups. Greater interaction with artificial intelligence is modifying the participants within the groups interpreting the world around us. An example of this is the personal assistant bots like Alexa. Asking Alexa "what is jazz" will create a response based on Alexa's interpretation of jazz. Telling Alexa to "play jazz" will create a response where it selects an artist and musical composition it has determined to represent as jazz. For the human users the interpretation of jazz now is based on shared construct partially constructed by artificial intelligence.

There are consequences to artificial intelligence and bots influencing our interpretations of world in which we live. In the 2016 United States presidential elections bots were utilized to influence the shared interpretive meanings of social groups such as immigrants or the Democratic Party. By frequent reputation and volume of communitive input bots were able to influence the shared interpretation of these social groups to being negative rather than the previous more neutral social meanings. Due to the fluidity of interpretation within the symbolic convergence theory artificial intelligence can be utilized as a negative influence on society to achieve political or social agendas.

Free of influence to promote social or political goals, interaction with artificial intelligence is frequently driven by data and logical examination of the world around us. This can be a positive influence on people since humans tend to be interpret the world emotionally. If future interpretations of meaning of the world around us is more equally based on logic and passion the influence of artificial intelligence will be a positive under the symbolic convergence theory. An example would be the concept of climate change, currently emotions control social interpretations of the concept. If in the rhetorical analysis of concept is more logical and data driven the social interpretation will reflect that influence. The concept of climate change will have a shared social meaning with artificial intelligence based on examination of facts rather than fear or impassioned arguments.

Eventually, advanced artificial intelligence, such as Watson, will evolve this shared construction of symbolic meanings to more advanced concepts. While artificial intelligence's meaning is based on other interactions with humans, perhaps billions of bits of information, it must still select or reject the meaning the symbol. In many ways the process is similar to how the human mind creates a definition of a symbol. The more people communicate with artificial intelligence and accept information from artificial intelligence the more it will shape the definition of symbols.

In conclusion, the redemption of Deep Blue is a new generation of artificial intelligence that can be the greatest achievement of mankind. The emergence of artificial intelligence and bots does not only modify how we perceive our world but will even define our reality of the future. Tomorrow's reality is likely to be crafted equally by humanity and artificial intelligence. Artificial intelligence will be part of

what defines our culture of tomorrow and how society interacts and functions. Finally, artificial intelligence will redefine what it means to be human.

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## **An Inversion Concept and Cultural Roots of Redemption as Finding One's Freedom**

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When this year's SASSI theme was announced, my first thought was that it would not be a year I would participate in the conference, at least as a presenter and writer. Personally, redemption has been one of those concepts that has never made sense to me. Yet, I decided I would stay open to the idea of participation; and if something came along that allowed me to explore this concept in a way that could provide some kind of insight, I would. Eventually a set of three things, the television show *The Killing*, a noticeable trend in the broadcast analysis of the 2018 PyeongChang Olympics, and a friend's reaction to Lila Down's concert, has led me to an understanding of redemption as "finding one's freedom."

Part of my own lack of clarity toward this subject may in part be due to my own lived experience as an athlete. Listen to the NBC broadcast of seemingly any hour of any day at the 2018 PyeongChang Olympics and the word redemption would be heard. Would the USA women's hockey team find redemption by beating Team Canada and win gold for the first time since the event was initially contested in 1998? Would Shaun White find redemption and reclaim gold after failing to medal in Sochi in 2014? Would Lindsey Jacob-Ellis find redemption and finally win gold on her fourth attempt? Would Nathan Chen find redemption in the long program after falling multiple times in the team and men's individual short programs? Yet, as an athlete, this notion of "erasure" of past problematic performance through next performance has always seemed riddled with pothole and tripwires. In my experience, it is accessing one's creative agency through creative engagement (Muller, 2014; 2016) in the moment of action that generates best performance. The link of creative engagement to performance goes through a focus on positivity. Attending to goals or anything outside of maximizing positive creative engagement in the moment results in non-best, unfulfilling performance. This would especially be true if any kind of negativity associated with past performance were to be a diving force during current performance. Yet, the nature of the broadcast analysis, led me to ask the question, why in this particular Olympics was the theme of redemption so central and what cultural relevance does this have?

### **Methodology**

As already begun in the opening paragraph, the methodology implemented in the paper is PERPLE or practically engaged reflection on the processing of lived experience (Muller, 2015; 2016). The PERPLE method is designed to make apparent the movement from a particular lived experience to a practical insight that is meaningful beyond the person who had the initial experience. Combining a set of scholarly perspectives allows for articulating and sharing with others the processing of a lived experience which, in a notable way, stands out as important to the researcher. The writing of the research report is an attempt to create thoughtful and informative resonance with the reader.

The method begins with identifying a moment that captures a lived experience. Dewey (1938, 1939) and relatedly Gadamer (1981, 1984) address how thinking is often set into action when a difficulty in sense-making is experienced. When something doesn't make sense, we think about it, and we think about it in particular ways. Grounded practical theory (Craig & Tracy 1995) builds on this foundation and is an approach to theorizing that includes identifying the dilemmas or problems communicators involved in a shared social practice experience when talking together. All three approaches advocate that thought and action are not separate endeavors. Rather, theory (how we think/talk) and practice (how we act/experience) are reflexively linked, especially in times of difficulty in sense-making. Translating this idea to PERPLE identifies that practically engaged reflection on specified moments involves addressing both thought and action when articulating the processing of that moment.

This practically engaged reflection occurs in thought, conversation, and writing. For each project, the writing is somewhat different because the writing is an attempt to capture a journey. As such the writing is rooted in autoethnography (Ellis and Bochner 2000; Denzin, 2014) and informed by analytic autoethnography (Anderson 2006). Yet it is different because while it does share the impetus to “change the conditions under which lives are lived,” (Denzin 2014, xi) it does so in a different way than that which is hallmark in autoethnography. While in PERPLE I am exploring a part of my own lived experience, as one would in any autoethnographic project, the practical aspect of this method means that the endeavor does not emphasize meaning-making per se but rather the point is to share reflection on my processing in order to provide a depiction of a way to “do” something in both thought and action.

In creating impact on thought and action through writing, the writing incorporates invitational rhetoric (Foss and Griffin 1995) where persuasion is not the goal of the writer as rhetor but rather perspectives are offered and presented in a way that invites the reader into considering them. One seeks neither agreement nor engaging in argumentation. Though there are characteristics akin to dialogue (Buber 2002), what is presented does not allow the reader to “experience” the writer as other; rather, the aim is to open the possibility for a kind of attunement (Lipari 2014) for the reader with what is presented. In writing, this means that use of the first person is mandatory at the times when I am talking about my actions, my thoughts.

Following PERPLE, the writing in this paper follows the movement from an initiating, though somewhat abstract moment to a moment of culturally infused relational insight. The journey between these moments is through foundational ideas in communication theory as related to the cultural relevance of redemption. In keeping with the SASSI conference an analysis of a societal image of a variation of redemption seen in the television show *The Killing*. Adding to this is the exploration of redemption in sport performance and presentation of redemptive experience which took place to at a Lila Downs concert leads to a discussion the notion of redemption as finding one’s freedom through redemptive release from a feeling of being “trapped.” This approach to redemption as an inversion of the archaic meaning has deep cultural resonance in the contemporary moment.

### *The Initiating Moment*

The initiating moment in this instance is different because it took place in light of working toward the possibility of participating in the SASSI conference around the theme of redemption. Whereas most initiating moments occur when living life and something, a particular moment, strikes the researcher as importantly “notable.” (Muller, 2016) In this case, attending to life was a little different in that the theme of redemption had been actuated by potential conference participation. Due to such actuation, the moment explored in this paper is a bit more abstract than often would be in my life experience. Yet, such activation is a part of lived experience and as such the relevance of a “mentally primed” along with more spontaneously experienced moments hold the possibility of practical insight.

The moment has already been referenced in the introductory paragraph. Stated directly, it was the striking constancy of the reference to redemption made by broadcasters throughout the 2018 PyeongChang Winter Olympics. Rather than engaging in the undertaking to the point of making sense of why this moment was especially meaningful to me personally which is the basis of most PERPLE work. Examining a question that arises from a moment is an instanton of the more abstract version of this methodology when working from an explicitly attuned viewpoint. The question under investigation here is, what is the cultural relevance of this theme at his point in time?

### *Redemption as Cultural Communication Ritual*

In my initial thinking, redemption seems as a process in kind with forgiveness and closure. All of which seem to be ritual engagements associated with overcoming a sense of guilt, absence, or emptiness. Though redemption is sometimes addressed psychologically in terms of life stories (McAdams, 2001; McAdams et al., 2001), it may also be understood as a communicative ritual (Carey, 1989). Just as do all such rituals, they need to be enacted as part of a shared experience with others in order to be meaningful. Their meaning is held not internally in an individual, but collectively in a community which values the ritual. Socio-culturally, communication practices become “ours” through taking on the attitudes of those in the shared culture in which we participate (Mead, 1934). For instance, attending a funeral can bring about a sense of closure; but this is experienced only by those members who attend it and make it a significant part of their shared and on-going history. A family member who does not attend the funeral may have a sense of guilt, absence, or emptiness, but these feelings are not ones that can be overcome through the actions of an individual. They can only be ameliorated through additional shared community ritual. Redemption is similar. “Paying for one’s crime” through punishment can a redemptive ritual in overcoming guilt; but redemption does not come about through internal change in the individual who receives the punishment. If the community values “taking one’s punishment” as a redemptive ritual, then the community experiences redemption together through participation in the shared ritual of punishment. How the community performs this ritual is what determines if the experience is one of redemption through punishment or merely one of punishment.

One complicated aspect of such communicative rituals is that though they bring about a communally shared experience, by their nature they do not facilitate unique personal growth. These rituals work because they are part of a shared world in which individuals understand each other through their engagement in these shared rituals. Actions and emotions of fellow community members are understood due to performance in mutually valued rituals. If a person does not engage in these rituals, she is not a valued community member and she is not understood. To grow as a person in a world where there are such rituals is to become more actively participative in these rituals. Communicative rituals are ways of maintaining a culture rather than developing unique individuals. From a psychological perspective, the relevant psychology is socio-psychological (Bandura, 2001). Individual selves are built through modeling behavior that is rewarded in society. In a world where such rituals are valued, ways of talking together socially become internalized into ways of thinking individually (Vygotsky, 1978; 1986). A person learns to think through learning to talk with others. While an individual is always a rhetorical actor (Tracy, 2002), pursuing his own goals in interaction. If she lives in a society in which redemption, forgiveness, or closure is valued, to have these experiences, she must learn to participate in the shared ritual.

The notion of communication ritual seems especially relevant in terms of the redemption theme at the Pyeongchang Olympics. While the argument could be made that only in the “fire” of the “toughest” and “most-esteemed” competition of the Olympics in order to truly show their mettle as a competitor and champion and thusly only here could one “erase” past failures. From a socio-cultural communication perspective, it is the communicative ritual of the Olympics that holds the potential for redemption for the community associated with these athletes. All of the examples I initially cited were from team USA, and the theme could be seen as redemption for American sports fans. Our women’s hockey team should be able to beat the Canadians, snowboarding (Shaun White, Lindsey Jacob-Ellis) is our sport, and with Nathan Chen we have a male figure skater who can compete with the best in the world. If we can all participate with these athletes in the return to the top of the podium, we can be redeemed as members of the sporting culture where we are the best in international competition. As our interviewers ask the athletes about their striving to return to the top, as our analysts frame their performances as seeking redemption, we can participate with them in our collective attitude toward American success and glory in sport. We have been challenged, but now again, and since it is redemption as seek, as we truly have always been, we are on top of the world. As communication ritual, the Olympics are not a chance to watch individual or even team sport

performances, but rather as participants in Team USA they are an opportunity to engage in a culturally shared communication ritual in redemption of our championship sporting culture.

### *Redemption as Enacting Agency the Embracing Identity*

If redemption is inherently a shared cultural ritual, how does that relate to individual experience? The case of Evgenia Medvedeva at the 2018 PyeongChang Olympics highlights this question. Having been injured and then coming in second for the first time in over four years at the most recent world championships to her young countrywoman and teammate Alina Zagitova, Evgenia was in a situation quite akin to returning men's champion, Japan's Yuzuru Hanyu whose injury left him unable to have significant practice time right up until the beginning of the Olympics. How would each of these two perform? Both have "grab the audience" performances in the long program. Yuzuru is able to skate clean, at times shakily on the injury, throughout his performance. Evgenia skates with no evidence of injury through her performance. Hanru wins the gold, Medvedeva the silver. Are either of these performances redemptive? For further analysis, I turn to the journeys of two TV characters.

The Nordic noir television show "The Killing" (based on the Danish television show had two primary lead characters, Sarah Linden (Mirelle Enos) and Stephen Holder (Joel Kinnamen). As the series begins, it is Sara's last day on the force, she is leaving to move to California (from Seattle the setting of the show). This is also the day that Holder, a hoodie wearing vice cop, is transferring to homicide. As Sara is just about to leave, a new missing person case, Rosie Larson, comes in and she meets Holder who is in search of a partner. That both of these characters are deeply troubled become readily apparent. Holder is an addict who became hooked on drugs while working undercover for vice. Sara has been recently released from a mental institution, and it is quickly revealed that her fiancé is her psychiatrist. Sara decides to take the case, promising her fiancé and her son, Jack, who does not want to move, that her remaining in Seattle is only temporary.

As we learn more about these characters, Holder is very much an addict. He quite regularly attends NA meetings. Even though for his work he is still often around drugs and the culture of drug use, he is able to stay clean most of the time. However, under extreme personal duress, in this case when a young informant with whom his relationship has become complicated is killed, Holder turns to drugs. In doing so he sustains his sister's view of him. She refuses to count or rely on him in any way. She does not say he cannot be around her or her children, but she makes it clear that when he is around he is more a "visitor" than any kind of family member.

Sara's "issues" are more complicated. Yet, the term to which she was referred during her foster child days, "the runner," is one way to capture her life struggles. Eventually, during a case, we see the tree fort to which she often used to run to get away from her foster homes. We also see her running as a workout, but often on these runs she encounters troubling visuals. Where is she running? Another word for this could be "the seeker." As a young child, she is out with her mother, and we see her spinning around looking for her mother, who she is unable to locate. We also learn that the initiating event that led to her institutionalization were the complications from her affair with her former married partner who is now a superior officer leading Seattle's .PD's Special Investigations Unit.

