

A large, stylized lowercase letter 'j' in a vibrant red color. The dot of the 'j' is a solid red circle positioned above the main vertical stroke. The vertical stroke descends and curves into a large, sweeping hook at the bottom left of the page.

jmla

SOLIDARITY

THE JOURNAL OF THE MIDWEST
MODERN LANGUAGE ASSOCIATION
SPRING 2025 | VOLUME 58 | NUMBER 1

THE JOURNAL OF THE MIDWEST MODERN LANGUAGE ASSOCIATION

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Introduction

Kelly Kidder and Brynn Fitzsimmons

When we proposed this special issue, we were reflecting on what was happening at the time: the newest phase of genocide against Palestinians in Gaza, ongoing genocides in Sudan and the Congo, echoes of the George Floyd uprisings in 2020, continued murders by the police, the January 6th insurrection, and global attacks against transgender lives and communities, among many other injustices. Our hope was for an issue that would use a humanities lens to consider broadly what “solidarity” means, what it looks like in literature and media and in day-to-day life. We wanted to consider how we might make solidarity a way of reading the world—academically and otherwise. We wanted to draw attention to the ways in which our futures are bound up together, and we wanted to highlight work emphasizing the beauty of empathy in action in a variety of contexts and disciplines. One always hopes, in proposing a project within these kinds of contexts, that by the time the academic publishing process has run its slow course, the project will be less relevant, less timely, that it will have become a historical rather than painfully current project.

This, of course, is not the case. The genocides in Palestine, Sudan, and the Congo continue, and scholars have begun to label the sweeping anti-trans rhetoric and legislation in the US as the beginning phases of genocide, too (Bragman). ICE agents have been responsible for the

deaths of more than seventy people in 2025 and at least a dozen in 2026, the vast majority of them BIPOC immigrants, although the media's whitestream bias (Alamo-Pastrana and Hoynes) means most of us have heard about only Renée Good and Alex Pretti, two white US citizens ICE agents killed this year, and not about Keith Porter Jr., the Black US citizen killed by an ICE agent on New Year's Eve, or Emmanuel Clifford Damas, Alberto Gutiérrez-Reyes, Jairo Garcia-Hernandez, Lorth Sim, Heber Sánchez Dominguez, Victor Manuel Díaz, Parady La, Luis Beltrán Yáñez-Cruz, Luis Gustavo Núñez Cáceres, or Geraldo Lunas Campos. Each life lost demonstrates that it is more crucial than ever that we see ourselves in each other. Daily events lead us yet again to an even more desperate call for solidarity.

Definition of Solidarity

Solidarity is one of those words that is frequently invoked and rarely defined. At times, solidarity seems to be a stand-in for "support" or "allyship" or similarly fraught—and often simply performative—expressions of support. Claims of solidarity are also often just that: claims, which are too frequently followed by inaction. In their work exploring solidarity, de Koning and de Jong argue the term has seen a resurgence because of the interconnectedness of our world. They encourage a minimalist definition of the term in order to allow for explorations of solidarity across disciplines. They "take solidarity to connote a recognition of communality or fellowship, and the willingness or obligation to act upon this recognition." Essentially, in their view, solidarity asks, "[W]hat are we prepared to do for others whom we identify as our fellows, and whom do we identify as such?" (13).

Noor Ghazal Aswad, going a step further, defines solidarity as "an emotional, ethical, and political capacity cultivated through attention to certain bodies" (7), especially those that "hail from historically oppressed communities, communities currently in crisis, and communities revolting against repressive hegemonic forces" (46). She argues that solidarity requires a willingness to let go of how we (especially those of us in the American academy) have been conditioned to understand resistance, how it works, what knowledge means, and how meaning is made and to become aware that there are many answers to these questions, rather than some totalizing, singular right way to make meaning or resistance.

When we view solidarity as multifaceted, it helps us draw connections across multiple modes of meaning, multiple struggles, and multiple strategies of resistance. We can then create a space in which struggles come together, even if only ephemerally; and we can build connections among different struggles and experiences of oppression, be they racialized, gendered, or nationalized. Thus, regardless of each individual's proximity to a particular site of revolutionary struggle, we begin to see that solidarity's reorientation matters for the liberation of everyone.

Aboriginal activist Lilla Watson, together with members of an Aboriginal Rights group, defined solidarity this way: "If you have come here to help me, you are wasting your time. But if you have come because your liberation is bound up with mine, then let us work together." This summation of solidarity does not erase difference or pretend that everyone experiences oppression the same way. It does, however, resist what Dean Spade has critiqued as the "charity" model of activism, which is frequently defined by "rich people or the government making decisions about the provision of some kind of support to poor people" (21). Instead of focusing on what those with particular kinds of privilege (e.g., money) can give to those without, solidarity asks us to consider how liberation for each of us requires the liberation of all of us. This argument isn't new, of course; Black feminists like the Combahee River Collective argued nearly fifty years ago that solidarity was the only way to liberation. "If Black women were free," they argue, "it would mean that everyone else would have to be free since our freedom would necessitate the destruction of all the systems of oppression" (8). We cannot help but wonder what our world might look like now if other social movements, like the white feminist movements they often critiqued, had heeded Black feminists' call in 1977.

Solidarity Is a Verb

Solidarity, then, as Koning and de Jong point out, must be a verb and must go beyond unification created to fight a common enemy. As poet and activist June Jordan said, "The ultimate connection cannot be the enemy. The ultimate connection must be the need that we find between us. It is not only who you are, in other words, but what we can do for each other that will determine the connection" (14). Solidarity must be something we do—not something we are, or even something we unite

against. As Black feminist theorist bell hooks describes it, solidarity is a consistent action, an orienting of one's daily life toward working at those shared, root oppressions. Unlike support, which can come and go, solidarity requires a deep commitment (67).

Given all of these definitions, we are thinking about solidarity as a way of life. It is a way of reading the world; of looking for and taking seriously the testimonies and stories of people who have been oppressed and who are revolting against repressive hegemonic forces; and of taking action that follows their leadership.

This issue, then, is interested in how scholarship might support solidarity, as well as how solidarity might become a scholarly way of life—a way of doing, breathing, conducting, describing, and presenting our research and analysis. We are interested in how solidarity as a guiding framework allows us to create scholarship that grounds us in what Black studies and abolitionist scholars have called “fugitive hope,” which “reaches for the vestiges of life that are themselves worlds and reveal that this world must recognize that we,” as Marquis Bey so eloquently describes, “are not going to lay down and die” (217).

Solidarity as (a Way of) Life

The pieces we present in this edition represent scholarly takes on solidarity from a wide variety of disciplines, approaches, and research areas. None of them claim to be complete or perfect attempts at solidarity as a practice, a subject of analysis, or a focus of scholarship. Instead, we hope each of these represents just one of what the Black feminist abolitionist Mariame Kaba has called the “one million experiments” (Kaba and Nagao) necessary for abolition—which is to say, the “founding of a new society” (Harney and Moten 42) where systemic oppressions like what we’re seeing in Gaza, in Minneapolis, in the Congo, in Sudan, and around the world are, at last, unimaginable.

We might view some of the articles in this issue as part of those “experiments.” For example, Isabel Garcia-Gonzales and Jane Hseu share how a Banyan Writer’s Collective provides a positive response to the heightened isolation of Asian-American voices in Chicago, and authors Tiya Morris and Virginia Cope describe how a community of Black Indians in New Orleans employs a century-old tradition of artistic expression to resist racial oppression. Turning to experiments

focused on the ways in which language embodies solidarity, Roshawnda Derrick examines how radio hosts in Los Angeles code switch to show solidarity with bilingual listeners, and José Manuel Medrano analyzes how bilingualism in the series *Dexter*, set in Miami, employs Spanish as a tool for cultural resistance and linguistic solidarity. Within the university context, Cynthia Porter provides deep reflection on how to create engaged pedagogy in a German language classroom, and Mari Ramler, in an examination of labor practices, urges tenured faculty to adopt a deep solidarity framework to support graduate students in higher education. There are also moments where solidarity does not quite materialize—and these, too, are worth studying, because we can learn from each experiment how best to prepare for the next one. Eric Wistrom, for example, writes about the struggles with intersectional organizing in France's 2014 March for Dignity and Against Racism, where diverse groups struggled to practice solidarity across different ideological orientations and approaches to organizing.

In all the pieces presented in this edition, we find clear calls to action and the possibilities of solidarity. Practicing inclusive pedagogy cultivates open-mindedness, empathy, and community engagement. The languages we choose to speak and the places where we speak them actively express resistance and foster trust. Participating in public rituals claims space for silenced voices and acknowledges our shared humanity. Even apparent failures at organizing can be part of the “one million experiments” needed to build otherwise, livable worlds.

In this issue, we are looking to make a contribution to the many ways in which we can work together to establish a sense of solidarity that centers marginalized knowledges (Collins; May); orients toward coalitional action rather than some idealized coalition (Chávez; Prasad); moves beyond weak gestures of support; and deeply recognizes and prioritizes everyday practices of resistance and our shared humanity.