Will these two troubled detectives find redemption working together? As detectives, they are both skilled. Sara is able to "see" things, especially crime scenes, in ways others do not. Holder is able to cultivate trust with the people on the street who are able to provide insight into cases unavailable from any other sources. Possibly due to their rough and difficult upbringings they have built useful survival skills, but they also are both unable to follow procedure. If they had been, Sara would not have had her affair and Holder would not have become an addict while on their job. Yet, by not being "standard," they are able to

incorporate their unique skills into their work. As partners, Sara and Holder are able to construct their own procedures for approaching cases and in doing so they are able to pursue powerful members of Seattle society in their investigations. Eventually, through a long and winding investigation, they are able to bring a conclusion to the Rosie Larson murder which is the “last” case Sara took. However, there are casualties along the way, most notably the candidate who becomes the newly elected mayor, Darrien Richmond, is paralyzed in conjunction with the investigation. After the case is concluded, Linden does retire but not to marry her former psychologist, but rather to live on an island and work for the Washington ferry service.

Moving ahead, Holder convinces Linden to come out of retirement to pursue a series of murders which seem connected to a case which has long “dogged” Sarah. As they pursue the case, it becomes clear that a long-time serial murderer is at work. It is in conjunction with this case that Holder’s informant, a teen/very young adult Rachel “Bullet” Olmsted who lives on the street, provides some erroneous information under duress from Holder to help find a missing fellow child. After the expensive debacle of the search where nothing is found Holder turns his back on Bullet to whom he had almost become a big brother. Bullet is found murdered in the trunk of a car. This is the event that sends Holder back into his drug habit. Though it is noticeable in his behavior, Holder continues to be able to work as a detective and even develops a seemingly stable relationship with Caroline Swift, a district attorney. He is very much able to live life as a partaking addict.

As the investigation into the serial killings continue, the prime suspect becomes James Skinner, Linden’s former partner, lover and now superior officer within the department. Eventually Linden finds indisputable evidence, Skinner’s daughter Bethany is wearing the ring from a recent missing person/potential victim. Skinner has been killing for years, and also for years has successfully kept Linden “trapped” in a cycle where she feels compelled to work the case of which he is the perpetrator, but also feels tied to him personally. Linden and Holder separately learn that Skinner has gone to his lake house and make their way there. Skinner is trapped, but he continues to bear down on Linden. There is a moment when both she and Holder are present and things could move more or less in a procedural fashion with an arrest. Linden, however, finds herself unable to do so and shoots Skinner dead. Holder and Linden decide to get rid of the evidence, and place both the body and Skinner’s car in the lake, in which they also know many of his victims have been placed as well.

As Carl Reddick takes the lead on the serial killer case, Holder and Linden move onto another case in which a family was murdered. As they investigate, the prime suspect becomes the son in the family, Tyler Ross. Though Linden follows every possible other avenue, she winds up in the family house with the son/likely killer. Though from a very rich family, Tyler has been under extreme duress both from his family and at the military school he attends. Sitting at the piano, Tyler confesses, after which Linden seemingly inexplicably says it is okay.” Tyler says, “no it is not.” Linden has gotten to a place where extreme duress and circumstances can make it seem somehow okay to kill. For the son though, killing his family, at least at this moment, regardless of circumstances is not “okay.” Sarah is finally completely trapped in her cycle. There is no way out. There is nowhere for her to run. Doing her job, solving a/the case cannot get her out.

At this point, Sarah begins to take agency of her life. She knows she needs to confess to killing Skinner and is prepared to take the punishment, almost as if she has learned the lesson from Tyler. Yet, the system is not done with her. Dues ex machina mayor Darrien Richmond, the consequential damage from the Rosie Larson case, steps in. Darrien tells her that she is going to keep her job and continue working as the department/city works to show how Skinner’s death was suicide and was even framed as the serial killer, no officer will tarnish the image of another officer or his office. Linden realizes the system is once again working to trap her in the same repeating cycle. She hands in her gun and badge and leave. The system will not send her to jail because of the damage that would do to itself, but Sarah exerts her own agency and walks away from the trap.

Five years later, Linden returns to Seattle—seeking to find Holder. Although when she had left Holder was still employed by the police department, she finds Holder at work running NA meetings. He now has regular visits with his daughter, although he is not in a together relationship with her mother Caroline. He has found his agency through embracing his life as an addict. He cannot put himself in overly stressful situations because he does not have the fortitude to keep himself away from drugs in such a situation. He needs to move regularly through each day. When in the program, he keeps himself in a semi-stressed state. It is a level of stress he needs to continually struggle through. He has the capacity to handle such, and he needs to continually manage such because he needs to keep himself from getting into an over-stressed situation where he feels the need to escape. He is an addict. He can never not be an addict. This is his reality, his inescapable identity around which he can build a healthy, sustainable life. Holder achieves redemptive freedom through embracing this definitive identity and the life necessary to maintain it.

Linden admits to Holder that the time she felt most at home was driving around in the car with him being detectives, being partners. Holder though will not consider going back to that life. Linden leaves Holder and drives around and around Seattle. As a runner, she has always struggled to hold onto anyone or anything. She tried to be in connection with her social worker and mother figure, Regi Darnel, she has found and remained in contact with her mother Gena Geddes, and she has worked to keep her son Jack with her though he now lives with his father in Chicago. After encountering Holder not as a member of the police culture but as a member of the NA culture, she drives around and around Seattle, seeing it from a different perspective. She sees it as an outsider, not someone embedded within its system, whether the foster care system or the police department. Seattle becomes something different for her. It becomes a place, a place of possibility not a system in which she is trapped. Linden returns to Holder not seeking to “run” with him, but ready to commit to a person and a place. She lets go of her runner identity and embraces something new, something somewhat unknown, but something outside the systems and cycles in which she was trapped. Linden achieves redemptive freedom through opening herself up to a new identity and a new life.

How does the story in *The Killing* relate the Olympic athletes? As was a key element in the movie *Cool Runnings*, winning can become a trap for elite athletes. The identity can become one of “winner” rather than competitor or athlete. Yet, to win an event is not something that is totally in the hands of an individual athletic performer. To embrace this identity is to accept getting caught in a systemic trap, much as the ones in which Linden and Holder were trapped. Exploring this notion, the “winner” trap takes going a bit back into the past. Being that the PyeongChang Olympics were in 2018, and that there was a tight skating match-up between Medvedeva and Zagatova, one of the storylines went back to Calgary 1998 and the competition between both Debbie Thomas and Katarina Witt as well as the “Battle of the Brians” between Brian Orser and Brian Boitano. Brian Orser was negligibly the favorite going in having lost to Scott Hamilton in 1984 due only to the compulsory figures aspect of the competition. Hamilton won that aspect of the competition by so much that Orser barely came in second even though he won the centerpiece of the competition, the men’s long program. In 1988, the story was different, but he came in again a very close second. What would Brian Orser do with these two “defeats?” Was he an Olympic near-champion? Was he always second-best? Was he someone who could not come through when it mattered most, maybe weak in his competitive desire or psychological strength? The identity he chose was Olympic skating coach. At this point, he has coached two Olympic gold medalists: Korea’s Yuna Kim in Vancouver in 2010, and the aforementioned Yuzuru Hanhu in Sochi in 2014 and again in PyeongChang in 2018.

In an interesting turn, Brian Orser is now also the coach of Evgenia Medvedeva. One of the oddities of the women’s competition in 2018 was that both Medvedeva and Zagatova had the same Russian coach. Medeva’s program was “pure Medvedeva,” telling the story of Anna Karenina. Zagatova’s program was an enactment of the Tchaikovsky’s Swan Lake. Her program was also designed exactly to maximize the point totals through having all her jump elements during the second half of the program. Was one skate

mere strategic and calculating while one more artistically designed? Possibly, and by the same coach. How would this coach work with both of these athletes moving forward? That question will never be answered.

The question still remains, have all these skaters achieved redemption. After the competition, Medvedeva said she gave it all she had, she gave her soul in her long skate performance. Working off that statement, it could be that Medvedeva sought out a coach that could also lead her to gold, or it could be that Medvedeva as Orser himself, has never been trapped in the “winner” identity. In an expressly artistic form of athletic performance where winning is judged, redemption could be considered holding on to the ability to express one’s skating identity. Though Brian Orser cannot skate any longer, but he can be part of other’s holding onto their own skating identities even in the face of the potential systematic traps of the “winning” identity. Working with him could be to join in a culture that embraces redemptive freedom from the trap of the winner identity.

### *Redemption as Finding One’s Freedom*

Looking at these athlete examples and both Linden and Holder in *The Killing*, though all achieve redemption through enacting agency and embracing identity, the identities they embrace are somewhat different. Holder’s identity as an addict is something he must embrace. He cannot change the fact that he is an addict. If he is not to be trapped in the cycle of his addiction, he must embrace that identity. Linden and the skaters act to choose identities that keep them out of systematic and cyclic traps. The emerging question is, what is it that facilitates a person either embracing an inescapable identity or choosing one that keeps a person out of the traps of repeating cycles? To pursue this question, I turn to my own experience.

Not long before the SASSSI conference presentation date, I and a friend with whom I attend such events went to a concert by Lila Downs. This performance was highly experiential. There was a 10-12 piece band, there was the main performer in a strikingly colorful outfit who primarily spoke English sprinkled with Spanish, the music itself sung in Spanish, and there was a huge video board hung across nearly the width of the stage. The performance of one particular song led to a redemptive experience for my friend. This song to me felt like an absolute celebration of death. It had an emphatically joyous and revelatory feeling of death coming for us. The pulsing rhythm, the singing, the visuals all said, “we get to die.”

For context, my friend had recently been deeply involved in the difficult death of someone who is her family was considered an aunt. My friend is highly interpersonally skilled and works professionally as a companion for older folks. She is not in any way a medical professional, but rather works with them as they find their way through the aging process including working through illness, the death of long-time partners, moving out of their long-term homes, and many other related scenarios. As such, it was very taxing for her to participate in her aunt’s final days. She had to make a long, nearly daily commute through tough city traffic. She had to coordinate between a vast network of her aunt’s friends and an oddly configured set of family members. The primary source of stress was working with her aunt’s partner, who had all the power to make medical decisions, but who at not any point throughout the process could find it in himself to do anything other than make decisions that served his own needs. Even though many of her wishes were known, her aunt experience significant amounts of physical suffering she has explicitly desired to avoid. This was due to her partner often making himself scarce during decision-making times.

As my friend listened to this song, she had a deep emotional response through which she came into an understanding of how thoroughly she had been trapped in a particular perspective. It was nothing she could exactly articulate at the moment, but through experiencing the performance of this song, things shifted in many ways throughout her being. Through debriefing the concert, we talked through how being raised in the American culture of life and experiencing such a rich and complete expression of a Mexican culture of death, that was just the thing to jostle loose the “trap” in her thinking and have a redemptive experience.

As this example shows, such a cultural encounter is one way to “find one’s freedom” through a redemptive experience.

The notion of finding one’s freedom is an inversion of the archaic definition of redemption (dictionary.com). The main definitions of redemption are 1) the action of saving or being saved from sin, error or evil and 2) the action of regaining or gaining possession of something in exchange for payment or clearing a debt. These two definitions are the ones that I did not grasp about acting in a way that would somehow erase or overcome something negative that had occurred with the individual. Looking deeper into the definition the one listed as archaic is “the action of buying one’s freedom.” While there still are places where people labor under near indentured servant conditions, the notion of buying one’s freedom doesn’t seem especially relevant in today’s society. However, inverting this idea to the notion of not buying but rather “finding one’s freedom,” does seem contemporarily relevant and seems to be descriptive all the instances of redemption presented thus far in this paper.

The life story of Lila Downs provides the completing part of the picture linking redemptively embracing identity and redemptively encountering culture. A woman raised dually in Oaxaca Mexico and Minnesota who early in her life distanced herself from her indigenous ethnicity. At one point she dyed her hair blond and followed the Grateful Dead around on tour. Later in her life as her own artistic performer, she has fully embraced her indigenosity and it is become that which she shares with her audiences. Much as with Holder, she has built her identity and her life around this inescapable part of her being. As such, both the real person, Lila Downs, and the character Stephen Holder are not only individuals but embodiments of cultural beings. Lila Downs is living indigenous Mexican culture and Holder is a member of the NA addict culture. As such, when non-members of this culture these individuals they also encounter these cultures. It is not that “outsider” become members of the culture but they can come to see everything about their home cultures and situations differently. Such an encounter can facilitate a redemptive experience as it did for Sarah Linden and my friend.

Importantly though, this cultural encounter model of redemptive experience is different from the one examined with the Olympic athletes. There are no inescapable parts of an athletic identity. A person may be physically gifted or raised in an environment that is supportive and values becoming an athlete, but it is always a choice to become a competitive athlete. Rather what is inescapable is that within this culture the “winner” identity is one repeating cycle into which anyone who chooses to become an athlete can become trapped. This is the systemic trap that any athlete needs to find a way to avoid. What we see with the Brian Orser coaching/training culture is an example of an alternative culture within this where within the umbrella culture in which athletes may win, but do so in an environment designed to support athletes in not falling in the systemic winner identity trap. This athlete example provides an insight into how within a culture, specific sub-cultures can be built to support people from not falling into the traps nearly inescapably, systemically built into that culture. This athlete example adds an intriguing layer of complexity to the cultural model of redemption.

## **Discussion**

In summation, the investigation of potential redemptive experience in the 2018 PyeongGang Olympics, the television show *The Killing*, and at a Lila Down Concert, has allowed for the presentation of an inverted concept of redemption not in the archaic meaning of “buying one’s freedom,” but rather as a contemporary concept of “finding one’s freedom.” When a person becomes trapped in a repeated cycle which keeps them from acting with creative agency, finding a way to break out of the cycle can be a redemptive experience. As seen with Stephen Holder and Lila Downs, this can come in the form of embracing and building a sustainable life incorporating and inescapable part of one’s identity. It can also emerge from coming into a new perspective on one’s own culture and identity through encountering a distinctly different culture as seen with Sarah Linden and my friend at the Lila Downs concert. Further as

seen in the Olympic example, it can also come from building and becoming a member of a specific alternative culture within a larger umbrella culture that is specifically designed to assist members in avoiding the systemic traps within that larger culture. All these examples show redemption as a way of finding one's freedom where the person can move with creative agency rather than being caught in and having their life course driven by a cycle such as the addition cycle of getting oneself into overstressed situations from which one then needs to escape through using drugs. From this perspective, redemption is not some kind of pay-back earning, balancing, or atonement. Rather it is moving out of something repetitious and into something somewhat unknown but also with a feeling of freedom and sustainability.