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Solidarity and Sustenance: Banyan: Asian American Writers Collective's Writing in Community Sessions

Isabel Garcia-Gonzales and Jane Hseu

Introduction

Writing in Community (WIC) is a monthly generative writing session organized by Banyan: Asian American¹ Writers Collective, a grassroots organization based in the Chicago area. Banyan was founded in February 2017, after Donald Trump was elected president in November 2016. Mary Grace (M.G.) Bertulfo, a Pilipina American² writer and educator based in the Chicago area, was spurred to create an Asian American writers' group to counter heightened racial tensions, xenophobia, and the long-standing invisibility of Asian American voices and stories in mainstream US culture and consciousness. Reflecting on that time, M.G. says, "I wanted to make a positive response to the racial tension in Chicago after the election. I wanted to find a way to support writers of Asian American stories, to create readings and uplifting events that would build bridges across communities."³ Banyan began in the aftermath of the first Trump election, continued through the global COVID-19 pandemic of 2020–2021 and the rise of anti-Asian hate, and persists into the second Trump administration. As we will discuss further, the work of Banyan in general and WIC in particular continues to this day. Banyan and its WIC sessions have persisted in "mak[ing] a positive response" during these fraught times in which people of Asian descent have often felt a heightened sense of isolation.

Like Banyan as a whole, WIC fosters the innovation of Asian American writing in the Midwest. Banyan's focus on this geographical location is an important aspect of its contribution to the fields of Asian American literature and Asian American community organizing, as so much of what has been made visible about Asian America has been located on the West and East Coasts. Banyan strives to cocreate a community of Asian American writers and artists in the Midwest and to support and amplify the creative work of Midwestern Asian American writers and artists, enriching and widening our understanding of Asian America while also creating a unique creative space for solidarity and mutual support.

The purpose of this essay is two-fold. First, we examine the ways in which Banyan and its WIC sessions build opportunities for participants to find a sense of belonging, creative inspiration, and solidarity among Asian American writers in the Chicago area and Midwest, and, with WIC's move from an in-person to an online format in April 2020, anywhere in the world. Second, we write to share specific strategies and structural considerations that have been important to nurturing the space that WIC strives to create, one that is open and flexible enough to hold the diversity of experiences, perspectives, and identities that the participants bring while also sustaining a sense of solidarity and connection. We tell you the story of WIC as an offering you might take to create or enhance your and others' own minority-focused writing groups/workshops or to foster solidarities of creative and artistic connection and mutual support.

In creating the form and content of this essay, the co-authors made a conscious decision to mirror the form and content of our collective's community-centered organizing. Just as Banyan seeks to draw in and amplify the voices of our community, we sought out reflections from our regular WIC participants. Before drafting this essay, we emailed a voluntary survey via Google Form with open-ended questions about participants' experiences with WIC (see Appendix). We allowed the themes that emerged from their reflections to shape and inform our writing, and their voices are woven throughout the essay. They have given us permission to print their comments, and they have given their names as they would like them to appear in this essay or have requested that their comments remain anonymous.

Building Banyan and Writing in Community

In February 2017, M.G. began making her positive response to the fraught social and political climate by gathering together a small group of local Asian American female⁴ writers and community arts organizers for a meeting at Calypso Moon, her studio in Oak Park, a suburb just outside Chicago. The attendees included two professors who had worked together at nearby Dominican University: Jane Hseu, an English professor specializing in Asian American literature, and Samina Hadi-Tabassum, a poet and education professor. Also attending was Nicole Sumida, co-editor of *riksha: Asian American Creative Arts in Action* magazine (along with Alexander Yu, Eduardo Cruz Eusebio, and Christopher Ike). As stated in the article “Preserving Culture” by the Oak Park Main Library, *riksha* was an Asian American arts and literary magazine that “was distributed nationally in print starting in 1993. The magazine also put on live events in Chicago in the 1990s and 2000s.” M.G. also reached out to Nicole because *riksha* was just emerging from a seventeen-year hiatus of publishing the magazine, the editors were restarting the magazine in an online format, and M.G. and Nicole thought their efforts could be mutually supportive.

At this first meeting, M.G. and the others came up with the name Banyan: Asian American Writers Collective for the group. M.G. states: “I remember choosing the name Banyan because the tree is a living, breathing being we have in common across Asia and throughout the diaspora. A banyan tree is really a rallying point, a community gathering place, a sanctuary across our diverse cultures. So, the emphasis was on commonality and holding space.”

Banyan began bringing Chicago-area Asian American writers and communities together with its first literary reading in June 2017, a book launch for Samina’s new poetry collection (*Muslim Melancholia*) that also included readings and performances from many other Asian American writers and artists, some of whose work had recently been published in *riksha*. Holding true to Banyan’s mission, Midwestern Asian American writers’ voices were not only included and amplified but supported by a community of readers and audience members. Banyan has been interdisciplinary and intergenerational from its inception. The inaugural event featured musical performances and artwork by local Asian Americans and included craft activities for children, while

the sharing of food welcomed in community members of all ages and backgrounds. The event was a success, with seventy-five people attending. M.G.'s seed of an idea to make a positive response to the challenges of the current climate was made real through the newly formed collective's efforts and the community's support.

In the years since, Banyan's events programming has continued to grow, reaching more audiences and communities, amplifying more Midwestern Asian American voices, through events including Banyan's Second Birthday Party and book launch for poet and Malcolm X College Professor Lani T. Montreal's *FANBOYS: Poems about Teaching and Learning*; a screening and discussion of *The Orange Story* with Chicago-based filmmaker Jason Matsumoto; and a reading and discussion of *Lola's House: Filipino Women Living with War* with Wisconsin-born writer M. Evelina Galang, as well as a book launch event for her subsequent collection of short stories, *When the Hibiscus Falls*. Banyan sustained its events programming during the pandemic through virtual events such as "Filipinx Voices from the Midwest," which featured Banyan writers and musicians and was part of The Digital Sala: Virtual Filipinx Literature Collaborative/Intervention/Experiment; "Did You Eat Yet?," a book launch for Banyan writer Mia P. Manansala's *Arsenic and Adobo*, the first book in her culinary cozy mystery series; and *Share the Love*, WIC's five-year anniversary celebration, which was a hybrid in-person and virtual event that featured readings and performances of pieces generated during WIC sessions.

Banyan's inaugural event not only seeded the events programming mentioned above, but it also led to rich, meaningful connections among Asian American writers in the Oak Park and Chicago area and beyond, and it became clear that there was an existing audience for Asian American stories and indeed a community hunger for it. The group of core organizers⁵ has grown and changed according to availability. As of this writing, in addition to M.G. and Jane, core organizers include Karen Su, children's book author and clinical associate professor of Global Asian Studies at the University of Illinois Chicago; Eduardo Cruz Eusebio, writer, creative writing workshop instructor at the Midwest Buddhist Temple, *riksha* co-editor, and member of Asian American band Sona Umbra; Tina Bhaga, writer and member of Sona Umbra; Isabel Garcia-Gonzales, writer/artist, educator, and lecturer at the School of the

Art Institute of Chicago; and Victor Yipp, writer and retired attorney. Soon after the June 2017 event, Banyan core organizers came together to formalize a structure and focus for the collective. We decided on an approach that would give a regular rhythm to our activities, which would in turn build consistent opportunities for community members to engage, making the work more sustainable. Banyan's model involves three main areas of programming, each with its own rhythm: (1) a monthly generative writing session (initially co-organized by Jane Hseu and Isabel Garcia-Gonzales; in August 2020 Eduardo Cruz Eusebio, Tina Bhaga, and M.G. Bertulfo began to rotate in to make the workload more sustainable); (2) a seasonal critique session (co-organized by Karen Su and Victor Yipp); and (3) less frequent but larger community events (with different organizers and co-organizers volunteering according to interest and availability).

Because of its regular monthly meeting pattern, WIC is a central component to sustaining Banyan's work. As Karen Su reflected, "[T]he Writing in Community monthly time has become the foundation for the other activities Banyan pursues—seasonal critiques, community events, a potential anthology, a conference presentation, this essay we're doing."

Jane and Isabel committed to organizing WIC, a monthly generative writing session held the second Saturday of each month from 10:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m., in order to have a regularly scheduled time for Banyan participants to write together, to generate work and to discuss it with each other. Isabel and Jane believed that having this monthly session would allow participants, with everyone's busy schedules, to know when there would be a regular, predictable time to gather and write together on the spot, rather than having a critique session in which participants read each others' work and discussed it. Isabel and Jane also emphasized the flexible and drop-in nature of the scheduled monthly meeting times. While either Isabel or Jane, and sometimes both, would be present to facilitate each session, participants could choose to come every month or drop in after a long period of time, sometimes years, with many other patterns of attendance in between these two possibilities. This drop-in format allows participants not to feel pressured to make a regular commitment to attending each month, but it also allows for continuity and predictability. As Isabel and Jane have said, We're here

every second Saturday of the month, someone will be here—and two people have been at every session (even only Isabel and Jane themselves on a particularly cold winter morning one time!) for the past eight years.

Isabel and Jane were also hungry to create a regular monthly session because both were keen to have community and support as Asian American writers in the Oak Park and Chicago areas. Isabel, who is Filipina American, is a Chicago native who had recently moved to Oak Park after living in the San Francisco Bay Area for almost twenty years. Jane, who is Chinese/Taiwanese American, had made a rather reverse migration in contrast to Isabel, having been born and lived in Southern California until age thirty before moving to the Chicago area in 2004. Isabel wanted to connect with a local creative and an Asian American community, so she helped build the community she was seeking. Jane was looking for structure and support as she drafted her book-length memoir about the difficult topic of her family history of mental illness and thought setting a regular meeting time each month would create a structure for consistent interaction among the Banyan participants, an interaction that might be lost given the complexity and competing priorities of everyone's lives. With Jane's and Isabel's education and teaching backgrounds—Jane's focus was mainly on literature, and Isabel's mainly on writing—they were able to create a structure and facilitation style that centered both the need for community connection as well as the need for actual writing time, as detailed in the final section of this essay.

Isabel and Jane wrote up a description for the session and sent it out to Banyan's email list. They also created a *Facebook* event. The same description is used to this day, reading, in part

Banyan: Asian American Writers Collective holds a monthly, informal writing session/generative workshop on the second Saturday of each month. . . . The intention of this writing session is to create a supportive space that centers the experiences and voices of API/APIA⁶ writers. During our time together, we will generate new work through the use of writing prompts and exercises. We will also share our work, talk about our writing goals/projects, and discuss plans for future Banyan events and workshops.

The first Writing in Community session was held in February 2018 at Jane's brick bungalow in Oak Park, right after one of Chicagoland's big winter snowstorms. Jane and her partner made sure to shovel and salt the front walk for those who would be coming up the steps. Jane put out flattened cardboard boxes for people to put their snowy shoes on, and participant Patty grimaced in humorous apology as some water poured out of her boot as she set it down. Seven Asian American women gathered at Jane's dining room table with steaming mugs of tea and snacks that they brought to share. The intimacy of gathering around a table and sharing food and drink helped to create a sense of community and togetherness, and we sustained this practice throughout all of our in-person sessions. In April 2020, WIC moved to Zoom because of the pandemic, and it continues in this virtual format today. Not only does the virtual meeting increase attendance due to greater accessibility for participants from various parts of the Chicago area, Midwest, United States, and beyond, but it also shows care and consideration for all participants' health, including those who may be immunocompromised.

Oak Park is a suburb of about 53,000 people (US Census Bureau, "Quick Facts: Oak Park Village") that lies on the western border of Chicago. It bears particular mention in this essay because at least ten regular participants of WIC and Banyan live in it or within a few miles of the suburb's borders. As stated at the beginning of the essay, the first meeting in which Banyan was created was held at M.G.'s studio in Oak Park. After the first meeting of WIC at Jane's home, WIC started convening in a meeting room that could be booked free of charge at the Oak Park Main Library. Holding WIC in the library meant no one had to worry about hosting the session in their home. The library was also in downtown Oak Park and accessible to the Chicagoland area, being near a stop on the Green El train line.

As the recent article "Live Closer to Your Friends" by Adrienne Matei in *The Atlantic* and studies by Fowler and Christakis and by Holder have shown, geographical proximity can increase social connection and relationships/friendships. Certainly many other Banyan core organizers and participants live outside the Oak Park area, including in many different neighborhoods of Chicago and other suburban areas. Oak Park is known for and attracts professional families that also have

an intellectual, artistic, or social services bent, such as those who are professors, artists, writers, journalists, and social workers/psychologists. It is also known as a liberal suburb, including for its commitment to racial diversity and LGBTQ+ rights and services. Oak Park is also known for its arts and culture. Ernest Hemingway was born in Oak Park and graduated from the local high school. Frank Lloyd Wright lived in Oak Park from 1889 to 1909, and his Home and Studio is a museum visited by tourists from all over the world. Thus, arguably the Asian Americans who live in Oak Park and the surrounding areas tend toward more creative and artistic engagement with a progressive politics that emphasize community building, factors that help explain how the increased density of Asian American creative writers in Oak Park led to the creation and flowering of *Banyan* and WIC. According to the US Census Bureau, in 2024, Asians in Oak Park comprised 5.5 % of the Village's population, slightly lower than the state of Illinois's percentage of Asians (6.3 %), which was slightly lower than the Asian population of the city of Chicago (7.1 %). Anecdotally though, around 2017 when *Banyan* began, Asian Americans who had lived in Oak Park for many years before that were remarking that there were more Asian Americans in Oak Park than ever before.

Banyan has also helped raise the visibility of Asian Americans in Oak Park, particularly Asian American stories. After *Banyan*'s first reading at the Oak Park Library in June 2017, M.G. wrote an opinion piece for the Oak Park newspaper, the *Wednesday Journal*, in which she thanked the community for its support of the event and stated, "According to local experts in multiculturalism (Multicultural Resource Center's Lynn Allen, journalist Stan West, and OP Regional Housing Center Executive Director Rob Breymaier), *Banyan*'s inaugural celebration may be first time Asian American authors have led a presentation of literature in the history of Oak Park" (Bertulfo, "Opinion").

The Importance of WIC to Participants: To "Write My Home Truths without Feeling 'Othered'"

Thomas Xavier Sarmiento's article "Literary Perspectives on Asian Americans in the Midwest" discusses the ideas of racial isolation and home that also come up in WIC participants' feelings and experiences with WIC sessions:

Racial isolation and alienation are important hallmarks of Midwestern Asian American literature, but they are not the only, nor most provocative, aspects of this body of creative work. Stories that present the Midwest as home for Asian Americans directly cut at the issues of regional non-belonging and posit the Midwest and Asian Americans as compatible. Certainly, home is fraught with ambivalence; a feeling not unique to Asian Americans. Still, hailing the Midwest as home for Asian Americans begins to rework questions of race, place, and space. (9)

Karen Su, a regular WIC participant who also co-facilitates another Banyan program, the monthly critique group, states:

It was exciting to find a group of Asian Americans who wanted to write together. The idea to begin meeting monthly to do generative writing helped me think about how to focus on a writing practice more regularly. It also became a great way to feel *connected* to a group of people who are all in the process of nurturing their own creative projects. It's been incredibly inspiring to be with people at all stages and working in so many different genres and with different methods. I like that we do the monthly check-ins and find out how people are doing with their creative activities. I like that we get to set an intended goal for the next month. So much of accountability is also feeling like there's a community who's aware of what I'm doing—it helps *counter the immense isolation involved in working on it alone*. (emphasis added)

While Karen states that WIC has helped counter the “immense isolation” that can happen in the often solitary act of writing, other WIC participants commented that WIC, in providing an Asian American-centered space, has allowed them to feel comfortable discussing and writing about their Asian American backgrounds and identities, with other Asian Americans who share a similar background and experiences.

I chose Banyan because it is an Asian American group. I was very active in the Asian American Movement during the 1960s/1970s

in the Bay Area, and much of my worldview is shaped by those times, so I wanted to be a part of a writing group that could be creatively supportive of that kind of orientation. (Greg Jue)

When I learned about this opportunity . . . I was so excited . . . to be in community with Asians and Asian-Americans like myself, where we share so much history and day to day experiences—while simultaneously being incredibly distinct and unique in our journeys. And THAT is also why we must write. To illuminate the distinctive identities from within our Asian roots and share the unique stories that abound. (tessa lopez garcia)

WIC is a space intended for Asian/PI/Desi writers or writers who write in these areas. I like being surrounded by writers who look like me. It's comforting. To me, WIC means Writing in Comfort as well as Writing in Community. (Victor Yipp)

Writing in Community is different in that it offers opportunities to write and share among other Asian writers and only Asian writers—this is an experience that is rare and special. (WIC Participant)

I am a Pilipina American and I wanted a space where I could write candidly with writers who have similar cultural backgrounds to mine, where I could code switch between Filipino and English, and reference our home food and family structures without feeling gazed at like a specimen in a bottle. In other words, I wanted a space where I could write my home truths without feeling “othered.” I also write Earth-centered stories and draw from the perspective of Pilipino culture and colonial history. (M.G. Bertulfo)

In their comments, two WIC participants also emphasized the importance of WIC being a specifically Midwestern Asian American space, even though the survey questions did not specifically ask about or mention the term Midwestern or anything else regionally or Chicago-area oriented. As Hiroki states, “I participate for community [and the] Asian

American Midwest culture—welcoming, generous, and affirming,” Karen Su says, “It’s been great to see community come together in this way—Asian American creatives supporting each other, amplifying our voices, building community in the Midwest.”

Recent scholarship like Sarmiento’s essay on Midwestern Asian American literature tends to be on the Midwest more broadly as a region⁷ than focused on Asian American literature and creative writing in Chicago or the Chicago area. Jane has done significant scholarship and writing for a general public regarding Asian American literature in Chicagoland. Her 2013 scholarly essay, “Teaching Race and Space through Asian American and Latino Performance Poetry,” focused on teaching about Asian American and Latino spaces in Chicago in relation to two Chicago-based performance poetry groups. In May 2025, Jane also published the web article “Chicago’s Asian American Literary Scene” on the website of the nonprofit organization Chicago Literary Hall of Fame (CLHoF), of which she is a board member. Through the CLHoF in May 2025, Jane helped organize an online reading highlighting three Chicago-area Asian American literary and artistic organizations: Banyan, South Asia Institute, and Kundiman Midwest, the Midwest regional group of the NYC-based national Asian American literature organization Kundiman.

As we can see in the WIC participants’ comments above, also in relation to Sarmiento’s points, the presumed and actual lower number of Asian Americans in the Midwest, as opposed to the East and West Coast, plus the image of the Midwest as predominantly white and homogenous in demographics, can lead to a sense of racial isolation for Asian Americans. It is interesting to note that Chicago is the largest city in the Midwest, often seen as the urban center of the Midwest, and the third-largest city population-wise in the United States after New York City (NYC) and Los Angeles. Scholarship on Midwestern Asian American literature frequently discusses the image of the region as the “heartland” of the United States, seen as more white and racially homogenous, small town and rural, and as embodying “typical” Midwestern values of friendliness and down-to-earthness and more conservative values than those along the coasts. The “heartland”/Midwest in the US imagination is also identified with the heart of “America” as opposed to the large numbers of immigrants on and diversity of the coasts. While,

as Hiroki states, WIC does have a sense of the Midwestern down-to-earth, friendly quality, it is interesting to think about Chicago as the third-largest city and a dense urban area in contrast to an image of the Midwest as small town and rural.