Still remaining is the opening question, what is the cultural relevance of this theme at this point in time? Why now, why the theme of redemption in the 2018 PyeongChang Olympics? Part of what is being argued here is that redemption is possible because we have cultures. Even in the cases of examples of individuals embracing inextricable parts of their identities, these identities are linked in with membership in larger cultures. This analysis turns the project of redemption into a three-pronged practical endeavor. One prong is finding those inescapable parts of oneself around which to build a sustainable life. The second prong is to realize that sometimes finding freedom comes from becoming able to gain a new perspective on one's own culture through encountering a different culture. The third prong could even be considered as the third and fourth prongs. These prongs relate to working to find the systematic traps in one's own culture and seeking out alternative sub-cultures that assist one from getting caught in the repeated cycles of those traps. Specifically, within the US culture of life where freedom is an expressed value, at this point in time, we need to address what are the systemic traps into which we can fall related to specific conceptions of freedom? At a time when there is very little leadership in the country and when there is very little consensus, it has become the endeavor to implement all 3-4 prongs of the practice of being open to redemptive experience. This analysis has shown some of the paths to finding one's freedom through redemption and as we continue to work to build a shared culture based on freedom to do to we need to seek to embrace identities, encounter cultures, become aware of systemic traps, and build alternative subcultures. At this point in time, just as each athlete in the Olympics had to find their own individual ways to experience redemption and compete with a sense of freedom, each of us in this culture can engage in such redemption related practices in our own ways as we work toward 21<sup>st</sup> century conceptions and practices of freedom.

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## Redemption of Truth: Do Facts Matter in the Post-Truth World?

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When George Orwell returned from the Spanish war, he was appalled by the amount of lies about the war in British newspapers, which were interpreted as truth by the British public. Orwell attributed this phenomenon to “newspaper and radio hypnosis”; today, we can say that we have social media hypnosis in Trump’s US and television hypnosis in Putin’s Russia.

From president Trump tweets to president Putin press-conferences, it seems like “... the very concept of objective truth is fading out of the world” (Orwell 198). If press-secretary says, “That was the largest audience to witness an inauguration, period,” it becomes the truth. If president says, “There are no Russian troops in Ukraine,” it also becomes the truth. So, do facts even matter anymore, or in our brave new post-truth world, reality disappears and instead the latest tweet or news flash on your Facebook page becomes the reality?

Here are some of the “alternative facts” showing that, once again, we see “history being written not in terms of what happened but of what ought to have happened according to various “party lines” (Orwell 197).

### *US<sup>1</sup>:*

- *Alternative fact:* “33,000 mining jobs have been added since my inauguration” (Jun 21, 2017).  
*Fact:* This number includes job mining for natural gas, oil, and other minerals. The coal-mining industry has added about 1,300 jobs since December 2016, largely because of Chinese production cuts.
- *Alternative fact:* 4,000 dollars pay raise for average American family in Trump’s tax reform.<sup>2</sup>  
*Fact:* According to the nonpartisan Tax Policy Center, the average household would get a tax cut of \$1,610 in 2018. Cf. Sinclair Lewis’ *It Can’t Happen Here*: “... we shall have such a balance of trade as will go far to carry out my often-criticized but completely sound idea of from \$3,000 to \$5,000 per year for every single family – that is, I mean, every real American family” (91).
- *Alternative fact:* Tax reform of 2017 is the biggest tax cut in US history (said 57 times).  
*Fact:* it is 8<sup>th</sup> (Treasury Department)
- *Alternative fact:* US is one of highest-taxed countries (said 33 times).  
*Fact:* in 2014, revenue as a percentage of the gross domestic product — the broadest measure of the economy — was 26 percent for the United States), lower than average of 34.4%, according to Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD)
- *Alternative fact:* We have trade deficit with everybody.  
*Fact:* The United States has trade surpluses with many countries, including Argentina, Australia, Brazil, the Netherlands, and the United Kingdom.

### *Russia<sup>3</sup>:*

- *Alternative fact:* There are no Russian troops in Ukraine.  
*Fact:* There are numerous examples of Russian troops being captures or killed in Ukraine.
- *Alternative fact:* Russia did not interfere in the US presidential elections.  
*Fact:* Indictment of 13 Russian citizens by special prosecutor Robert Mueller.
- *Alternative fact:* Malaysian airline flight 17 downed by Ukrainian missile (variant: Ukrainian fighter jet).

*Fact:* A Dutch-led criminal investigation into the 2014 downing of Malaysia Airlines Flight 17 found evidence the airliner was struck by a Russian-made Buk missile that was moved into eastern Ukraine from Russia.

- *Alternative fact:* Population of Russia is increasing.  
*Fact:* 116,000 decrease in 2017; official government forecast: 240,000 every year decrease for the next 15 years.
- *Alternative fact:* Oil and gas share in export from Russia is decreasing.  
*Fact:* Oil and gas share increased in 2017; export of machinery comprises a very small percentage (less than 8%); so oil and gas are major exports.

Thus, by this constant flow of lies (or, in Trump’s words, “truth hyperboles”) both presidents create an alternative, virtual reality in the minds of their voters. Not only these virtual realities have nothing to do with the real world, but propaganda tools used to create “alternative facts” in the minds of the citizens of both countries are surprisingly similar. Both presidents employ fear – the number one emotion used in any propaganda campaign. They create the image of the enemy – be it immigrants or other countries who use US to their own advantage (in case of Trump), or in case of Putin, the image of mother Russia surrounded by enemies who wish to destroy it.

However, there is also a difference: Trump managed to create an alternative reality in a free country, where anyone can check the facts. In spite of that, a third of the country still supports him and ignores the boring facts. We do not know how many of Russian citizens really support Putin (official polls in an authoritarian country mean nothing), but there is no doubt that there are voters who believe everything he is saying and who do not pay any attention to the facts, either. Besides, it is much more difficult to check the facts in Russia, since there are no free media anymore.

As a result, we have leaders of these two countries not only creating the alternative reality but trying to impose this reality on everybody else. This virtual reality is not confined to only those who support Trump and Putin no matter what; the dangerous aspect of it is the fact that it replaces truth at the level of the governments of two nuclear powers. What if these two presidents really believe everything they are saying?

#### Endnotes

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<sup>2</sup>Incidentally, this claim is nearly a verbatim quote from Sinclair Lewis’s novel *It Can’t Happen Here*: “... we shall have such a balance of trade as will go far to carry out my often-criticized but completely sound idea of from \$3,000 to \$5,000 per year for every single family – that is, I mean, every real American family” (91).

<sup>3</sup>Fact checking sources for Russia: YouTube channel *Lies of Putin Regime*:

[www.youtube.com/channel/UCBReV5bfLRI8pFtTroKH7mw](http://www.youtube.com/channel/UCBReV5bfLRI8pFtTroKH7mw)

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## **The Machine, the Garden, and the Wilderness: Historical Images of Redemption in America**

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It could be argued that the myth of the environmental paradise, an Eden if you will, has long been tied to the narrative about the North American continent, and specifically the lands settled in what would eventually become the United States. Henry Nash Smith (1950) says the history of the first European immigrants to the North American continent can be seen as a recreation of the Garden of Eden narrative from Biblical texts. In this case, the white settlers were fleeing a wrecked and devastated garden (Europe) in favor of a new and pristine land, where they could fix the problems found in the land left behind in a new Garden. The first Pilgrim harvest demonstrates this creation myth in action: man is struggling against a sometimes hostile wilderness, only to eventually persevere and tame it (Smith 1950, 141). It was also a gendered space, with men as explorers and women as tenders of the new homeland.

This creation myth would repeat itself as the North American continent was settled: people would flee a devastated Northeast, or South or Midwest, for greener pastures in “untamed” land. But, as Leo Marx (1964/2000) notes, this would be complicated by the Industrial Revolution:

The sudden appearance of the machine in the garden is an arresting, endlessly evocative image. It causes the instantaneous clash of opposed states of mind: a strong urge to believe in the rural myth along with an awareness of industrialization as counterforce to the myth (229).

As trains and factories were transforming manufacturing, so too were photographs transforming image-making. But here, the machine would take a curious role in the garden: images of seemingly “untouched” lands were being distributed to the public via a mechanized device. The machine was not only in the garden, but was attempting to make its presence invisible.

This paper compares the writings and photographs of two photographers who would both find a type of redemption in the land: Edward Weston and Jessie Tarbox Beals. Each worked in gendered spaces, with Weston celebrating the “unspoiled” land and Tarbox Beals the tended garden. But both found a type of spirituality within, which the paper argues both preserves the gendered nature of these spaces while at the same time pushes against the notion that redemption can only be found in the wilderness.

### **Capturing Beauty**

As I argued in the proceedings for this conference in 2017, the concept of “nature” is a “constantly evolving and negotiable process” (Ryan 2017, 62), that is typically placed in pointed opposition to the “manmade”: cities, roads, technology, and other accoutrements of human life. But at the same time, as William Cronon (1995) notes, it is something that is “a profoundly human construction” (25). By this he means that “nature,” as a construct, is something that was created by humans to indicate a space separate from “manmade.” The concept of “nature” stems from the Enlightenment, where “nature” was imbued with a sort of Edenic purity. It is thus seen as a space that is the closest humans can get to perfection, a world before original sin and the fall of man.

This construction ignores the sheer brutality that is a part of nature. The natural world, after all, is dangerous, with animals living not in harmony with one another (and humans), but rather a space where a wrong step or an encounter with a wrong predator could literally end one’s life. The construction (nature

as Eden) also ignores the fact that humans, and their creations, are as much a part of the natural world as flora or fauna. Nature is, Cronon argues, infused with complex duality:

It is not a pristine sanctuary where the last remnant of an untouched, endangered, but still transcendent nature can for at least a little while longer be encountered without the contaminating taint of civilization. Instead, it is a product of that civilization, and could hardly be contaminated by the very stuff of which it is made. Wilderness hides its unnaturalness behind a mask that is all the more beguiling because it seems so natural (Cronon 1995, 69).

By this Cronon means that humans constructed an idea (“nature”) as a space which was the polar opposite of where they lived and worked. “Natural” things were not created by the human animal, but rather seemed to spring into existence apart from human intervention. Humans, at least those living in an industrialized society, were tainted by that industrialization and could not be seen as a part of nature, despite the fact that they evolved on the same earth as its flora and fauna.

This concept of nature is, as Marx (1964/2000) observes, a “pastoral ideal” (3) thoroughly entwined in the narrative of the conquest of the North American continent. In North America, and specifically the United States, “the soft veil of nostalgia that hangs over landscape is largely a vestige of the dominant image of an undefiled, green republic, a quiet land of forests, villages, and farms dedicated to the pursuit of happiness” (Marx 1964/2000, 6). There are echoes of the romance of primitivism in this narrative, as well as the concepts that the frontier in the United States is the last bastion of rugged individualism and that settlers have an obligation to “conquer” it via Manifest Destiny.

This led to what Deborah Bright (1989) calls a “cult of nature,” through the development of “Arcadian nature in the cities through the institution of landscaped parks and nearby forest preserves” (127) as well as the development of preserved, but easily accessible (via automobile), wilderness spaces via the National Park Service. Nature, on the one hand, was easily accessible. But it was either co-existing alongside the inorganic (in cities) or reached by mechanical devices (the Park Service). This contradiction, steeped in the romantic tradition “that ‘organic’ nature is the opposite of things ‘mechanical’” (Marx 1964/2000, 162) can be deeply disorienting. On the one hand, the machine allows the Manifest Destiny-style conquest to proceed with greater ease. On the other, the machine destroys the romance of primitivism promised by the pastoral ideal.

But one machine in particular seemed to allow both incursion into and preservation of the pastoral: the camera. Though the cameras favored by early photographers were large and cumbersome (the Seneca 8X10” camera Edward Weston used for his landscape photography weighed 10.5 pounds before adding lenses, tripods or film), they were nonetheless *temporary* additions to the landscape, different from roads, railroad tracks, and cities. Thus, while machines themselves, the cameras provided an ideal mechanism to promote an “aesthetic [that] was premised on an identification between a mythical Eden and the American landscape” (Bright 1989, 129).

### **Capturing Beauty**

Both Jessie Tarbox Beals and Edward Weston are celebrated names in American photography. Tarbox Beals (b. 1870) was the country’s first female photojournalist, initially working for a newspaper in Buffalo after a stint as a teacher; she later left newspaper journalism, instead taking magazine commissions and lecturing on photographic techniques. She lived most of her life in the Northeastern United States. She died in 1942 at the age of 71. Weston, was born in Illinois (1886) but moved to California when he was 21. He would remain in the state for the bulk of his life, and known for his innovative and experimental photography techniques on a variety of topics (nude, landscape, portrait, still life). He died in 1958, also at the age of 71.

While Tarbox Beals was known as one of the first chroniclers of New York City, she also had plans for a book (never published) on the garden photographs commissioned by individuals as well as for publications like *Better Homes and Gardens*. Her image of the Parrish garden in Cornish, New Hampshire, typifies this work. She's looking down from a hillside onto a path, lined by hedges trimmed into a rectangular shape, shrubs, and flowering trees. A solarium is at the left side of the black and white photograph, set into a small rise of a hill. The front of the image is framed by the leaves of trees from two different species, the foliage slightly out of focus.

Not all gardens caught the fancy of Tarbox Beals; she criticized ones which were too planned or predictable. But others she described with satisfaction, as evidenced in her handwritten notes for her unpublished book (n.d.):

It's a little sloping garden with wide welcoming steps — hewn not of rough slab. From all the crevices and crannies little rock pans each out as you pass. You feel that they might purr if you touched them, they are so caressing . . . stones were set in the jade free grass — great set stones such as I love. They seem . . . to lead to a small enchanting place. I am finding them more and more in the gardens I photograph.

She celebrates the unexpectedness of a garden “planted for winter effects” where “pine and spruces and cedars were verdant with icicle. Or another, in the height of season, where “toward the westering sun is a gorgeous flaming garden backed by the yellow of the house with its red roots. All the succession of blooms from May to November is washed in earth brushes laden with yellow range — burnt umber — mahogany — and brown.” She likens the garden to a painting by artist Joaquín Sorolla.