In addition, as Sarmiento argues, focusing on Midwestern Asian American literature highlights that the Midwest is global, with multiple layers of global migration running across it. Chicago is a large urban metropolitan area, with many ethno-racial neighborhoods, including such areas as Chinatown, the Uptown Southeast Asian neighborhood, Devon Avenue with its prominent South Asian population, Greektown, Bronzeville/the Black Belt, and predominantly Latino Pilsen and Little Village. As Jane discusses in “Teaching Race,” this shows that Chicago is a racially diverse city, going beyond the Black/White binary in discussions of race. In the 2024 US Census, Chicago was thirty-two percent White alone (not Hispanic or Latino), twenty-nine percent Hispanic or Latino, twenty-eight percent Black, seven percent Asian/Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander, one percent American Indian and Alaskan Native, and twelve percent Two or More Races. Rather than predominantly White (not Hispanic or Latino), Chicago is about one-third White, one-third Hispanic/Latino, and one-third Black.

Just as more attention has been paid to Asian American literature and Asian American studies on the West and East Coasts, the most prominent Asian American literary organizations are on the coasts. The best-known Asian American literary organizations in the United States are arguably Kundiman and the Asian American Writers Workshop, which are both based in NYC. Kundiman is a national nonprofit organization that was started in the early 2000s and hosted its first workshop retreat in 2004 at the University of Virginia. The annual retreat has occurred every year since 2004 and now takes place at Fordham College in NYC. Kundiman also hosts regional groups in all areas of the United States; as aforementioned, Jane recently organized a reading that included Kundiman Midwest, with regional director Helene Achanzar speaking and reading her work. The Asian American Writers Workshop started in the 1990s and continues to be based in NYC. The Asian American Literature Festival that was sponsored by the Smithsonian and held in 2017 and 2019 in Washington, D.C. is another major Asian American literary event on the East Coast.

On the West Coast, particularly California, one of the other best-known Asian American literary organizations is the Kearny Street Workshop (KSW), which was founded in 1972 and, as stated in “Our Story” on its website, “is the oldest Asian Pacific American multidisciplinary arts organization in the country.” KSW was started and continues to hold events and workshops in San Francisco. Kaya Press is the most established, long-standing publisher focused on Asian American literature in the United States. Started in 1994 on the East Coast and based in the NYC area, Kaya Press is now located in the Department of American Studies and Ethnicity at the University of Southern California. Recently formed presses and publishers focused on Asian American creative writing include *Slant’d* (Los Angeles) and *Third State Books* (San Francisco).

It is wonderful to celebrate the amazing work of these Asian American literary organizations and publishers. Asian American literature and creative writing has been assumed to be most prevalent on the two coasts, also because of the assumption of the larger numbers of Asian Americans there. The authors of this essay want to promote telling Asian American stories in, and enhance the much-needed Asian American literary and artistic organizations in, the Midwest. One notable Midwestern Asian American literary space has been The Loft Literary Center in Minneapolis. While The Loft is not an explicitly Asian American-focused space, Vietnamese American writer Bao Phi worked at The Loft for over twenty years, including as Program Director. Phi especially helped amplify the work of Southeast Asian American writers with the notable Southeast Asian communities in Minnesota and the Midwest.

Banyan is only one Asian American literary organization in the Midwest and Chicago area and is unique because of the uniqueness of its organizers, participants, and the environment in which it occurs. Banyan has collaborated with other Chicagoland Asian American literary and arts groups. In addition to Banyan’s collaboration with Kundiman Midwest and South Asia Institute at the CLHoF, Banyan was also part of the first festival put on by the recently created nonprofit organization Asian American Arts Chicago in May 2023, whose website describes its mission to “support and amplify artistic expression from the Asian American diaspora in Chicago, Illinois.” By intentionally collaborating

with other Chicagoland Asian American literary and arts organizations, Banyan helps foster solidarity among these organizations. Individuals frequently participate in more than one or many of these organizations, and this creates synergies among individuals' and organizations' creative work and organizing to further make visible Asian American storytelling and creative expression in Chicago and the Midwest.

A Structure for Creating, Connecting, and Building Solidarity over Time

Banyan and WIC's goal has never been to grow quickly in sheer volume but to cultivate depth of community over time. It is the depth of connection that will sustain the community, not just a large number of participants. Influenced by Asian American activist Grace Lee Boggs's focus on "critical connections instead of critical mass," adrienne maree brown discusses "inch-wide, mile-deep" versus "mile-wide, inch-deep" organizing in her book *Emergent Strategy* (20). Critical connections can only be made with careful attention and over time, which is what we strive to do in our community-building work. And so it was with thoughtful intention that we built a structure within which deep connections could be made and sustained. We share our structure here with the hope that it may prove useful for other groups, especially for those that strive to promote Asian American stories or those that are likewise marginalized from the mainstream.

The two main components of Writing in Community are in the title. Writing—we seek to create a space where participants are able to at the very least put some words or marks down on paper and perhaps even engage in creative risk-taking. Community—we seek to nurture a space where all participants feel a sense of connection and belonging. These two things do not just happen on their own. We have been intentional in creating a structure that nurtures both the act of creating and the act of connecting. Isabel facilitated the first WIC session in February 2018, and WIC sessions have largely continued to maintain this structure for its two-hour sessions, a structure that has proved to be effective, engaging, and useful for WIC participants.

In planning that first session, Isabel brought her prior knowledge and experiences as both a student and an educator. As a student, Isabel participated in many writing workshops, both in her MFA program

at Mills College as well as at various literary organizations, including VONA/Voices, Kearny Street Workshop, and the Breadloaf Writer's Workshop. While many of these workshop experiences were essential to her growth as a writer, she knew that the space that she and Jane sought to build was substantially different from "the 'traditional' creative writing workshop, in which the author submits a manuscript to a group of peers and listens silently" and "began at Iowa" (the Iowa Writers' Workshop, established in 1936), as described by author Matthew Salesses in *Craft in the Real World* (xx). Rather than a traditional workshop setting, which was usually accessible only through an application process and had a formal teacher/student relationship, WIC would be open to all regardless of writing experience and would have a facilitator who cocreated the space along with the participants. WIC would provide a generative space, not a critique space. The focus would be on sharing the experience of connecting with one another and writing/creating together.

As an educator, Isabel taught writing to nontraditional college students, and her pedagogy is deeply informed by the work of writer, educator, and scholar bell hooks. In *Teaching to Transgress*, hooks emphasizes the importance of cultivating community: "As a classroom community, our capacity to generate excitement is deeply affected by our interest in one another, in hearing one another's voices, in recognizing one another's presence" (8). While WIC is not a classroom space, it is a space that calls for a similar intentionality in making room for all participants to contribute to the collective experience; it is a space where all participants are valued, welcomed, and active contributors to the community. To this end, we begin each session with a check-in, in which all voices are heard, as detailed below.

For the generative portion of the session, Isabel drew from writer Natalie Goldberg's book *Writing Down the Bones*, which has been important to her approach to supporting writers both in the classroom and beyond. Goldberg introduces "the timed exercise" as a strategy for cutting through our tendency to over-think or self-censor even before we get any words down on the page. By committing to keeping our hand moving for just the short amount of time allotted, we can access our "first thoughts." Goldberg states, "First thoughts have tremendous energy. It is the way the mind first flashes on something. The internal

censor usually squelches them, so we live in the realm of second and third thoughts, thoughts on thought, twice and three times removed from the direct connection of the first fresh flash” (9). The generative writing/creating portion of our sessions is structured as a series of three timed writing exercises, each with its own optional prompt provided by the facilitator as a way to help participants get closer to their “first thoughts.”

As mentioned earlier in the essay, WIC sessions are held monthly on a regular, predictable schedule, which serves as a counterbalance to the openness and flexibility of the sessions. While participants know that the space will be offered consistently every month, they also know that there is no obligation for them to attend every month. Over the years, we have seen many participants come and go with the rhythms of their lives and their interests. One participant took a two-year hiatus while she pursued her MFA degree. Another often works at that time slot but will sometimes listen in while working at their family restaurant and delivering food, jumping on to participate during quieter moments. Many community members just become busy or focused on other projects, then return after time away, while others make space in their lives to attend every single month. And at the same time, new participants are welcome to join at any time. This means that the first part of the session is essential to setting the foundation for our space and time together, as well as to building and nurturing the community over time.

In addition to the comings and goings of participants, WIC now has a group of five rotating facilitators who each bring their own perspectives, strengths, energy, and styles, which is a wonderful opportunity to open up a wider range of experiences in the space. However, in order to maintain a sense of consistency as we rotate between different facilitators, it is helpful to try to maintain a consistent general structure. This also helps to ensure that the main intentions of connecting and creating are at the center of each writing session.