Weston uses similar language to describe his beloved coast of Big Sur:

The excursion was exciting: over a steep tortuous road high upon the cliffs overlooking the Pacific, then down into valleys, hardly more than cañons, where great Redwoods, majestically silent, doused the light. The coast was on a grand scale: mountainous cliffs thrust buttresses far out into the ocean, anchored safely for an eternity: against the rising sun, their black solidarity accentuated by rising mists and sunlit water, the ensemble was tremendous. But I lack words, I am inarticulate, anything I might write down would sound as trivial as “ain't nature grand.” (Weston 1973, 111)

He lashes out at an unnamed East Coast critic who describes his work as “theatrical”: “I have several times note that Eastern people do not at once see Western values: to them our values are not “correct.” . . . So to one not used to the West, to the scale of things out here, — nature must seem very dramatic” (250). Instead, he says he is driven by a need to “record nature exactly” and to see “the thing itself” (194). This structure he attempts to isolate in his negatives and photographs.

Weston's images are, if not theatrical, certainly dramatic. In one, taken along the California coast, dark black rocks seem to form a cascade of rolling hillsides. The sky is a pale grey stripe across the top 1/16th of the photograph. At the bottom third, nestled comfortably in a “valley” between two of the rocks, sits a white seashell. Its color — the bright white with only a few pale strands of grey where the shell curves — draws the eye, jumping out in arresting contrast from the dark rocks surrounding it.

Dave Hickey talks about the “subversive potential of visual pleasure” (2009, 23) within the visual arts. He argues that beauty, and the pleasure it provides, became suspect in the contemporary art world because it was too “easy” to understand — a concept echoed by Weston:

I am “old-fashioned” enough to believe that beauty — whether in art or nature — exists as an end to itself: at least it does for me . . . I cannot see why nature must be considered

strictly utilitarian when she bedecks herself in gorgeous color, assumes magnificent forms, or buster into song. has man the sole prerogative to use beauty as an end? — which he most certainly does (1973, 242).

Tarbox Beals, similarly drawn to the “power and beauty” (n.d.) in the land, likewise celebrates the visual pleasure found in the manicured gardens she photographed. There is aesthetic pleasure to be found in the land.

Hickey warns of the seductive appeal of beauty in art, at least when viewed through the “critical” eye: “If we would expose the inner soul of things to extend public scrutiny, ‘sincere’ appearance is everything, and beauty is the *bête noire* of this agenda, the snake in the garden” (2009, 25).

The snake in the garden is an important trope. Beauty itself — or at least our conception of it — is the problem.

### **Personal Restoration**

It’s important to note that Hickey isn’t critiquing the use of beauty and redemption in the arts. On the contrary, he’s critiquing an institution (made up of museums, galleries, critics) that would dismiss a piece of work outright because of its embrace of beauty and not recognize the subversive potential that gives beauty its aesthetic appeal. Within beauty itself is tension, the realization that in order for there to be something “beautiful,” there may also be something that is less than. He writes: “The image is always presumed to be proposing something contestable and controversial. This is the sheer, ebullient, slithering, dangerous fun of it” (Hickey 1993, 26). In this case, beauty operates to set photographs of the land apart from the poisoning of the “unnatural” world: the human-clogged and polluted cities.

This is evident in the writings of Tarbox Beals and Weston. Simple aesthetic pleasure failed to offer a complete path to redemption for either photographer. Rather, there was something else found within a natural space, which offered a path to personal respite from the ills of society. The land offers a psychic rather than physical pleasure. Weston contrasts his beloved (and sparsely populated) Carmel with San Francisco.

And when I think of the unbroken rows of houses, people canned as it were, the massed emanation from these huddled thousands, I catch my breath and draw away, and am glad to be here with the pine trees instead of people for neighbors. Every time we drove away into the country from S. F., — returning, nearing again the city streets, my heard would sink, my stomach turn in revulsion (1973, 107).

For Tarbox Beals, writing of a “white” garden, or one designed entirely of flowers in shades of whites, the contestable thing becomes the “state of feeling” (5) she falls into when entering into the garden space:

Wraith like wisps of heavy air float like tiny ghosts amid the shadows — the spirits of the flower — only to dirt away in the distance laden with perfume. The morning glory bells change their silent trumpets that once echoed to the humming of the bees. If happily there be a bipod — lone lovely shadows are cast by the iris and white lilies . . . The pond lilies have folded their honey sweet and are asleep with their sleeping world. (n.d.).

She speaks of a garden constrained less by the size of the space than the desire of the person designing and tending it. A garden too carefully tended “bores me to extinction” (5).

Implicit in this writing is the knowledge that the gardens of Tarbox Beals and the rugged landscapes of Weston exist to offer a kind of psychic respite from the manmade world. Or, to put it in other terms: *the*

“*natural*” cannot exist without the presence of the “*unnatural*.” Tarbox Beals writes, in almost poetic language:

The charm of a garden is in its myriad changes. The changes of each hour of the day — at dawn, when so few know its murderous game — when the flower awake — shake their sleepy head and turn to face their sun god — with votive offering of dew and the head fills of perfume — then the change that comes with the unveiling of the day (n.d.)

The “*natural*” is a space where change is inherent — not only from season to season but also from hour to hour. Unspoken, and omnipresent, is the thing that doesn’t have the hour-by-hour change: the city.

Consider Weston’s photograph of White Sands in New Mexico, taken c. 1941. In the photograph, the famous sands of the National Monument are reduced to gently sloping grayish hills in the bottom quarter of the image. The focus, the dominant feature, is the clouds, ranging from a dark grey to shining white. The image, as Weston writes, demonstrates a place where “heavens and earth become one” (1973, 275). In particular, the clouds at the center of the image almost seem to glow with a supernatural force. Though this is an expansive landscape, photographed by a man using a bulky camera, it has no evidence of people: no distant cities, no roads, not even any footsteps made by the photographer. It as if he was dropped into the space by the hand of a god.

This is the “dangerous fun” Hickey talks about. The photographers and their audiences bring a knowledge of a “spoiled” landscape and industrial society to the images, even if the images themselves don’t show evidence of that knowledge. There is a slippery tension between acknowledgement and willful ignorance. It is within this that the images attain their redemptive value. Weston takes this tension to the extreme, writing in a voice of doom that undeveloped spaces such as the California coast are “rich in fulfillment, Life. And not so many miles away “bread lines,” hunger, mobs, murder, Death” (1973, 255). The rugged coastline offers the Edenic potential.

Ironically, Eden isn’t referenced in Tarbox Beals’ writings about the gardens she photographs. There is a brief mention of the way “gods call [her] to the country,” but her other writing refers to the *aesthetic* pleasure in the space doesn’t really have any Edenic references. She is looking at the “moods and tenses” of the garden, where one has “the happiness — not of having a garden but have making yours immortal” (n.d.). Similarly, Weston merely alludes to the wonder and grandeur of nature, “massed together in violent confusion, in magnificent continuity. Pyramids, cubes, rectangles, cylinders, spheres,— verticals, obliques, curves,— simple elemental forms, complex convolutions, opposed zigzags, at once chaotic and ordered, an astounding sight!” (1973, 57). Its biblical qualities go unmentioned.

But while Weston’s photographs attempt to capture that grandeur and wonder, it’s within Tarbox Beals’ photographs that one sees a visual reference to the biblical garden. Again and again, a young child appears, naked and unashamed. In one, she grins broadly at the camera, surround by blooming iris and daffodils. The flowers are taller than the child. In another, the same girl (her daughter, Nanette) sits upon a large rock, her legs crossed, with arms and hands stretched out behind her to prop her up. She is surrounded by seemingly untamed land: the trees are not manicured, a placid stream catches the reflection of the landscape. Sun shines upon the girl’s hair, causing it to glow as if she were crowned by the light.

The girl appears to be in a state of innocence. She resides in a garden before the fall.

### **Gendered Paths to Redemption**

Carolyn Merchant sees Western civilization's narrative as one of fall and recovery. Humans transform the land through development, and then attempt to mitigate the effects of that transformation. In the United States, the "improvement" came initially through taming the wilderness:

The narrative of frontier expansion is a story of male energy subduing female nature, taming the wild, plowing the land, re-creating the garden lost by Eve. American males lived the frontier myth in their everyday lives, making the land safe for capitalism and commodity production...To civilize was to bring the land out of a state of savagery and barbarism into a state of refinement and enlightenment (Merchant 1995, 146-147).

In this narrative, the cultivated garden stands in for "the idea of nature as it should be rather than as it is, and in attempting to make a garden resemble Eden, the gardener wrestles the garden away from resembling nature—nature, that is, as the uncultivated expanses around it, the patterns that would insert themselves without interference" (Solnit 2007, 254). But at the same time, the garden itself is problematic. It is a transformed version of the natural land. As land is conquered, borrowing from Finis Dunaway (2010), nature becomes "sequestered," either through urban parks and gardens or via national parks.

Within their writings the two photographers demonstrate this tension. While Weston seeks the "untamed" land, his appreciation of its beauty only comes through his machine: the camera.

I think my first great realization came through my camera: at least it brought me into closer contact with nature, taught me to observe more carefully, awakened me to something more than casual noting and romantically enjoying. Even though I was trying to understand, getting closer, becoming identified with nature. She was then as now, the great stimulus (1973, 239).

The camera is anthropomorphized by the male artist as female, perhaps working hand in hand with the other female muse and creator, Mother Nature. The female photographer, by contrast, doesn't attach human characteristics to her machine, or even recognize its presence within the garden. Instead, Tarbox Beals visits the garden in an effort to become a part of that "state of feeling" which is characterized by potential for redemption and captured by her camera as an afterthought of sorts. It is the garden itself — and the flora within — that holds the power. "Each is full of charm and change," she writes. "Each holds mystery and chance" (n.d.).

Marx says there is a type of romantic pastoralism that emerges as the Industrial Revolution became to transform the American landscape. "The sudden appearance of the machine in the garden is an arresting, endlessly evocative image. It causes the instantaneous clash of opposed states of mind: a strong urge to believe in the rural myth along with an awareness of industrialization as counterforce to the myth" (Marx 1964/2000, 229). Photographers like Weston and Tarbox Beals demonstrate how this dynamic plays out. He calls attention to the camera. She calls attention to the falsity of the myth of the romantic pastoralism — and that of the human/nature divide.

As Cronon (1995) notes:

This is not to say that the nonhuman world is somehow unreal or a mere figment of our imaginations — far from it. But the way we describe and understand that world is so entangled in our own values and assumptions that the two can never be fully separated. What we mean we use the word "nature" says as much about ourselves as about the thing we label with that word (25).

Through their writings and photographs, Weston and Tarbox Beals demonstrate the varied meanings that come in our cultural assumptions. As Hickey observes: “The vernacular of beauty, in its democratic appeal, remains a potent instrument for change in this civilization” (Hickey 2009, 30). By looking at the writings and images of these two photographers, we can see that beauty not only allows for redemption for society’s ills, but it also provides a multitude of paths to that renewal, paths which challenge the gendered narrative of conquest and redemption found in American history. Redemption, like beauty, is in the eye of the beholder, and can be found in both the wilderness and the garden. By dismissing the psychic value of the human-curated garden, because it falls into a domain considered the female sphere, we risk losing the potential for redemption itself.

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## **Eve (and Eden) Redeemed**

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Consider Colorado in the public imagination. From snow capped mountains to verdant valleys, the land is largely perceived and historically presented as Paradise Regained; a place to recreate and revere and draw sharply into view one's relationship to nature and humankind. Even prior to statehood, the at-that-time Western Kansas region was written about, spoken of and artistically represented as a gift of divine providence comparable to the most pristine grandeur that the highlights of the globe had to offer. In his 1869 tome, "A Summer Vacation in the Parks and Mountains of Colorado," Samuel Bowles the influential newspaper editor and cross-country traveller, dubbed the area, "The Switzerland of America." Following Bowles proclamation:

The dream destination was Colorado, where the high valleys of the Rocky Mountains, adorned with glacial lakes, meadows and forests as if by an artist's hand, were reported to be the New World's answer to the Alps ... Travelers began arriving from New York, Boston and Philadelphia in walnut-paneled Pullman train coaches, thrilled to stay in the Swiss-style hotels of resort towns like Colorado Springs, where they could "take the waters," relax, flirt and enjoy the idyllic mountain views. Pikes Peak became America's Matterhorn, Longs Peak our answer to Mont Blanc, and the chic resorts at Manitou Springs evoked glamorous European spas. (2015 Perrottet).

That same year the acclaimed Hudson Valley painter, Alfred Bierstadt, depicted the Rocky Mountains and, specifically, Colorado's Estes Park with its celestial view of Longs Peak. Those paintings appear in such light that it appears divinely inspired, as if an otherworldly atmosphere. And when it came time for statehood in 1876, the motto Nil Sin Numine, or Nothing without the Diety, was selected. "Between green base and crown of ice, shine golden gifts that dower thee, Yet are Nil sine numine," reads a poem by J. Harrison Mills to introduce an 1880 book, "History of Clear Creek and Boulder Valleys." In that same book, W.B. Vickers's writes of humankind fleeing the fleshpots of the east (p. 18) for the sublime grandeur of the Colorado Rockies. This, then, was a paradisiacal retreat for those who heard the call of the West and for others who dreamt of a return to the prelapsarian Garden. It was, in short, a place immortalized in word and image as Edenic, a gift from God. A place to cherish and worship and flock toward.

The connection between nature, humankind and religion is well documented in countless, religious tracts and art works. It is not within the scope or purview of this paper to present an exhaustive literature review of works that celebrate nature and religion (or spirituality). An extraordinarily broad overview of such would contain such last-name-only luminaries such as Thoreau, Whitman, Muir, Abbey, and Emerson. And an equally broad generalization of their message might be "Nature is a volume of which God is the author" (1873, Harvey).

### **Fall from Grace**

In the Bible's Genesis, God is the author of all. "In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth" reads the first verse. When God has created man, he places him in an orchard called Eden; a paradise of pleasure. God then provides man a counterpart in woman. In an unspecified amount of time, the woman is tempted by a serpent, consumes fruit forbidden by God (her maker) and, along with man, is expelled from the orchard, or as more commonly referred to, the Garden.

Depictions of this expulsion span the history(ies) of art. Here is Massacio's fresco from 1424-27 showing the duo exiting the garden through a formal stone archway. Adam buries his face in his hands and

Eve's mouth is twisted and agape in grief as they face an unknown, uncaring and unsentimental territory ahead. They exit the garden to the right of the fresco. In Michelangelo's 1509-10 version of the incident, man and woman, nude and at the tip of a sword wielding cherub, exit the lush garden for a barren expanse of land. As in the Massacio fresco, the pair exit, the woman cringing, to the right of the painting or to the east. West's 1791 "The Expulsion of Adam and Eve from Paradise" shows the couple exiting to the east toward an ominous cloud bank. Cabinet's dramatic 1867 painting shows the couple, the woman overcome lies supine, bathed in light, while to her right, again toward the east, lies darkness. The Expulsion of Adam and Eve from Eden' (1897) by Arthur Nowell offers the duo, in utter disgrace and under the scornful watch of angels, exiting the Garden, eastward.

The creation of an orchard in Eden claims the Garden as separate and distinct from that which lies outside. The Garden affords protection, pleasure, harmony; to be outside of it is to invite or encounter threat, pain, disunity. Such perceptions shape our notions of nature; to be close to the earth is to be close to God. Allegorically and ontologically it is considered a place set aside, but in reality, writes Wilson (1992) it is a creation of humankind: "In fact, the whole idea of nature as something separate from human existence is a lie. Humans and nature construct one another" (p. 13). Cronon, echoes this in "Uncommon Ground" (1996). Nature, or the wilderness, he writes:

Far from being the one place on earth that stands apart from humanity, it is quite profoundly a human creation—indeed, the creation of very particular human cultures at very particular moments in human history. It is not a pristine sanctuary where the last remnant of an untouched, endangered, but still transcendent nature can for at least a little while longer be encountered without the contaminating taint of civilization. Instead, it is a product of that civilization, and could hardly be contaminated by the very stuff of which it is made (p. 69).

Perhaps is this nowhere more evident in the history of this country than with the post-Manifest Destiny establishment of the National Park System in 1916; once the conquering of the land had slowed, the impulse to create and preserve was made *manifest*. An act to set apart an area as a public park was first suggested with the establishment of Yellowstone Park in 1872. The "Yellowstone Act" enacted by Congress is explicit in its very title—An Act to Set Apart A Certain Tract Of The Land Lying Near The Headwaters Of The Yellowstone River As A Public Park (17 Stat. 32). This is land to be set aside for a certain purpose according to the language of the act: "Yellowstone is hereby reserved and withdrawn from settlement, occupancy or sale ... and dedicated and set apart as a public park or pleasuring-ground for the benefit and enjoyment of the people ..." (U.S.C., title 16, sec. 21). With this proclamation, what Ross-Bryant (2013) describes as the "National Park Idea" was borne.

The democratic virtue of creating "pleasuring grounds" was not just for the elite, but for all people, was part of the Idea ... The connection of America's greatness with its land was also present and, in particular, the mythic belief that the virgin land out of which U.S. American democracy had developed could be set aside and preserved so that all Americans could participate in the power of that primal land ... America was at heart God's country and was dedicated to democratic and generally "Christian" values (p. 117)

Similarly, Muir's language concerning nature and the "National Park Idea" echoes this notion. "Everybody needs beauty as well as bread, places to play in and pray in," he declares in "Nature Writings" (1997, p.114). "Nature may heal and cheer and give strength to the body and soul alike."

## **Recreating Eden**

If God is the author of nature, the pastoral utopia as proclaimed by Muir and others, Estes Park, Colorado's Enos Mills, a naturalist, author, and tour guide, crafted the tale of the land that inspired

otherworldly Bierstadt canvases, breathless proclamations and worshipful awe—the land that would become Rocky Mountain National Park. For years, Mills was at the center of preserving the land west of the resort town. “He had written more than 2,000 letters and given 42 lectures promoting the park idea; he had provided 430 photographs and penned 64 newspaper and magazine articles all to promote the case,” (1983, Buchholz, p. 104.) A tireless advocate for the “Idea of the Park,” Mills was dubbed the Father of Rocky Mountain National Park by the *Denver Post* in 1915, the year the Park officially was granted National Park status. Within its boundaries (Mills had originally hoped for a park so large—1,000 square miles—as to extend to Wyoming) he envisioned a place of sanctuary. “They need the temples of the gods,” wrote Mills, “the forests primeval and the pure flower-fringed brooks” (1915 p. 315).

One hundred years later, the Park still invites remarks filled with rapture: “No adjectives can do Rocky Mountain National Park justice. The jagged snow-draped peaks, rocky tundra, green valleys, and roaring waterfalls render exclamation points inadequate. The beauty is almost unearthly,” raved an Associated Press writer (2014, Tanner, para 1). Barclays Travel online (2018, anon.) site boasts of the park: “As you get closer to Estes Park, you are going deeper into heaven ... The view of the Lake Estes with the background of the mighty Rocky Mountains makes you speechless. Yes, you are in heaven.”

Such figurative superlatives surface in Ross-Byrant’s “Pilgrimage to the National Parks” (2013) As she notes: “Using the language of religion in relation to national parks is appropriate if religion is understood to include more than traditional institutions” (p. 3). She also points to the power of the myth of nature as Edenic and a sense of community, or communal, building inspired by such.

The image of Eden announces a primal perfection - the unpeopled land viewed by the first Europeans is now preserved in wilderness. ... This is a place of harmony, a place for restoration and relief from the noise, development and crowds of civilization. The frontier images shares much with Eden. It is also a pristine place, but the stress is now on the challenge of survival, of proving one’s mettle by conquering nature, something one is deprived of in the urban, industrialized world (p. 181).

Today, this “Eden” welcomes nearly 4.5 million visitors annually (2017, National Park Service). But, of course, it wasn’t always so. The Garden once needed additional attractions; the Garden once needed Eve. In 1917, she surfaced.

A girl attempting to live alone in the wilderness was hardly a new idea, Buchholz writes (p. 139), but it was a newsworthy one. When the “Eve of Estes” stepped into the park “Naked, Unarmed and Alone,” as the headline in the August 6th *Denver Post* blazed, it made news across the country. “Girl Goes into Forest to Live; As a Modern Eve, She Will Remain Seven Days in the Wildwood,” proclaimed the *Ogden Golden Standard*. “Can This Be Why El Paso Men Talk of Vacation in Colorado?” read the *El Paso Herald*. “Modern Eve Enters Her Colorado Eden for Week’s Sojourn,” stated the *Washington Times*. The “Father of Estes Park,” Mills, and the park supervisor joined about 2,000 people to see Eve off on her journey. Clad in a leopard skin tunic resembling a stereotypical cavewoman’s attire, the barefooted Eve strode into the park.

Eve, many newspapers noted, was actually Miss Agnes Lowe, a college co-ed from the University of Michigan. She was the hale and hearty daughter of a lumberjack, and as such accustomed to the wilds of nature. “As she worked her way through a week in the wilderness, tidbits about her progress enchanted the public and drew attention to the new Park” (Buchholz p. 140).

Wearing a revealing leopard skin outfit for photographs, “Eve” was said to be wandering alone through the wilds, living on berries and natural foods. Occasionally she appeared before tourists—a beautiful, shapely creature cavorting like the earth’s first woman through

this serene mountain place ... Local people by the hundreds began flocking into the park, hoping to catch a glimpse of this luscious creature (Lambdin, 2014)

Notes scrawled on aspen bark, supposedly scattered by Eve, were found by park visitors and curiosity seekers claim to have seen her cavorting in her “natural” state sans leopard print outfit. And then, after a week in the park, she emerged from the wilds according to the *Post*, toasted a dark brown by the sun and covered from head to toe in mosquito bites. Upon her return she was presented with a sack of mail purported to contain 64 proposals of marriage. She was also exactly one half pound heavier than when she had entered her Eden. The attention may have been very real—visitors flocked to the park, more than doubling the previous year’s attendance figure—but “Eve” was not. “Miss Lowe” was actually Hazel Eighmy, a photo clerk at the *Denver Post*. She’d been “discovered” there by a publicity savvy *Post* editor looking to fabricate a story that would sell newspapers and draw crowds to Rocky Mountain National Park. Eighmy, it turns out, had spent seven days at the home of one of the Park’s residents. However, the gambit worked toward accomplishing both goals as Eve reentered the Garden. The Edenic Myth had sprung to life in the 20th Century because people wanted to believe in her. They wanted to believe—and bought into the myth—of her character’s “time spent in the Garden” through which was found redemption and restoration. A fecund, and thus regenerative, power walked into the Garden. They wanted to believe in Mother Nature, a recovery narrative embodied in the young Eve.

Myth are a form of discourse that narrate the paradigmatic truths of a people, articulating the values and beliefs of the society and unifying the community around them, powerfully promoting social cohesion and sentiments of common belonging (Ross-Bryant, p. 7)

Fallen Eve, adds Merchant, (2013) becomes the nature that must be tamed into submission. In this myth, this journey of Eve into the Garden, they “saw” firsthand (or through numerous nationwide newspaper accounts) a “virgin land to be subdued, as fallen nature to be redeemed through reclamation, and as a fruitful green to be harvested and enjoyed” (p. 145). Curiosity seekers and newspaper readers alike championed this Fallen Eve into a Mother Eve character, “an improved garden, a nurturing earth bearing fruit, a ripened, ovary, maturity” (p. 137). Our views of nature and The Garden and, of course Eve’s role in it, are important in defining who we think we are and our relationships to the external, natural world.

In the United States ... Eden is never far beneath the surface in shaping what we imagine to be the perfect home in the perfect natural setting. Ever since the Puritans arrived in Boston to build their fabled city on a hill to serve as a beacon for all the world, Americans have hankered after the Protestant mission of reforming an old world and a faded dream by starting over again. In this land of new beginnings, the place to which people most wish to return is inevitably some version or another of the original garden (Cronon, p. 39).

Such is the abiding power of Edenic myth (and the indomitable American spirit of the era) that people were willing to suspend disbelief and follow Eve’s actions either by flocking to the park by the thousand in hopes of a glimpse of her or following her story in newspapers across the nation. Considering the flowery, Biblical inspired prose that accompanies the profile of the state even before its inception, myth making of a modern-day Eve and her triumphant and therefore redemptive return to the Garden struck a chord with the public’s imagination. To co-opt the writings of Barthes on mythologies, “~~Wine~~ *Nature* is the sap and sun of the earth ...” so engrained is it in the psyche. A further interpretation of Barthe’s essay “Wine and Milk” (1972/1957) lends itself to thinking of the beauty of the natural, or how the natural becomes a construct. Again, I have taken liberties with Barthe’s text, but the sentiments ring true “All this is well known and has been said a thousand times in folklore, proverbs, conversations and Literature,” he writes in the essay.

But this very universality implies a kind of conformism: to believe in ~~wine~~ nature is a coercive collective act. A ~~Frenchman~~ American who kept this myth at arm's length would expose himself to minor but definite problems of integration, the first of which, precisely, would be that of having to explain his attitude. The universality principle fully applies here, inasmuch as society calls anyone who does not believe in ~~wine~~ nature by names such as sick, disabled or depraved: it does not comprehend him... ~~Wine~~ Nature gives thus a foundation for a collective morality (p, 59).

The Garden, then, can be found in Rocky Mountain National Park and it is, as Barthes contends, part of our make up. And when "Eve" inhabits it (if only for a week), it is second nature for us to embrace its myth for we are part of that myth and that myth is part of us. It is in the story(ies) we tell ourselves of Colorado just as it is in the "realities" of the land, the snow-capped mountains, the verdant valleys and the woman in the leopard-skin print outfit wending her way through the Garden.

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## The Spiritual Redemption of Margery Kempe

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The spiritual legacy of Margery Kempe (ca. 1370-1440) is difficult to overstate. Not only was she a Christian visionary, world-traveling pilgrim, and mother of no less than fourteen children, her eponymous *Book* is also credited as the first autobiography in the English language—no small accomplishment for a woman in the Middle Ages.<sup>1</sup> In her book (likely dictated to one or more scribes), Margery describes her profound spiritual experiences in detail, noting how she in her earlier life had succumbed to temptation, but that through the grace of God had been redeemed and made a special witness of Christ. Her visions were controversial for their demonstrations of affective piety: she would scream, weep, roll around, and so on when her divine “fits” came upon her. She also insisted on some ascetic practices, such as wearing a hairshirt for penance, abstaining from meat, and becoming a retroactive virgin—all activities that mark the lives of the saints, but not an average married laywoman. As such, Margery’s unique spiritual reputation led many to believe she was possessed by a demon, an attention-seeker, a heretic, insane, or a combination of these, accusations which plagued her for the remainder of her life and sent her for examinations before legal and ecclesiastical courts. Modern scholars have characterized her ecstatic experiences and lifestyle in psychological or feminist terms, all of which are accurate; however, it’s important to remember that Margery Kempe was first and last a Christian seeking redemption from her sins.

### The Life and Spirituality of Margery Kempe

Margery Brunham was the daughter of a well-to-do councilman of the town of Lynn in Norfolk,<sup>2</sup> and at age 20 was married to John Kempe, a merchant-class man of some means. It was shortly after delivering her first of many children that her visions began. These initial experiences were not positive—devils came to her, she later recalled in her *Book*, “crying upon her with great threatenings, and bidding her [that] she should forsake her Christendom, her faith, and deny her God, His Mother, and all the saints in heaven” (206-8).<sup>3</sup> Tormented by these demons and overwhelmed by postpartum suffering, she succumbed to blasphemies and self-harm, tearing at her skin with her fingernails, flailing obscenities at heaven, desiring to end her life and “be damned with [her tempters] in hell” (215).

This evocative episode plainly demonstrates that Margery experienced intense postpartum psychosis, whether devils actually appeared to her or not. Her pain is real, and she suffered for eight long months, even having to be tied and “kept [down] with strength” (i.e. “forcibly restrained”) to prevent her from maiming or killing herself (219-21). She sought relief from a priest to no avail, but the extended madness only departed her after a personal visitation from Christ who, in a very intimate moment, “sit[s] upon her bedside, looking upon her with so blessed a cheer [expression] that she was strengthened in all her spirits” (229-31) and was soon “stabled in her wits and in her reason as well as ever she [had been] before” (237-8).

Margery believed that she had other stains on her spirituality, too, that drove her eventually to seek personal redemption. In addition to forsaking her faith during her psychosis, she was also guilty of pride and vanity, wearing expensive clothing and jewelry and seeking to elevate her station in society “All her desire was to be worshipped of the people,” she wrote (271-2), never being content with what she had, but constantly “desir[ing] more and more” prominence and wealth (274).

Marriage was also a spiritual stumbling-block. As her eyes gradually opened to all of the sins impeding her devotion to God, Margery recognized that she had not remained chaste. Sex in this period, even between a married couple, was looked down on as a less worthy state for a woman than perpetual virginity or even widowhood (Evans 23-4).<sup>4</sup> Margery had not only partaken in marital sex, but had occasionally enjoyed it, a prior sentiment she believed “was displeasing to God” (Salih). But as she came

to realize sexuality's unholiness, she felt the need to cease such activity, and to "live chaste[ly]" (355), even within the bonds of matrimony, "for the debt of matrimony [sex] was so abominable to her that she had rather . . . eat and drink the ooze, the muck in the gutter, than to consent to any fleshly communing" (347-9). On top of this, she had also once agreed to meet another man for an adulterous tryst, and though the event never came to fruition, she recognized that she had been far too willing to succumb to "the devil's persuasions," and that she indeed had become a quite fallen creature (446-9; Dinshaw 234).