Whether in-person before April 2020 or on Zoom from April 2020 to the present, roughly the first third of the session consists of introductions/check-ins and goal setting/reporting. This portion can take anywhere from thirty to sixty minutes, depending on how many people attend the session. In the last few years on Zoom, on average, about seven to eight people attend each month, with about ten attendees at

the higher end and four at the lower. Sessions with larger attendance can go up to about fifteen participants. For each session, there may be one or more people attending WIC for the first time or people who do not know each other. Thus, it is important for people to be able to state the name they would like to be called and the pronouns they use, if they would like. As Karen Su states, “I was very pleased and reassured when WIC facilitators made sure to make space for everyone’s pronouns. I was relieved that everyone practiced respecting pronouns.” Banyan and WIC are an Asian American-centered space that affirms the diversity of ethnicities, gender identities, sexual orientations, and ages, among other social factors, that intersect Asian American identities. Banyan’s logo is a banyan tree and, under the group’s English name, the term banyan appears in different Asian languages, including Chinese, Vietnamese, Hindi, Japanese, Thai, Baybayin, and Korean.⁸ The logo was created close to the time the group started and demonstrates the group embracing diverse Asian languages from its beginnings.

If there are people new to the group in the WIC session, participants may briefly describe the kind of creative writing they do or the project(s) they are working on (e.g., book-length memoir or novel, poems, songs, comics) as a means of introduction. Participants may also announce readings they are doing, events in which they are participating or organizing, or new publications they have out. These introductions and check-ins build community and social relationships, inspire others, and share knowledge and information, such as about venues for publication or writing retreats. Each month, participants can, if they choose to, set a goal for the next month that is written on a running shared Google Doc. If the participant attended the WIC session the previous month and set a goal, the person will report back and let us know how attaining the goal went. This can give continuity to WIC participants. If a participant has not attended WIC in a few months, the person can still look back at the Google Doc to the last time they attended and update the group as to where they are now in their work. During check-in, participants provide updates on their creative lives and projects, listen to each other, empathize, share resources, and generally cheer each other on:

I think it’s community spirit that makes WIC different from other writing spaces. Our monthly generative writing sessions,

and Banyan on the whole, are lean, flexible, accommodating, and compassionate. I think we practice a deep and abiding community KINDNESS. During WIC, there is *kapwa*⁹ spirit where member writers are alive to each other's pain and struggles, funny or wicked or sentimental sense of humor, and we celebrate each others' creative successes. Over and over again, I've witnessed Banyan writers check in about their creative process with great vulnerability and openness—and in so doing inspire other writers in the group. Someone may be grappling with finding time to write, another may be wondering if song lyrics or comics are the form they really feel called to write in, someone else may be in the throes of editing for a publication deadline. Hearing everyone else's real process allows me the freedom and safety to be vulnerable myself. As writers, we're called to dig deep. It helps to have a steady, soulful, joyous, and resilient community who have built enough trust to be vulnerable together as we undertake the sometimes arduous art of writing. (M.G. Bertulfo)

Honestly, each time I participate in the sessions it is impactful. As someone new to calling themselves a writer I find it incredibly valuable to hear the updates of what others are doing with their time. I find validation in others' struggles and joy in their triumphs. Until joining Banyan earlier in 2022, I had never written in community aside from my middle school language arts class. I sought out a space, a small space, and community where I could learn what it looked like to be a writer. I wanted to know other writers and see how they spent their days, if they had the same struggles as I and if I could call myself a writer. Although I looked for this initially, even just after the first session, I realized what I was really looking for were relationships. People I could invest in and that could invest in me as writing peers and possibly friends. (Kumar Jensen)

After introductions/check-ins/goals, we move into our generative writing time. Each month, one of the five facilitators is in charge of sending a reminder email to the regular participants about the upcoming session and creating an event on Banyan's *Facebook* page. The facilitator will

create or gather three prompts for the participants to do three writing sprints of about ten minutes each. Facilitators may present a prompt from another source; some facilitators regularly use prompts from *Poets and Writers* magazine or shared by other writers publicly online or in books, with attribution. Facilitators also create their own prompts. Facilitator Ed Eusebio chooses to do a somewhat different format for WIC. After check-in, Ed leads participants in The Story Workshop Method from Columbia College Chicago. WIC leaves space for facilitators to lead according to their expertise and experience.

It has also become a regular occurrence for facilitators to do the Banyan Shuffle prompt at sessions. Isabel introduced this community-generated prompt at one of the sessions she facilitated, and the WIC participants and facilitators have responded enthusiastically to it. The community-generated prompt allows participants to create the prompt together and see how their words and ideas can inspire others' creative expression. The facilitator selects four or five categories before the session, for example: a smell, a song title, a food or drink, a feeling. The facilitator goes through each category, one at a time, and asks the participants to call out a word that goes with that category, thus generating a list of words for each category. During in-person sessions, we either wrote these on the board, or we had participants write each word on small slips of paper that were then "shuffled" and redistributed so that each participant received a new set of words. During virtual sessions, we either share a Google Doc or type the words into the chat. Once all categories have been populated with the participants' words, the facilitator asks participants to use as few or as many words as they want from the lists to write a scene or a paragraph or a poem or a song, or draw a picture or a comic, etc.

After about forty to forty-five minutes of generative writing, there are about thirty minutes of sharing what people wrote, whether sharing the actual writing, describing the topic of the writing, or discussing how the process felt. That WIC is a generative writing session is important because participants write on the spot and together, thus generating writing and material. Banyan does also have a critique group program that meets monthly. While WIC meets the second Saturday of the month, the critique group meets on the third Saturday, thus also giving regularity and continuity to Banyan's programs. Karen Su and Victor Yipp facilitate

the critique group, in which participants read each others' drafts ahead of time and then come together to give each other feedback.

As a community group, as a collective, WIC, and Banyan generally, has participants from a range of writing backgrounds and with a range of experience. Several regular participants have MFAs in creative writing or have published shorter works or books. Others reflect Kumar's previous comment about being "new to calling themselves a writer," or, like Nicole Sumida, say they might not consider "myself a writer" but "aspire to build a writing practice." WIC provides a space for both these more experienced and newer writers to write and share together. As Nicole states, "[F]olks in WIC have always warmly embraced my and others' efforts to express ourselves. Several times, I recall experiencing a flow of writing in a session that is hard to replicate on my own. This space is a gift!" Greg Jue says:

After retiring from Northwestern University where I was a Business Administrator dealing in the non-creative world of research, administration, and university policy, I decided to try to chart a different, more creative path in my life. . . . I never saw myself doing anything like this before then. . . . I learned about Banyan [and Writing in Community] from Ed and decided to check it out as a structured way to explore my creative side. I hope to learn from others, especially the more experienced writers in the group as well as contribute in whatever ways that I can.

The generative writing format enables all participants to get something out on paper or screen, or in another medium. The community-generated prompt of the Banyan Shuffle also enables participants of whatever writing credentials and accomplishments to contribute to others' creative expression as well as their own.

One thing that became apparent as WIC went on in its first few years was the diversity of genres and mediums in which its participants worked and generated material, during WIC and outside of it. As Karen Su states:

I've been surprised at the kinds of genres and works people are working on—songs, cozies¹⁰ (I'd never heard of them before

Banyan!), historical novels, children's books, picture books, chapter books, and middle grade, flash fiction, memoirs, essays, poetry, illustrated journals, and more! And the diversity of backgrounds from the Asian American community has been gratifying too—not just ethnically, but also in terms of gender identity and sexual orientation, age and occupation. I love how all of these aspects make it truly a group where we are “writing in community.”

In relation to Banyan and WIC being an Asian American-centered space, WIC introductions and check-ins, generative writing, and sharing may address Asian American issues explicitly or implicitly, but not necessarily. Several Banyan core organizers, including Jane and Isabel, did discuss, as WIC was getting started, the composition of WIC participants. The organizers decided to include this language in the call for WIC participants: “The workshop is open to those who identify as Asian/Pacific Islander or Asian/Pacific Islander American. Also welcome are those who are writing significantly about APIs or APIAs.” So, WIC is open to those who self-identify as Asian/Pacific Islander or Asian/Pacific Islander American, but also to non-APIAs who write about APIA-related topics with complexity and sensitivity. As has been discussed before in this essay, it is important to have an Asian American-centered space in which Asian Americans can feel comfortable talking about things as a minority group and not have to explain or defend things that someone who does not share a similar identity might not experience. The Chicago area has a rich, vibrant literary scene in which there are many literary organizations, programs, and workshops. Banyan and WIC have become one of the better-known Asian American-centered generative writing sessions based in the Chicago area, but there are still relatively few Asian American-centered literary organizations and writing workshops in Chicago.

Generated writing and sharing that is explicitly or not explicitly connected with Asian American identity was evident in the June 10, 2023, session that M.G. facilitated. Banyan Shuffle categories for that session included “Reshaped Language/Nicknames.” Under this category was the term “Piggy,” which Karen Su shaped into the following prose piece:

Piggy—a delectable treat. Is this salty sugary splintery goodness meat? Is this crumbly crispy flakey deliciousness that melts on your tongue pork? It's all of those and more! I don't remember how or why my brothers and I started calling it piggy except maybe there was a drawing of a pig on the container. But now my kids and I still call it piggy even though there are more sophisticated English terms for rou song (literally loose meat) such as pork floss! It's amazing we are able to buy it in Chinatown groceries whenever we want—we buy a small plastic container now and then, not the giant glass jars although those are tempting. We can afford some restraint due to its availability. When I was little, it was a once a year treat! My best piggy memory was receiving a box of canned goods from my grandmother in Taiwan. We were so disappointed to see cans of baby corn and asparagus, bamboo shoots, etc. Meat products were a no no. But when we picked up the cans, they were unusually lightweight. We squealed in delight when inside the can was PIGGY! We sprinkled it on our rice, bowls of congee (grandma had also sent pickled cucumbers to eat with congee—vegetables that were forgiven), and made piggy sandwich rolls with white bread and piggy inside!