### **Margery's Redemption from Sin**

Margery first sought spiritual relief through confession, and though she always completed every penitent act prescribed by her confessors, her temptations persisted and even "increased," much to her dismay (475-9). This led her to believe that her constant remorse was a sign of God's displeasure and her damnation (485-7). "[T]herefore," she wrote, "always she despaired," and her mental and emotional "labors were so astonishing that she could [only] with difficulty cope with them[;] . . . ever mourning and sorrowing" because she believed that "God had forsaken her" (487-90).

Again, she was rescued by a vision from Christ, who, calling her "daughter," asked why she was weeping, and reminded her that he was "Jesus Christ, who died on the cross suffering bitter pains and passions for you. I, the same God, forgive your sins to the uttermost point. And you shall never come into hell nor in purgatory, but . . . shall have the bliss of heaven" (496-501). For some time prior to this Margery had been wearing a hairshirt as an undergarment for self-imposed penance. This Christ told her to stop wearing, as he would "give you a hair[shirt] in your heart that shall please me much better than all the hair[shirts] in the world" (506-8).

Of virginity, Christ later assured her that even though she wasn't a maiden in body, she was "a maiden in [her] soul" (1682). This promise would further allow her to be received by His Mother, the Virgin-of-virgins, in heaven (1629-33), and would have the opportunity to "dance in heaven with other holy maidens and virgins" (1684-5)—no small promise for a woman who averred that she would rather her husband "be slain than [they] should turn again to [their] uncleanness" (720-1). Margery does eventually come to an understanding with her husband, in which the "marriage debt" was bought-out by Margery paying-off John Kempe's financial debts in exchange for him letting her make an official vow to be a "chaste widow" (1086-90), something usually reserved for women whose husbands were actually dead (Hanawalt 60).<sup>5</sup> With this clean break from sex and the Lord's pledge that she had become "a very daughter to me and a mother also, a sister, wife, and a spouse" (991-3),<sup>6</sup> Margery finally felt redeemed.

### **Maintaining Redemption through Affective Piety**

Thus, redeemed from her sins, Margery became preoccupied with maintaining such redemption; her intense, scrupulous spiritual lifestyle afterwards suggests the depth of her conviction—practices many people considered excessive and even fanatical. Her unusual religious behavior included wearing a white robe to symbolize her newfound "virginity"; frequent pilgrimage to major shrines and religious sites throughout Europe and the Levant (including Santiago de Compostela, Rome, and Jerusalem); abstaining from all meat; and refusing to take God's name in vain in any circumstance, a blasphemy, though still in force, often ignored by her contemporaries. These practices evinced no small amount of abuse from her neighbors and other laypeople, pilgrims she traveled with, and even religious clerks and priests. But all this paled in comparison to the "slander" heaped on her as a result of her ecstatic (and very public) experiences: visions, participatory revelations, and divinely-inspired weeping.

The hysterical fits bothered people most of all (Torn 788-9). Her visit to Jerusalem in 1414 marked a watershed moment for her, both literally and figuratively: as soon as she laid eyes on the holy city, she became so overwhelmed with emotion that she nearly fell off the donkey she was riding (2186-9). And at the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, she really lost it, throwing herself on the ground and weeping and

wailing, her cries becoming full-throated “roaring” (2215-7). This extreme reaction was not due only to the significance of her location, but also due to the fact that she had visions of Christ’s Passion as she saw the sites associated with it, everywhere from the Holy Sepulchre to Mount Calvary to the Via Dolorosa, as if her presence sent her back in time to experience firsthand the crucial events that took place in these locations. At all these places and others, “she wept, she sobbed, and she cried so loud that it . . . [was a] wonder to hear it” (2325-6). Others’ reactions to this were mostly negative: “For some said it was a wicked spirit [that] vexed her,” she recalled, “some said it was a sickness, some said she had drunk too much wine, . . . [and] some would [that] she had been [cast] on the sea in a bottomless boat” (2245-8). Not only that, but she often “suffered much spite, much reproof, much scorn, much slander, . . . and much cursing” (4601-3).

Margery’s ecstatic fits remained with her for at least a decade, gradually reducing in frequency over time; almost all of them happened in public, usually at shrines, in front of holy images, or at churches during Mass. Because of the negative reactions she received from people who witnessed these episodes—some of whom wanted her burned at the stake—she tried in vain to hold in her outbursts until they could no longer be contained (2254-63). Again, these were no simple experiences for her: she truly believed that she had a personal, substantial relationship with Christ, and when encountering sites or emblems associated with him, felt the sharp pangs of sorrow for the death of a close friend or family member, which she firmly believed Christ was (2281-99). At the tomb of the Virgin, Mary herself appeared to Margery and assured her that her agony was a grace given by God, that she shouldn’t be “ashamed of him that is your God, and your love, no more than I was when I saw him hanging on the cross” (2374-6). Such suffering, the Virgin instructed her, was essential to her eventual exaltation in heaven, for “if you would [like] to partake in our joy, you must also partake in our sorrow” (2378-9). Christ confirmed this fact to Margery by suggesting that she should view her tears as “a token that I love you” (6140), and that her weeping would stir others to treat the Passion as something present and real for them, not far removed in the past (6145-8; Dinshaw 231-2).<sup>7</sup> Margery, in effect, was to serve as one of Christ’s emissaries through these “tears of compunction.”

Margery’s confidence in the life of Christ did not exist on a mere theological level but was something she had seen with her own eyes in participatory visions. Early in her narrative, Margery has a vision in which she assists in the births of the Virgin Mary, John the Baptist, and Jesus. These visions are exceptional because they are not merely “showings,” wherein the visionary is just a passive observer, but an actual participant: Margery helps deliver each of the children, converses with their mothers, and swaddles the babies. These experiences are not so much “visions” then as *transportations*, even time-travel, marked by their physicality or “sensory contact” as much as their transcendence—another manifestation of Margery’s “liv[ing] in a multitemporal, heterogeneous *now*” (Dinshaw 237).<sup>8</sup>

Perhaps her most poignant vision was her affective imagination of being at the bedside of the dying Virgin, accompanied by the likewise mournful apostles.<sup>9</sup> As Margery beheld the Mother of God—whom Margery “knew” almost as intimately as she had her Son—she erupted, as she was want to do, into great sobs, at which the (male) apostles rebuked her, and told her to be silent (5872-5). The Virgin reprimanded the men for their censure of her “daughter,” and comforted Margery in her loud crying, telling her that “all these sorrows that you have had for me and my blessed Son shall turn [into] great joy for you[,] and bliss in heaven without end” (5889-90). This scene also turns the tables on Margery’s detractors, many of whom were male clerics or monastics. If Christ’s very apostles were rebuked for shaming her, then why not mortal men of whatever station or ecclesiastical office? Again, these divine approvals by Christ and Mary assured that her special devotion would have its heavenly reward, regardless of what others thought of her as a result.

### **Modern Perspectives on Margery’s Experiences**

These examples are only a few samples of the manifold experiences of Margery Kempe from her voluminous *Book*, of which a full analysis could take years. Certainly her experiences were unusual, and

commentators will be working for decades more to tease-out their historical and literary significance. But how should we contemporary readers respond to the fascinating (and sometimes disturbing) events in the life of this fifteenth-century woman from Norfolk?

One view emphasizes the psychological aspects of Margery's experiences, suggesting that her visions were the psychopathological result of postpartum illness (no doubt influenced by fourteen pregnancies) and religious guilt induced by austere ecclesiastical environmental factors (Torn 789-90). Critical feminism provides additional perspective, that Margery's affective piety was born out of living in a world dominated by men (Dinshaw 228): her asceticism, visions, outbursts, and clashes with authority gave her a voice in an environment that strongly discouraged women from speaking- or acting-out, particularly on religious topics (Dinshaw and Wallace 6).

While both of these critical outlooks are significant and essential for a complete understanding of Margery Kempe, we must not forget that at her core, Margery was a Christian woman seeking redemption from Jesus her Lord—a redemption her *Book* avers she received. Her final prayer recorded in her text speaks volumes:

Have mind, Lord, of the woman who was taken in adultery and brought before you, and as you drove away all her enemies from her and she stood alone by you, so truly may you drive away all my enemies from me . . . that I may stand alone by you, . . . my soul dead to all the joys of this world, and alive and hungry for . . . contemplation in God. (8516-21)

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#### Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> *The Oxford Encyclopedia of British Literature* notes that even though “[t]he *Book* is often described as the first autobiography in English, . . . this categorization, although not inaccurate, obscures its mixture of genres” (Salih). Yates similarly argues that isolating Margery's book into generic terms is both impossible and unhelpful (93). However, these observations should not be seen as detracting from the unique, pioneering role of Margery's *Book* in English spiritual writing and proto-autobiography, or, as Salih calls it, “autohagiography,” or as Gust calls it, “autofiction” (43). For a further discussion on the meaning of authorship in a medieval context, see Jennifer Summit, “Women and Authorship,” cited below.

<sup>2</sup> Then called “Bishop's Lynn” and, after the Henrician Reformation, “King's Lynn,” which it is still known as today.

<sup>3</sup> Windeatt's transcription of *The Book of Margery Kempe* from its original manuscripts retains the original Middle English. I have therefore modernized the language and mechanics for clarity in this essay. The citations refer to line numbers, not pages. Note too that Margery's words are written in third-person.

<sup>4</sup> For a more complete description of the medieval view of virginity, marriage, and widowhood, see the respective essays by Evans, Elliott, and Hanawalt below.

<sup>5</sup> Of this sexual bargaining, Salih writes: “If medieval marriage customs treated women as commodities, transferred from father to husband, then Margery was a commodity who bought herself back with hard cash and a promise of decorous behavior.” The Kempes’ marriage, however, wasn’t all stress, psychosis, and bargaining. Near the end of her husband’s life, when John seems to have suffered from some dementia as a result of a fall (6066-78), Margery quit her full-time piety and stayed at home to care for him until his passing—service she believed was on the same level as serving Christ (6079-80; Dinshaw 234). Nowhere does Margery claim that she ever stopped loving her husband.

<sup>6</sup> These relationships parallel the promise of Jesus in the Gospel of Mark, where he claims that “[w]hoever does God’s will is my brother and sister and mother” (3.35).

<sup>7</sup> Her conviction of a “real and present” Passion is poignantly evident in a scene where, after seeing a pietà in Norwich and erupting again into howling and tears, a priest reminds Margery that “Jesus died a long time ago,” and as a result needn’t weep so intensely. To this Margery replied, “Sir, his death is as fresh to me as [if] he had died this same day, and so I think it ought to be [for] you and [for] all Christian people” (4963-6). The chiding priest does not understand that Christ’s Passion permeates all eras through its universality and is not constrained by temporal historicity (Foster and Carey 89).

<sup>8</sup> Blamires suggests that such involved visions are perceptual outgrowths of clerically encouraged spiritual practices: “[a]ffective meditations” on the Nativity and the Passion (152), as well as enactments of biblical and hagiographical tradition in liturgical devotions and morality plays (153). Margery’s “time-travel” corresponds to what Foster and Carey call “sacramental time” inherent in the liturgy of the Mass, in which “the unique death of Jesus is re-presented in such a way that the worshippers at that Mass . . . are virtually present a Calvary in 30 A.D.” (89).

<sup>9</sup> The scene of the apostles at the bedside of the dying Virgin was depicted in medieval art, such as one of two thirteenth-century tympana over a portal in Strasbourg Cathedral. The Sullivan source below includes images of this artwork, accessible at the listed URL.

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## ‘Coming Full Circle’: Redemption for John Rambo?

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Wherever the poetry of myth is interpreted as biography, history, or science, it is killed . . . When a civilization begins to reinterpret its mythology in this way, the life goes out of it . . . To bring images back to life, one has to seek, not interesting applications to modern affairs, but illuminated hints from the inspired past. When these are found, vast areas of half-dead iconography disclose again their permanently human meaning (Joseph Campbell, *The Power of Myth* 249).

The iconic modern action hero, John Rambo, portrayed by Sylvester Stallone in the *Rambo* film franchise (1982-2008) focuses on the difficulty of the Green Beret veteran’s homecoming after his service in Vietnam, and his quest for redemption—reintegration back into civilian life. Homecomings of mythological warriors are often notoriously difficult: Achilles chooses not to return home and grow old, but to die a young warrior’s death, Odysseus can only resume his former life after violent retribution against the suitors, and the Celtic demi-god, Cuchulain often remained distanced from his patron city after a heated battle, until his warrior fury subsided. As Leo Braudy points out in *From Chivalry to Terrorism: War and the Changing Nature of Masculinity*, both history and myth provide recorded evidence that the “berserker warrior” posed a threat to civilian society once his battle rage was invoked (43). In the tradition of the elite warrior who survives battle, Rambo returns home to find he is alienated—reviled or forgotten. After excessive provocation, his violent impulse is unleashed, and his warrior skills are then alternately exploited by forces without (twice his previous commander recruits him for special covert missions, another time an official representative of the private sector enlists his aid), even as Rambo himself seeks refuge from this part of himself—in prison and then in or near a monastery in Thailand.

Joseph Campbell remarks of the Germanic hero, Siegfried, that having killed the dragon, he tastes its blood and hears the song of nature at which point: “he has transcended his humanity, and re-associated himself with the powers of nature” (*Interview with Bill Moyers: The Power of Myth*). Such a hero—and Rambo follows this pattern—becomes both more and less than human; he is capable of extraordinary feats in battle, but only by reverting to an animal atavism that separates him from the humanity he serves and which he wishes to recover in himself. Is there redemption for Rambo, whose immersion into nature by the opening of the fourth film is almost complete? If so, how is this achieved, and through what agency? I will offer some remarks about his redemptive journey in the context of the warrior tradition he represents, referring to Joseph Campbell’s tripartite hero cycle: “separation” or the “call to adventure,” followed by the second and longest part of the narrative, the initiation phase in which the hero meets a series of tests, concluding with the third phase that features his return, bringing with him the “boon” he has earned in his struggles and rejoining his culture in his rightful place (*The Hero With a Thousand Faces* 245). For Rambo, the trouble of his homecoming and reintegration into his culture emphasizes Campbell’s discussion of what he labels the “Magic Flight” and the possible fates that await him when crossing back over the threshold traversed earlier: the hero can either return “triumphant” carrying “some divine elixir for the restoration of society,” he may find his return difficult, blocked by forces of “magical obstruction and evasion,” his boon or “trophy” having been attained in “opposition of its guardian,” or, as in the second and third Rambo films, he may refuse to return (197) creating the need for “Rescue from Without”: “The hero may have to be brought back by assistance from without. That is to say, the world may have to come and get him” (207). The four *Rambo* films collectively trace the hero’s quest for spiritual healing, an effort to negotiate his past and future while occupying a liminal space in a purgatorial present.