While Karen's wonderful piece touches on ethnic foods, family, places of origin, and more, the Banyan Shuffle also led to Marilou Mariko Carrera's beautiful piece below that does not have explicit ethnic or racial markers. Marilou Mariko's piece builds off the phrase "driving to the mountains or the coast" under the "Summer Activity or Scene" in the Banyan Shuffle that day:

Once you hit the coastal mountains of north/western Oregon, the urban centers and satellites become as untouchable as the mountains in the rearview mirror.

Under the treeline, the signs for the exits get smaller and smaller. No more names pass, only a string of numbers, numeric signposts instead. Maybe a coder's dream. Maybe my overworked brain loves the simplicity of county roads and rural highways. The sun flickering between the leaves, I find myself squinting for a familiar sign.

An hour and a half in and only twenty-five more minutes from the sea is a graveled pullover for water. Spring water, they call it—who is “they,” I don’t know. It is the cleanest water I have ever experienced. I gulp it down with ease and try to find words. “Delicious” and “pure” come to mind, but say nothing. I tip my head back again for the cool liquid splash against my throat and wait for a magic to happen.

WIC even has a certain relationship to a historical moment that was important for heightened anti-Asian racism of the past few years. As aforementioned, M.G. was inspired to start Banyan in response to heightened racism and xenophobia after 2016. Two years after WIC started, March 2020 occurred, and we had the shutdown. WIC did not meet in March 2020 but transitioned from meeting in person to Zoom in April 2020. Since then, sessions continue on Zoom because of convenience. Participants have Zoomed in from other states including Ohio, Wisconsin, Washington, New York, and California. Someone who normally lived in Chicago but was working in Paris Zoomed in from France for sessions. We had a hybrid reading event to celebrate WIC’s five-year anniversary, and one presenter’s parent Zoomed in from Guam.

Because Banyan and WIC already had an organization and practice of gathering to write, express, share, and give mutual support before the pandemic in relation to Asian American identities and issues, meeting up monthly for WIC allowed for participants to discuss and address things like heightened anti-Asian racism, but also not have to do so. For example, for the February 2020 WIC session, during the time in which some Asians and Asian Americans felt more visible, even targeted, because of racial suspicions linked with COVID–19, evident by some calling it “kung flu,” Isabel offered a prompt called “Visibility, Invisibility, Hyper-visibility.” The prompt read

Write a song/poem/scene/part of an essay about visibility and/or invisibility and/or hyper-visibility. Do you/the character/the speaker of the poem/song feel seen or unseen? This can be literal invisibility if you want to think about ghosts, or figurative as you/your character move around in the world. Write about

a time that you/your character/the speaker of your poem/song
felt seen or unseen.

Creative works ranged from a story involving a ghost to a creative non-fiction piece about riding the train with a cold as an Asian American at the beginning of the pandemic. All types of works are welcomed and received by the community.

From the first dining table writing session at Jane's house to our current virtual writing sessions more than eight years later, WIC has evolved in response to community needs, grown outward in number and deeper in connection, and pivoted to a robust virtual presence due to the pandemic. What has remained unchanged is our intention to create and sustain a space in which WIC participants can engage in their own creative practices while also building a sense of belonging and solidarity with other Asian American writers in the Chicago area and Midwest. As of this writing, WIC is still going strong, and we are in the initial planning stages of compiling an anthology of creative work that was generated during WIC sessions, along with the prompts that sparked these works. We hope this essay about creating *Banyan* and WIC presents useful methods and strategies for fostering and enhancing solidarity within other writing groups, especially those similarly focused on supporting underrepresented voices. These methods and strategies include how to reach out to bring people together, designate a regular meeting time and format to build community and generate creative work, and be aware of the particular lived realities of participants in a particular location and historical moment. *Banyan* and WIC were intentionally created and sustained in the aftermath of the 2016 election in the United States and during the pandemic, a period of heightened anti-Asian racism, in order to combat damaging stereotypes by encouraging the expression and promotion of diverse Asian American stories. *Banyan* and WIC are distinctly and proudly rooted in Chicagoland and the Midwest, an area in which Asian Americans may have felt more isolated and have had less visibility than on the coasts, and this only makes it more important to nurture literary and artistic organizations to bring people together through events and workshops, to tell the story that Asian Americans are here.

Appendix: Survey Questions

1. What brought you to Writing in Community? Why do you participate in Writing in Community?
2. If you participate in other writing communities/spaces, what makes Writing in Community different from other spaces?
3. Is there a specific moment, writing session, prompt, or experience that had an impact on you? Please tell us about it.
4. How long have you been participating in Writing in Community?

Notes

1. Banyan uses the term “Asian American” in its name to refer to those who reside in the United States who have ethnic/cultural backgrounds from the areas of East, Southeast, and South Asia.
2. Throughout this essay, if a Banyan participant indicated a certain identity in the Google Form, we include the identity that the person indicated.
3. Unpublished quotations from M.G. in the essay were given to the essay authors directly.
4. While Banyan intentionally cultivates the diversity of backgrounds of its participants in terms of gender identities, among other social factors (see, for example, Karen Su’s comments later in this essay), from the beginning, a majority of Banyan participants and core organizers have self-identified as women. This may stem from the initial gathering to start Banyan being all women, also with the first meeting of WIC being all women, and the network developing from there. Several Banyan core organizers, including those mentioned in this essay, identify as male, and there have also been key participants and organizers in Banyan who identify as gender non-binary.
5. Banyan is an entirely volunteer-sustained organization. It is not an official 501(c)(3) non-profit organization. Banyan uses the term “core organizer” informally to designate those who regularly participate in and help organize Banyan programs and events.

6. In addition to the term “Asian American” in the subtitle of Banyan’s name, we add the terms “Pacific Islander” (PI) in the information about WIC sessions. Banyan believes it is important to make visible the identity of Pacific Islander and Pacific Islander American in its information about and call for participants in WIC. Highlighting writing by Pacific Islander Americans is something Banyan strives to continuously work on and develop.

7. Other significant scholarship on Midwestern Asian American literature includes Roger Bresnahan’s entry on “Asian American Literature” in *Dictionary of Midwestern Literature*, Vol. II, and the discussion of selected Asian American writers in the *Dictionary of Midwestern Literature*, Vol. 1, both volumes edited by Philip Greasley. Nicolyn Woodcock’s essay focuses on “Reading Midwest Asian America in Celeste Ng’s *Everything I Never Told You*.” While not specifically focused on literature, the *Journal of Asian American Studies*’ 2009 Special Issue on the Midwest was an important indication of the field of Asian American Studies’ focus on this region.

8. Baybayin is a Filipino writing system that predates Spanish colonization of the Philippines in the 1500s.

9. In his article “Critical *Kapwa*,” Maharaj “Raju” Desai defines *kapwa* as “the core value of Filipina/o indigenous psychology that emphasizes our interrelatedness with one another” and “a deep connection and commitment to . . . community” (34, 36).

10. In an article for *Crime Reads*, Patricia Sargeant defines the increasingly popular genre of “cozy mysteries” as “a subgenre of crime fiction. . . . [T]hey’re mysteries without on-the-page violence, physical intimacy or naughty words.” Other features of cozies include amateur sleuths, humor, and “quirky secondary characters.”

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Black Indians in the COVID–19 Pandemic: Grieving in the Mother Tongue

Tiyi Morris and Virginia Cope

This article describes the experiences of the Mardi Gras (Black) Indians of New Orleans during the COVID–19 pandemic, documenting the pandemic’s disproportionate impact on Black Americans while also uncovering an often overlooked aspect of this legendary Black parading practice: how the solidarity it creates has empowered individual and community survival amid the legacies of segregation, racial discrimination, and racialized poverty. Our research consists of eighteen interviews conducted in 2022 by faculty and students of The Ohio State University at Newark with the members of the Mardi Gras Indian tradition, a New Orleans Black parading culture dating to the nineteenth century, as they prepared for their first Mardi Gras in three years, as well as dozens of previous interviews beginning in 2012. In 2022, the practitioners described the pandemic as a time of devastating loss due to isolation, sickness, and death. They also described extraordinary acts of resilience and creativity. In the darkest days of an unprecedented crisis, they drew upon the rituals and spirituality of Black Indian culture to find novel ways to cultivate solidarity, maintain their strong bonds, and preserve their traditions. The strength borne of solidarity is at the heart of this joyous, grassroots artistic tradition, the practitioners told us. It has seen them through Jim Crow, hurricanes, the levee failures after Hurricane Katrina, and, most recently, the pandemic—the effects of

which on Black New Orleanians were dramatically increased by structural racism.

The Black Masking Indian culture dates at least to the 1880s but is deeply rooted in African traditions of dance, music, and spirituality going back centuries. It was a response to the post-Reconstruction resurgence of white supremacy in the South, a reaction to exclusion and an assertion of Black humanity and African diasporic culture. In the 150 years since, the tradition has evolved into a magnificent celebration of Black art, perseverance, joy, history, and hope—its origins debated, but its rituals and distinctive terminology firmly established.