At the beginning of the first film, *Rambo: First Blood* (1982), the alienated ex-Green Beret is shown living a nomadic life. Rambo has returned to his culture to find himself alone. Leo Braudy points out in his chapter, “The Solitude of the Wandering Knight,” the Christian community in the Middle Ages saw a need

to “reshape the warrior heritage into a new system of values,” because it recognized the dangers of “unfocused prowess” (*From Chivalry to Terrorism* 91). The solitude of the professional warrior served to cultivate his introspective, spiritual side; hence, the birth of “chivalry” and the invention of the Christian knight. Braudy avers that this tradition continues in contemporary art and film: “The artistic preoccupation in both Western and Japanese culture with the solitary adventurer . . . in increasingly urban societies, owes a crucial debt to the chivalric model of the warrior knight or samurai,” citing as examples the western outlaw hero, Shane, and Rambo who, at the opening of *Rambo III* resides in a Buddhist monastery (92).

Rambo meets hostility and rejection upon his return to civilian life; when the film opens, he arrives in Hope, Washington in search of what he believes to be the home of the last living soldier in his squadron, Delmore Barry, only to discover that the latter has died from earlier exposure to Agent Orange, which only increases Rambo’s deep isolation.



Rambo, lost and nomadic, enters Hope, Washington. *Rambo: First Blood* (1982)

Rambo wears an American flag on his jacket, apparently a patriotic gesture, but his appearance, augmented by his long hair, makes him a target of suspicion. Misjudged by Hope’s arrogant sheriff, Tease (Brian Dennehy), who orders him out of town three times and then arrests him, Rambo’s sense of injustice and the frustration that takes over when he is persecuted by a sadistic deputy, Galt (Jack Starrett), forces him back into the role of an enraged warrior. This prompts his escape into nature, where Rambo relives his nightmarish past in Vietnam, engaging in a ritual re-enactment of the gorilla warfare tactics in which he has been trained.

The law, which should stand for justice, is corrupt in this case, and Rambo lapses unwillingly into his instinctive will to survive, depending on his elite training. Tease, whose vendetta goes beyond reason, having refused Rambo civilian rights in “his town,” finds himself at Rambo’s mercy.



“In town, you’re the law. Out here it’s me.” *Rambo: First Blood* (1982)

Rambo disables but refrains from killing any of the deputies; he holds a knife to Teasle's throat and growls: "I could have killed them *all*. I could have killed *you*. In town, *you're* the law. Out here, it's *me*. Don't push it, or I'll give you a war you won't believe. Let it go." Rambo's former commander, Colonel Sam Trautman (Richard Crenna) with whom he has lost touch, arrives to resolve the threat Rambo now poses to the community, boasting "I trained him to ignore pain, weather, to live off the land . . . In Vietnam, his job was to dispose of enemy personnel. To kill. Period." Trautman tries to persuade Rambo to surrender to authorities, averring that Rambo can't go around "wastin' friendly civilians," to which Rambo replies, "There *are* no friendly civilians." Locked into a deadly struggle and provoked by the injustice he incurs, Rambo begins to demolish the unrelenting "king shit cop's" town of Hope, using his knowledge of munitions and guerilla tactics to do so. Hunted, Rambo now turns the tables and stalks Teasle, but Trautman's intervention results in an emotional meltdown for Rambo that makes his former commander aware of how he has neglected his soldier. The alienated hero breaks down at the end of the film, perplexed and angered that, while he was trusted with million-dollar equipment in Vietnam, now he "can't even keep a job." Trautman negotiates Rambo's surrender; he is led off at the end of the film, a sequel heavy in the air. It should be noted that this conclusion is one of several ways it differs significantly from its source novel, David Morrell's *First Blood* (1972), in which both Teasle and Rambo die, the latter at the hands of his former commander.

Trautman sees his responsibility for the rehabilitation of Rambo, who ends up in a military prison where, when at the opening of the second film in the series, *Rambo II* (1985), Trautman recruits him for a covert mission in exchange for his freedom. At first, Rambo does not wish to be free, stating, "In here at least I know where I stand," but he is persuaded to cooperate when he learns the mission is to investigate rumors of American POWs who have remained in enemy hands. This would seem to set Rambo on a path to redemption; what Trautman offers suggests that Rambo's government trusts him, and this gives him purpose once again. But when this renewed "call to adventure" turns out to be directed by a corrupt CIA agent, Marshall Murdock (Charles Napier) Rambo's alienation only becomes worsened by these lies. He has realized that this mission is a reprise of his earlier role in battle-torn Southeast Asia, the "kind of war you don't win." Disillusioned, he refuses to return to the United States, even at Trautman's urging, and his purgatorial wandering for redemption ensues.

The first two films focus on what is commonly referred to as the second Cold War arena, Vietnam, the first having been Korea. The third film in the franchise, *Rambo III* (1988) is set in another, Afghanistan, but it opens in Southeast Asia in a brilliantly staged sequence that underscores Rambo's divided self. He enters a brutal stick-fighting match with bystanders betting on who the winner will be—a scene vaguely reminiscent of the Saigon Russian Roulette pistol game in an earlier iconic film, *The Deer Hunter* (1978).



Rambo unleashing his warrior fury in a stick-fighting match. *Rambo III* (1988)

The angry look on Rambo's face during this match reveals his pent-up aggression that he tries to control through this sublimated act of combat. When he wins the match, he has the choice to kill his opponent, but refrains from doing so. In the ensuing sequence, Rambo returns to his home—a Buddhist monastery—and turns his winnings over to the monks. Here is a place of refuge, a liminal space where Rambo escapes his past warrior training in an effort to cultivate his spiritual side, and to regain his humanity. In the words of Victorian poet, Matthew Arnold in 1855, figuratively Rambo is “Wandering between two worlds, one dead, / The other powerless to be born” and seeks refuge, as did Arnold, in a monastic retreat (*Stanzas From the Grande Chartreuse* ll. 85-86).



Trautman attempts to recruit Rambo, who has taken refuge in a Buddhist monastery. *Rambo III* (1988)

Despite his magical flight, trouble—Rambo's destiny—finds him out, even in this remote place, in the form of Colonel Trautman and another government official, who once again try to recruit him for a covert mission, this time in Afghanistan. Rambo adamantly refuses, saying, “I don't know what you think of this place, but I like it. I like being here . . . I like belonging to something.” Trautman avers that Rambo *does* belong, but not to the world of the monastery; instead, he is a “full-blooded combat soldier,” and must one day face up to that fact, an insistence that echoes Emerson's idea of moral perfectionism: “When you gonna come full circle? You said your war is over—but not the one inside you,” and he leaves Rambo to contemplate this. Finally, Rambo is enlisted to help the Afghan freedom fighters against Soviet forces because Trautman himself is captured and tortured. His motive is thus not one of obligation to a cause, nor is it an acknowledgement of the truth of Trautman's assertion about Rambo's combative nature, but rather one of simple loyalty to his mentor and friend. For this reason, at the end of the third *Rambo* film, he is still not integrated back into the culture. His “magical flight” is prolonged, and his redemption doubtful, as we see at the opening of the fourth (and thus far final) installment.

The first three *Rambo* films were released in 1982, 1985, and 1988, but the last debuted in 2008, twenty years after its predecessors. In “It's a Long Road: Resurrection of an Icon,” an aptly-titled documentary included on the extended cut of the DVD, Stallone and his producers maintain that this lacuna was a result of finding the right story for Rambo's return, what Stallone aptly identified as “the essence of Rambo . . . still a lost man, wandering the world.” This gap in time was advantageous, allowing the actor to acquire a more care-worn appearance, reflecting his cynicism and withdrawal from the world in the film's opening sequences. Setting *Rambo* in Burma also made perfect sense—ruled by a corrupt military dictatorship from 1990-2011, in a BBC documentary, “Myanmar Profile—Overview” from March 2015, it was singled out for its “appalling human rights record.” The third film featured Rambo as a champion of the oppressed in Afghanistan, and in its sequel he continued this role, here as a defender of the persecuted Christian Karen denomination in Burma. Moreover, Richard Crenna, cast as Colonel Sam Trautman in the first three films as the man “who made Rambo” and who served as his only real connection to his past life, had died in 2003, so the pattern of having Crenna's character recruit Rambo for another mission also had

to be replaced with another scenario; this, too, enhanced the change in the hero's plight because it made him even more isolated than before.

*Rambo* opens with actual television footage of unrest in Burma in order to recount a brief history of the persecuted Karen people, "poor Christian farmers," then cuts to an aged but still virile and embittered Rambo, who resides in the neighboring country of Thailand on the Salween River. Like Siegfried, having repeatedly "tasted the blood of the dragon," Rambo's flight from the modern world and his retreat into nature is almost a complete immersion (*Outlaw Heroes as Liminal Figures of Film and Television* 214). With Trautman out of the picture, Rambo has no connection with his former military or domestic life; even his contact with the nearby monks is tenuous. His heroism—which makes him more than human—is not active. He spears fish and donates them to the monks passing by his boat, but he no longer resides in the monastery. Rambo lives by hunting pythons and cobras for a local tourist show and operating a water taxi on the Salween River. Though he may find some solace in his proximity to the monks, the metaphoric images underscore the liminal space Rambo occupies, and his unresolved inner conflict that has prompted his retreat into nature. Others in the film allude to Rambo as "The Boatman"—the Salween River, that harbors deadly snakes, pirates, and serves as the gateway to oppressive Burma—is a river of death like the River Styx, the mythological border between the living and the dead. But as "the Fisherman," Rambo is associated with life forces, spearing food for the monks, the river also freeing him from the constraints of "civilization," similar to the archetypal Huck Finn. Even more, finding solace in fishing is evocative of the Rich Fisher, or Fisher King of medieval Arthurian lore. The Fisher King has incurred a wound that will not heal, yet he cannot die, thus condemning him to a liminal space of suffering, not unlike that caused by Rambo's anguish; only the act of fishing alleviates this suffering. When addressed, Rambo's reply is a growl. Cynicism like this—which almost always masks an idealism that is not quite obliterated—has created a kind of spiritual paralysis that makes it impossible for Rambo to cross the return threshold that will let him resume his life (*Outlaw Heroes* 214-15).

Rambo's redemption—if it is indeed accomplished in the 2008 film—is achieved in part through the agency that Campbell labels "rescue from without," (alluded to earlier) when a group of Colorado missionaries attempt to hire his water taxi to transport them to a village of persecuted Burmese Christians. Rambo flatly refuses, telling them "Burma is a war zone" and asserts cynically that Bibles, medicine and food will do nothing to change peoples' lives: only weapons can do that. The leader, Michael Burnett (Paul Schulze) retorts, more with arrogance than idealism: "It is thinking like that that keeps the world the way it is," to which Rambo utters a profane reply. What changes his mind is the group's only woman, Sarah (Julie Benz). Although Rambo keeps repeating to her: "Go home," some part of her idealism does reach him: "Maybe you lost your faith in people. But you must still believe in something . . . trying to *save* a life isn't wasting *your* life, is it?" Despite his savage exterior and deep internal division, Sarah's beauty and goodness persuades Rambo to help them. As he taxis them to the drop point, he tells Sarah he has agreed to this only because she asked.

*En route*, they encounter Burmese pirates who demand that Rambo "turn the whore" (Sarah) over to them. This unleashes Rambo's warrior fury, and in seconds he slaughters all of the pirates, for which the self-righteous Burnett reproaches him. Rambo hisses: "They would have raped her 50 times and cut your fucking heads off! We're going back!" Only by Sarah's exhortations, and against his better judgment, does Rambo continue, taking them to the drop point where they must make their way inland on foot to reach the Karen village. As they part, Sarah gives Rambo the wooden cross pendant she has been wearing, a token of their unspoken bond. He wears this on his wrist, later cherishing it as he recalls Sarah's words and examines his conscience, not unlike a devotee with Rosary beads or a courtly lover with a lady's token. Rescue from without has arrived.

Rambo is awakened one night a short time later by a pastor, John Marsh (Ken Howard) who informs him the missionaries have been captured; the American Embassy cannot help, so Rambo is once again asked to reprise his role as covert rescuer. Marsh has hired a team of professional mercenaries to find Sarah

and her friends, but they need Rambo as a taxi and guide. To prepare for this mission, Rambo forges a new weapon to add to his iconic collection. As he does so, he continues to recover his humanity by further self-scrutiny, recalling Trautman's lecture at the monastery in the previous film. Rambo thinks about his motive as an elite forces soldier, telling himself: "War is in your blood. Don't fight it. You didn't kill for your country. You killed for yourself. The gods are never gonna make that go away." This is a very close approximation of Campbell's assertion that the hero's attempts to cross the second threshold and return to the world may be "resented by the gods or demons" (*The Hero With a Thousand Faces* 197). Rambo and the mercenaries soon learn that the villagers the missionaries visited have been slaughtered; the other soldiers assume Sarah and her friends are dead and thus plan to abort the rescue operation, but Rambo usurps the leader's authority by force and asserts: "Any of you boys want to shoot, now's the time. And there isn't one of us that doesn't want to be somewhere else. But this is what we do, who we are. Live for nothing or die for something," a simple but effective rhetorical tactic, as the mercenaries unite behind Rambo.



A rallying cry: "Live for nothing or die for something." *Rambo* (2008)

Under Rambo's command, the converted mercenaries rescue Sarah and the other missionaries in an appropriately violent climactic conclusion to the mission, and Rambo, recognizing that she belongs to a domesticated world he has not yet rejoined, is left once again to his solitude. His *modus operandi* (violence) is the only way to save the woman with whom he can have no future. As before, Rambo stands aloof and alone: a heroic demi-god, both more and less than man.