Because the tradition has largely been transmitted orally, multiple origin stories exist.¹ The original Carnival Indians emerged in post-Reconstruction America. Some scholars argue that the depictions of American Indians were adopted from the representations of Plains tribes in the Buffalo Bill Wild West shows that came to New Orleans in the late nineteenth century. But some Indians claim Native American ancestry and say that the tradition dates back further and reflects the intermarriage and intercultural exchange between Blacks and American Indians. The best-known origin story is simply that donning the attire of the Plains tribes is an act of solidarity, an homage to the American Indians who assisted people escaping slavery (Just).

Much attention has been paid to the beauty and artistry displayed on Mardi Gras Day by the Black Masking Indians, particularly since the tradition gained greater prominence after Hurricane Katrina (Ligon-Williams 2). The suits, now housed in museums from Columbus, Ohio, to Paris, France, are each worthy of a dissertation and are protected by copyright. This case study brings attention to the rarely noted significance of the culture beyond the Carnival season as well as another role for the artistry and communal craft crucial to the tradition: the bonding forged among the members of the tribes, who year-round provide financial, physical, emotional, and spiritual support to each other, whether family by blood or choice. The tradition, grounded in solidarity, is a continuation of the nineteenth-century mutual aid society—a communal response to segregation, dehumanization, and disempowerment. Accordingly, we argue, the tribes' suits and the Black Masking Indians' joyous processions during Carnival season are not only acts of resistance but a celebration and manifestation of impoverished but

tightly knit communities of Black New Orleanians. The return of the Indians on Mardi Gras 2022, after two years of banned gatherings, was a testament to the resilience fostered by a grassroots tradition that has continued to evolve to confront unimaginable hardships, made heart-breakingly bittersweet by the devastating losses suffered in the twenty-four months since the pandemic swept through the city.

Guardians of the Flame Maroon Queen Cherice Harrison-Nelson used a phrase she learned from her mother, Hearrest Harrison, in describing how practitioners of the culture find solace and survive. “We grieve,” she said, “in our mother tongue” (2022b). This phrase exemplifies the cultural connection among the Indians that creates solidarity. In times of sorrow, people return to their heritage and express their grief in familiar and familial ways. In this context, we understand reference to the mother tongue to mean more than the literal language of their ancestors but the cultural traditions of communal care and collaboration indicative of the West African worldview.

Harrison-Nelson calls herself a maroon queen, linking the tradition to the enslaved people who escaped into hidden communities to establish independence. She rejects the term *Mardi Gras Indian* and the implications of the origin story most often cited for the tradition: that the suits of beads and feathers are tributes to Native American tribes that took in “the slaves that ran away” and assimilated (2022b). Harrison-Nelson explains that the term *slave* dehumanizes, and the story of assimilation overlooks the historical nuances of maroon history while understating the bravery, independence, and agency of her ancestors. “We use maroon to really embrace the parts of us that are African and the resistance of people who self-emancipated themselves on plantations. They were emancipating Africans. They had a will to free themselves” (2022b).

During the pandemic, and saddled with numerous losses, the Black Masking Indians persevered by holding fast to the traditions that have sustained generations of the practitioners through a shared artistry and culture as well as what Harrison-Nelson calls “conversations with the ancestors.”

Background

The 2022 interviews were possible because of a longstanding partnership among the Mardi Gras Indians and The Ohio State University

(OSU) at Newark. Since 2012, OSU students and faculty have collaborated with the Mardi Gras Indian Council, other leadership groups, and individual culture bearers to document the tradition in a series of films. The first documentary, *Spirit Leads My Needle: The Big Chiefs of New Orleans*, provides a history of the tradition in the words of its male leaders. They describe a tradition that is male and hierarchical: the big chief is accompanied by a big queen (the only role for women) and men with specific ranks and duties. While each tribe and neighborhood has its signature style, the suit designs often protest injustice, pay tribute to African traditions or moments in Black history, or express personal pride or perseverance. On Mardi Gras Day, the chiefs lead their tribes (each bearing a distinctive name that often references Native Americans) through the streets of New Orleans to interact with others in ritualized face-offs to determine whose suit is “the prettiest.” Originally little known outside the city while being targets of police brutality, crackdowns, and curfews, the Black Masking Indians are now celebrated for their extraordinary grassroots artistry, recognized as the creators of a unique form of resistance and a symbol of resilience for New Orleans itself (King 6–8). The tradition represents the fullness of Black expressive culture, combining visual art, music, dance, and spirituality. This Carnival-like parading tradition is an assertion by Black people of self-determination, claiming space in a city and country that denied their humanity. Essentially, it is an expression of freedom.

The second documentary, *It's Your Glory: The Queens of Carnival*, is among the few sources that describe the perspective of the female leaders. Queens are the only role traditionally open to women. Crucial as leaders yet often overlooked, the Queens recognize their value: they are central to the persistence and the survival of the tradition and to the community itself, not least by quietly retreating to provide the men a space to articulate and express a strong, Black manhood in a society determined to deny it (Morris and Cope). Allowing the men center stage is one of many intentional acts of care undertaken by the Queens. Through their work as culture bearers, othermothers, and community leaders, the Queens provide material resources, emotional grounding, and spiritual sustenance for the Indians and the larger Black community. In so doing, they ensure the survival of both the tradition and the community.

We worked closely with more than two dozen Black Masking Indians to produce the documentaries. The March 2020 lockdown left us deeply concerned about the pandemic's impact on this primarily Black, working-class community rooted in year-round celebratory gatherings. We checked in regularly by phone. Big Chief Howard Miller and Big Queen Elenora "Rukiya" Brown (Creole Wild West) and Maroon Queen Harrison-Nelson described a devastating paradox. Their communities were not only disproportionately impacted by sickness, death, and financial losses, but they were deprived of the very strategies they had developed to combat their dehumanization and disempowerment: communal craft work, community gatherings, and open-air street performances. In addition to canceling Mardi Gras 2021 and parades after Carnival Day itself in 2020, the lockdowns eliminated the other gatherings central to the close-knit groups: sewing circles in which children learn the skills and traditions of the Indians and where members bond and support each other; the Sunday night music and dance practices in the months leading up to each Mardi Gras; and, most poignantly, the funeral and grieving traditions. The interruptions to the latter were particularly challenging, as this aspect of wake work—the "sitting (together) in the pain and sorrow of death as a way of marking, remembering, and celebrating a life"—is a New Orleans tradition and an integral aspect of Black existence in a society that has never valued Black life and disregards Black death (Sharpe 10–11).

In 2022, with lockdown restrictions lifted and the Mardi Gras Indians preparing to return for the first time after an unprecedented two-year break, we returned to the city with four students to capture the moment in the words of the practitioners themselves. Those OSU interviews provided the material for our 2024 documentary *Masked for Battle: Mardi Gras Indian Culture Confronts Covid*, as well as for this case study.

Cultural preservation, communal care, and mutual aid are the cornerstones of the Black Masking tradition and central to the participants' personal and cultural survival. Without solidarity, the coming together—to bead, to support each other, to take care of each other, to celebrate—this practice would not survive. The tribe is organized like a family, providing support and structure outside the biological family. An ethic of care permeates individual tribes and well as the collective

of Indians. These values maintained the tradition through major disruptions to the fabric of the city and Indians' lives. The COVID-19 pandemic brought new challenges and once again forced the Indians to delve deep to survive. Their perseverance—and the joy and strength the Indians bring to the community—was on display on Mardi Gras Day 2022, another monumental event in the legacy and power of this Black community tradition.

The Pandemic

In early 2020, although most tourists in New Orleans were there for the better-known floats and bead-tossing on St. Charles Avenue, exuberant crowds also jammed the neighborhoods legendary as the sites of Black Masking Indians. The nation and the city were not yet in lockdown. “We hit the streets just like we always hit the streets,” said Rukiya Brown. Her suit’s theme was war, which she described as “our day-to-day life here in the United States as people of color.” Her message was that “we’re still marching and we’re still protesting and we’re still at war.” She and the revelers of Mardi Gras 2020 did not realize the Black community, and the Black Masking Indians, were about to enter an entirely new war. New Orleans experienced an early and devastating surge of COVID-19 infections and deaths, in large part because Mardi Gras fell early in 2020 (February 25), and therefore early in the nation’s response to the pandemic. Carnival season begins in early January and hits its zenith on Mardi Gras Day, but it also includes additional celebrations throughout the spring. Throughout the year, the Indians also participate in other local events, such as the Essence and the New Orleans Jazz & Heritage festivals, both to showcase their newest suits and to earn income. The national and local lockdowns in March canceled those events in 2020, but by then the pandemic had already taken over the city.

The first COVID-19 case in the United States was documented on January 21, 2020. Just over a week later, on January 30, the World Health Organization (WHO) declared COVID-19 a Public Health Emergency of Global Concern. No federal guidance on public gatherings had been issued by Mardi Gras Day. Indeed, on Mardi Gras 2020, as 1.4 million tourists filled the streets of New Orleans, Health and Human Services Secretary Alex Azar was giving a press conference

declaring that the risk of illness from the “China coronavirus” was low (“Health and Human Services”). Things then accelerated dramatically. Two weeks after Mardi Gras, the first positive case in the region was announced (March 9); two weeks after that, sixty-eight people in New Orleans had tested positive, and two were dead (“How Did COVID-19”). The Louisiana governor declared a public health emergency two days later, closed K-12 public schools, and banned large gatherings. President Donald Trump, whom Mayor LaToya Cantrell had criticized for not taking the pandemic seriously enough in the early weeks of the outbreak, declared a nationwide public health emergency on March 13. Cantrell locked down the city on March 16, and by March 23 the governor had issued a state-wide stay-at-home order (“Guidelines” 1-2).