Yet the film's conclusion suggests that Sarah has brought Rambo at least the hope, if not the finality of redemption. Her earlier words: "Don't you want to see how things might have changed back home?" have broken the threshold, and the final shot of the film shows Rambo returning to the ranch where he was raised. There is no definite closure to this journey, only a tenuous one, which is why Stallone began to develop a fifth Rambo film, but after years of wandering, the hero here has, at least, returned home a second time (*Outlaw Heroes* 220). *Rambo* embodies what critic Robert B. Ray calls the "reconciliatory pattern" in American cinema in which the competing myths of individualism (freedom) and community (responsibility) are temporarily reconciled (*A Certain Tendency of the Hollywood Cinema 1930-1980* 57). Not only did classic Hollywood cinema attempt to reconcile these binary oppositions, represented by what Ray labels the "outlaw hero" and "official hero," it "systematically mythologized the certainty of being able to do so" (64), a pattern that has remained a vital part of the American film tradition. Further, Ray argues that the outlaw hero often also features the typology of the "reluctant hero" story, exemplified, for instance, by the titular character of the 1954 western, *Shane* (played by Alan Ladd):

The reconciliatory pattern found its most typical incarnation, however, in one particular narrative: the story of the private man attempting to keep from being drawn into action on any but his own terms. In this story, the reluctant hero's ultimate willingness to help the

community satisfied the official values. But by portraying this aid as demanding only a temporary involvement, the story preserved the values of individualism as well. (65)

As Braudy has also observed, the connection between Shane and Rambo— itinerant but skilled warriors— connects them with a long line of such heroes, those who render service to a community but are unable to remain in it for long.

Has Rambo won a boon or magic elixir to transport him across the threshold? Stallone composed an earlier script of this fourth *Rambo* film titled *Pearl of the Cobra* (2006) that employs the ancient legend of the talismanic power of the titular gem, found only on rare occasions in the hood of very old Naga Mani Cobras. In this draft, Rambo wears one around his neck; he tells Sarah that it is said to bring good luck, piety, wealth, and victory over enemies, but only if it is acquired by fortune—killing the cobra to attain it negates its talismanic power. A pearl is, of course, an ulcer produced in an animal by some irritant. In this case, an aged reptilian predator, wise and battle scarred, carries in its body a crystalized story of its experiences, the gem a metaphor for the character of the cobra itself, and for Rambo. Angry and battle-scarred, he finds himself still capable of responding to beauty and goodness, that which makes us human (*Outlaw Heroes* 220). He has lived the extremes of godlike power and animal atavism for too long. Finding such a gem, or rather having it find him, could serve as a tender for his passage home. The final version of the script and film replaces the gem with Sarah's more conventional wooden cross, but both can be said to serve as the payment for Rambo's return from his death struggle to the *chance*, at least, for resurrected life—redemption.



Redemption for Rambo: Home at last? *Rambo* (2008)

His service to his country has been great, but at a sacrificial cost to him. A decisive yet discriminating killer, he pays the heavy price of being outcast, partaking in what critic Leo Braudy, cited earlier, identifies as an ancient and revered archetypal pattern for the professional warrior. To “come full circle,” as his mentor Sam Trautman urges upon him in *Rambo III*, and earn what Campbell identifies eloquently as the “freedom to live,” Rambo must first become “master of the two worlds,” reconciling himself with his destined role in the dark realm of war, struggle, and death but, after long exile and atonement, being responsive to the call that beckons him at last back to humanity. An end and a beginning, the alienated hero crosses the second threshold, but the final film stops short of showing Rambo's final reintegration into ordinary life, thus allowing audiences to applaud his service to his community, while imagining him still as the extraordinary individual, larger than life, a mythic hero.

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## **Dreaming of a Better Tomorrow: The Image of Redemption in the Writings of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.**

Frederick D. Watson

After his big victory in the Montgomery bus boycott, Dr. King and several other black ministers established the SCLC or the Southern Christian Leadership Conference. This organization was set up to allow Dr. King and his associates to move the protest movement beyond Montgomery to other cities, and to train volunteers in the philosophy and techniques of the nonviolent direct action strategy. "To Redeem the Soul of America" was the motto of the SCLC. My central question is what did Dr. King and other civil rights activists mean when they said that their goal and primary purpose was the redemption of America's soul?

Martin Luther King, Jr. was born in Atlanta, Georgia on January 15, 1929<sup>1</sup>. His mother's father, the Reverend Alfred Daniel Williams, founded Ebenezer Baptist Church in Atlanta. Reverend Williams activist and an opponent of Booker T. Washington's conservative philosophy of accommodationism. He believed that African-Americans should be able exercise all of their citizenship rights and not have to accommodate themselves to white supremacy. Reverend Williams was a follower of W.E.B. DuBois. He was also one of the founding members of the Atlanta chapter of the NAACP. Reverend Williams was a veteran of many battles for equal rights and facilities for Atlanta's black community.

After Reverend Williams retired he turned the pastorate of Ebenezer Baptist Church over to his son-in-law, Reverend Martin Luther King, Sr. (also known as "Daddy King"). Under Martin Luther King, Sr., Ebenezer became one of Atlanta's leading black churches in Atlanta. King's father was also an activist. He set an example of manful resistance to the customs and humiliation of Jim Crow for his son, Martin Luther King, Jr. Once when a traffic policeman addressed the elder as "boy," Reverend King corrected the policeman at once. Pointing to Martin Luther King, Jr., sitting next to him, he said, "that's a boy, I'm a man." When a clerk in a shoe store ordered King and his father to get out of their seats up front and to go to the rear of the store, Reverend King, Sr., refused. He declared, "We'll either buy shoes sitting here or we won't buy shoes at all." He then led his son out of the store.

Through examples such as these, Martin Luther King, Jr. was molded to be a leader of the oppressed people. This is why Thomas Jackson believes that King's radicalism did not evolve over time to become the democratic socialist of his last book, *Where Do We Go from Here: Chaos or Community?* (187-202) According to Jackson, King was radical from the beginning, or at least as early as 1957 (27-35).

As King learned Baptist preaching important mentors and teachers such as Benjamin Mays and Howard Thurman helped to foster King's commitment to racial and economic equality, as well as his commitment to pacifism. Since his seminary days at Crozer Theological Seminary in Chester, Pennsylvania, King had been intellectually searching for a way to bring to reality his vision of transforming America into a better world that would be based on reconciliation and true brotherhood. King wanted to establish a Christian commonwealth that he called the beloved community where all people would be treated as equals in a caring community and color would not matter.

An incident that took place in Montgomery, Alabama in late 1955 that first brought Martin Luther King, Jr. to national attention. Mrs. Rosa Parks, a black seamstress who worked in a downtown store was arrested for refusing to give up her seat on a bus so that a white man could be seated. Fed up with years of mistreatment and over the arrest of the mild-mannered Mrs. Parks, Montgomery's black community decided to boycott the buses and the downtown stores during Christmas shopping season.

The boycott leaders asked Dr. King to be the leader of the boycott. The young eloquent King already had a reputation as a spellbinding orator. He was twenty-six and had only been pastor of Dexter

Avenue Baptist Church for a few months. Dr. King proved to be a great inspirational leader who was able to bring together what had been a very divided black community. For over a year Montgomery's blacks organized carpools or simply walked several miles to and from wherever they had to go.

After studying Jesus, Gandhi, and Thoreau, King came to believe that nonviolent protest would be the key to the black struggle for equal rights in America, according to King's account in his book *Stride Toward Freedom* (84-85). King kept the boycotters peaceful even though violent whites tried their best to provoke an open clash. In January 1956 King's house was bombed. He convinced his followers to resist in the Christian and Gandhian spirit of loving and forgiving one's enemies with the kind of unselfish love that God has for all humans. King was opposed to responding to white violence with black violence. Violence, he believed, only led to more violence, retaliation, and hatred, and further divided people. King's goal was to break the unity of the white majority, and he wanted to embarrass his violent opponents into feeling guilty. He wanted them to have what he called a "crisis of conscience." His final goal was to open the way to conversion and reconciliation.

The Montgomery bus boycott was actually part of a two-pronged attack. While thousands in the black community were refusing to ride the buses, a lawsuit against the bus company was working its way through the courts. The boycott ended in December 1956 when the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that segregated seating on buses was unconstitutional because of its *Brown vs. Board of Education* ruling in 1954, and that Montgomery had to allow passengers to be seated on a first come first serve basis.

According to historian, Nathan Huggins in a *Journal of American History* article, King's gifts of oratory was not the only reason he appealed to Southern black Christians. Huggins asserts that King perceptively tapped into the tradition of Christian stoicism in the black community. When King repeated over and over again that "undeserved suffering is redemptive," he was merely repeating a value that his Southern audiences had lived their lives by since slavery and Jim Crow (336-337).

In an article titled *The Conservative Militant* August Meier explained that King appealed to so many white liberals for several reasons. He always positioned himself as a moderate between conservatives and militants like Malcolm X. To white liberals King's positions always seemed to be so responsible. Most important were King's manipulation of the Christian symbols of love and nonviolent resistance. King made white liberals feel guilty every time they saw him lead nonviolent groups of marchers who were assaulted by Southern police and white vigilantes armed with clubs, fire hoses, and vicious dogs. But King's faith in the essential humanity of every white bigot gave other whites the sense that he truly valued humanity unconditionally. Liberal whites could love King, Meier argued, because he had "faith that the white man would redeem himself (147-149). James Baldwin stressed the same idea in many of his writings. In Baldwin's public letter to his nephew, *The Fire next Time*, he wrote "that we with love shall force our brothers to see themselves as they are, to cease fleeing from reality and begin to change (21)."

For years Birmingham, Alabama had represented the stronghold of White supremacy. White police officers had picked up black women pedestrians and raped them at gunpoint. Throughout the 1950's black homes and churches had been bombed. No black resident was ever safe from white terrorism. Every black person seemed to know someone who had been beaten, bombed, raped, or murdered by whites in Birmingham. Its police force was headed by the hot-tempered staunch segregationist Eugene "Bull" Connor. On April 3, 1963 King began his Birmingham desegregation campaign. Dr. King and his associate Reverend Ralph Abernathy were arrested on Good Friday. Marchers on Easter Sunday were clubbed and thrown in jail. On May 2, 1963 James Bevel coordinated a children's march involving six thousand black youth from the ages of six to sixteen were brutalized and jailed. "Bull" Connor ordered his police minions to use fire hoses and police dogs against pregnant women, children, and the elderly before national and international news media. Across the world people were repulsed by American racism, in the world's greatest democracy.

Eight white Birmingham ministers wrote a letter to the newspaper denouncing Dr. King for his impatience with the new city administration and for his “unwise and untimely” demonstrations. Manning Marable said that King’s response, “was one of the most eloquent essays written in American history (17).” King answered his critics in *The Letter from Birmingham Jail*. This document can be found in King’s book *Why We Can’t Wait*. *The Letter from Birmingham Jail* was a public letter written in the tradition of Emile Zola’s letter to the President of the French Republic denouncing the Dreyfus decision. In *The Hero in History*, Sydney Hook makes a sharp distinction between the leader who rises to fame as a result of events he did not create and the truly great leader who transcends events by creating the occasion of his greatness (98-99). Dr. King chose to make his stand against segregation in Birmingham, because it was the perfect place to stage his morality play of good versus evil, despite the critics who said that the Birmingham campaign was unwise and untimely.

King answered the ministers’ claim that he was an “outsider” and a troublemaker. King asserted that he was not just an outside trouble maker on three counts: first, because the SCLC had organizational ties to Birmingham, second because he is a Christian, and third because he can’t be an “outsider” because he is an American. King pointed out that the Apostle Paul left his village and carried the gospel of Jesus Christ to practically every hamlet and city of the Graeco-Roman world. King announced, “I too am compelled to carry the gospel of freedom beyond my particular town. King goes on to say that he is in Birmingham because injustice is there, and “Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere.” King pointed out that Birmingham’s black community was left with no alternative except to demonstrate, because the political leadership of the city “consistently refused to engage in good faith negotiations.”

King explained nonviolent direct action as a tactic that seeks to establish a creative tension in a community that has constantly refused to negotiate is forced to confront the issue. He compared the creative tension he hoped to stimulate with nonviolent direct action demonstrations to Socrates’ attempts to create tension in the minds of individuals so that they could see through myths and half-truths.

King turned to theologians St Thomas Aquinas, Martin Buber, and Paul Tillich to support his position for breaking laws. Aquinas said that there are two types of laws: Just laws and unjust laws. King reports that one has a moral responsibility to obey just laws, because they square with God’s law. Aquinas said that unjust laws degrades human personality. Thus, “all segregation statutes are unjust because segregation distorts the soul and damages the personality.”

King concluded his letter by telling his conservative church colleagues, “that if today’s church does not recapture the sacrificial spirit of the early Church, it will lose its authenticity, forfeit the loyalty of millions, and be dismissed as an irrelevant social club with no meaning in the twentieth century.”

The appalling spectacle in Birmingham forced President Kennedy to go on television and proclaimed that American racism was a serious moral failure of the country. He also announced that he was sending a new civil rights bill to Congress. Kennedy’s bill would become the 1964 Civil Rights Act, the strongest civil rights bill ever passed.

Dr. King played an indispensable role in the civil rights movement. I don’t agree with the scholars (such as Aldon Morris, and Clayborne Carson) who place greater emphasis on local movements and the roles of unsung heroes than on national figures like Dr. King. They claim that King was just one of many players and that others could have stepped up and played the same role. King was not just an interchangeable part. I don’t think that major legislation like the Civil Rights Act or the Voting Rights Bill would have been passed without King’s insistence on his nonviolent direct action tactics.

Today we can take hope from the thought that Dr. King and the movement that he symbolized was able to achieve revolutionary change without resorting to violence. Unfortunately in our time many people believe that the only way to solve their conflicts is with the gun or arsenal they have in their closet.

## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup>I found the following sources necessary to get a handle on the development of King's social and religious philosophy in the context of his extraordinary time in American history: Lerone, Bennett, *What Manner of Man: A Biography of Martin Luther King, Jr.* (New York: Pocket Book, 1965), pp. 24-25. C. Eric Lincoln, ed., *Martin Luther King, Jr.: A Profile* ((New York: Hill and Wang, 1970), pp. vii-xv. Martin Luther King, Jr., *Stride Toward Freedom* (San Francisco: Harper & Row 1986, reprint ed.), especially, pp. 90-107. David L. Lewis, *King: A Biography* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1978), pp. 27-45. Stephen Oates, *Let the Trumpet Sound: The Life of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.* (New York: A Plume book, 1982). James Cone, *Martin and Malcolm* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1991), pp. 121-128. David Chappell, *A Stone of Hope: Prophetic Religion and the Death of Jim Crow* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004), pp. 44-62. Stewart Burns, *To The Mountaintop: Martin Luther King, Jr., 's Sacred Mission to Save America, 1955-1968* (San Francisco: Harper, 2004). Taylor Branch, *Parting the Waters: America in the King Years* (New York: Touchstone, 1989), pp. 69-93.

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