A month after Mardi Gras, the city was leading the nation in per capita COVID-19 deaths (Dean; Calvert). Mardi Gras 2020 was later determined to have been a superspreader event. A visitor from Texas brought the virus to the city, leading to explosive spread across the South (Zeller). Because of that fateful visit, at least fifty thousand people were infected (Zeller; Woodruff). One year later, in March 2021, ten thousand Louisianans would be dead from the virus.

As in other urban centers across the country, the Black population of New Orleans witnessed devastating and disproportionate losses: higher infection and death rates, poorer health outcomes, higher unemployment rates, and greater experiences of housing loss. Astoundingly, Black Louisianans accounted for seventy percent of COVID-19 deaths early in the pandemic (Stewart), despite representing only thirty-two percent of the state’s population (Hu). The social and economic injustices that traditionally marginalized communities experience exacerbated the ravages of the pandemic. Lack of access to quality health care, in addition to comorbidities such as disproportionate rates of hypertension, obesity, and diabetes, intensified poor outcomes for Black Louisianans. A 2022 study determined structural racism as a major cause of the disproportionate impact, finding that “a synergistic framework of cumulatively negative determinants of health . . . ultimately affected COVID-19 deaths in Louisiana Black communities” (Hu 1). Those legacies of racism dramatically exacerbated the pandemic’s impact on Black New Orleanians, including these culture bearers.

The losses that occurred in those first few weeks of the lockdown foreshadowed what was to come over the next two years. One of the first New Orleanians to die was Ronald Lewis, a former Mardi Gras Indian chief and the legendary founder of The House of Dance and Feathers, a museum to celebrate Black traditions in New Orleans. On March 13, 2020, he had joined a crowd including Miller and Big Chief Tyrone Casby of the Mohawk Hunters to celebrate the opening of the Mardi Gras Indian Cultural Center. The purchase and renovations of the shotgun house in Central City had been funded with a hard-won grant. The center included a sound room, board room, and space for the Indian community to meet and sew—practicing, preserving, and passing down their traditions. The day of the joyous ribbon-cutting, President Trump declared COVID-19 a national emergency. A day later, the first Orleans Parish death was announced. Word went around that Lewis had been hospitalized. On March 20, one week after the opening, he was dead. Casby described the sequence of events: “Individuals who came was carrying Covid and we didn’t know. . . . Ronald Lewis . . . sat on the steps out there and I conversed with him. You know, we talked to him. Dah dah dah. Three days later, he died from Covid.”

Casby himself then began having symptoms of COVID-19. He isolated at home, “too weak to move.” Because at that time hospitalization was recommended only for those in “deep trouble,” the big chief relied on help from his son and “concoctions” his wife recommended. He recovered but had trouble breathing for weeks. The opening of the center was meant to kick off a new season with the celebration of a light-filled, long-sought space for sewing suits and gathering. Instead, the center, like the city, was sealed in silence. It was the beginning of “a very, very dark year, very dark,” said Casby.

Marvin “Cane” Belisle masked for the first time in 2020, as the wild man for the Wild Magnolias. He had heard little about the pandemic on Mardi Gras morning as he donned his first suit, complete with a forty-pound bull’s head on the back. Within a month he was hospitalized and near death. “I went through Mardi Gras, killed it, had fun—and a couple of months later, I went through the worst part of my life ever.” Big Chief Keith “Keke” Gibson, leader of the 9th Ward Comanche Hunters for twenty-five years and a military veteran like Belisle, was also hospitalized in March 2020 and nearly died. His fear was made worse by his

isolation. His wife was not allowed to enter the hospital. “Normally my wife will stick by my side. So now I’m in there and I’m looking at the news and I’m hearing cases, all these people dying every day. And you know, I’m like, I can’t breathe. I was scared.”

New Orleans was a microcosm of society as the increasing deaths signaled the seriousness of the illness and the severe impact it was having on under-resourced communities, communities in which working from home or avoiding public transportation were less likely to be an option. Black and lower-income people also were more likely to live in multi-generational households that made isolating difficult, if not impossible. Almost all of the eighteen practitioners we interviewed got sick themselves; many nearly died. All lost multiple family members, friends, and neighbors, either to COVID-19, other illnesses, or gun violence, and the survivors grieved at being unable to properly celebrate their lives.

Fear and a sense of helplessness added emotional trauma. LaShundra Brown, gang queen of the Wild Magnolias as well as a nurse and mother, feared bringing illness home; she changed after work in her garage every night, washed her clothes separately, and kept her house and car stuffed with masks and hand sanitizer. This stress was exacerbated by understaffed medical facilities: “We might have sixty people in this particular building, you know, upstairs, . . . sixty downstairs, and it may be four nurses—two, three—and then we have people that’s being rolled in. They didn’t know all the precautions . . . we didn’t have all the protective gear. We just knew that people were contracting this virus.” She described the agony of watching people die before doctors understood how to help them; hospitals overflowing; a shortage of ventilators; and hearing of desperately sick people who refused to come to the emergency room for fear of catching COVID-19. She had to find her own personal protective equipment, use her personal cell phone to connect dying patients with their families for their final moments together, and return home after twelve-hour shifts fearful of infecting her children. Even in 2022, surges were continuing to bring in sick patients and infect staff, leaving the staff both overworked and grieving. But amid the trauma and exhaustion, she, like many other medical professionals, continued to go to work. While working at a short-staffed rehabilitation facility that relaxed family visit guidelines over Christmas 2021, she

contracted the COVID-19 virus and developed pneumonia. She was unable to work for several weeks and was still short of breath when she returned. Her greatest fear was not being able to provide for her patients and support her family. “That was the hardest part.”

When they needed it most, the pandemic robbed the Black Indians of the life-sustaining practice of community. Older adults were particularly vulnerable to “social isolation and loneliness” because of their dependence on others for their care (Hwang 1217). Big Chief Victor Harris, leader of the Mardi Gras Indian tribe Mandingo Warriors (Spirit of Fi Yi Yi), believed some elders died of the separation and grief: “Can you imagine the elders did not see any children, grandchildren or daughters and sons? And they isolated. Can you imagine? Surely they going to pass. They going to pass because they were absent they people. That’s a broken heart. Loneliness, you know.” Extended and fictive kin networks have been essential to Black people’s survival in the United States, providing stability, identity, and support in the face of oppression. These manifestations of solidarity and care-taking that are central to both the tradition and to Black communities were threatened by isolation and quarantine orders.

Harrison-Nelson shared a similar sentiment when reflecting on the passing of her council chief, Joe Jenkins. She suffered tremendously because she was unable to comfort him in his final days. “He was fragile, he was eighty-nine years old, but I feel in my heart that the pandemic brought him to the end of his life faster,” she said. She visited him nearly every day, but after the city shut down, his condition worsened, and he was moved to hospice. During one of their daily phone calls, she forced herself to explain why she could no longer visit. He replied with characteristic selflessness: “Oh, baby, don’t worry about it, don’t worry about coming to see me. Just be safe and I love you.” They never spoke again. He died days later.

Masking Indian is a community practice, from making the suits to parading, not a solo endeavor. The separation from other members of the tribe enhanced the sense of loss and fear that many were experiencing. For some, the announcement of the pandemic had confirmed a looming sense of unease. Queen Janet “Sula” Evans of the Mandingo Warriors described an ominous feeling on Mardi Gras Day 2020: “I remember when I walked out, I felt like I was meeting death. I was so

burdened in my spirit. . . . And then about a week later, two weeks later, they announced the pandemic to the world. And then I realized, Oh, that's why Asase Ya came, because this Earth is sick; the Earth is sick, and it needs healing." As the Medicine Queen for the Mandingo Warriors, Sula moves through the world with a sensitivity to imbalance. Her presence, her rituals, and her suits are a manifestation of her desire to restore balance. She explains, "My suits are spiritual suits; every suit that I put on the street is for healing purposes. Every suit, every energy comes to heal the people." Her suits are more than mere costumes; they are ceremony. Imbued in her suits is her intention to transform and realign—a healing that was desperately needed during the pandemic.

The Earth did indeed begin to heal itself during the quarantine. Pollution drastically decreased across the globe. Greenhouse gas emissions decreased, air quality, water quality, and aquatic life improved (Khan). Amid the tragedy and heartache, the environment underwent a positive transformation that confirmed Evans's sense that an earthly readjustment was in order.

Many of the practitioners told us they had begun suits during lockdown, hoping to hit the streets for Mardi Gras 2021. But after a deadly third surge late in 2020, Mayor Cantrell banned 2021 Carnival gatherings. In December 2020, Miller speculated in a phone interview that "people will stop sewing" if uncertainty continued. Creating a suit is an enormous commitment of labor and money, requiring an entire year of sewing and beading and thousands of dollars for materials.

Despite Miller's fears that a canceled year would imperil the tradition, he joined the mayor and other big chiefs for a February 9, 2021, outdoor press conference urging New Orleanians to stay home. Tyrone Casby also felt a responsibility to use his influence to urge Indians to take a year off. "If we came out and people died, I'd feel some kind of way," he said in a 2022 interview. At the press conference, Casby reminded community members that the tradition was emotional and spiritual, not solely produced by the act of masking itself. "And you can't cage a spirit," he reminded them (Cantrell). He gathered with family in his backyard instead. "My spirit going to be there either way—whether I dress up or not," he told us.

Nonetheless, the choice was excruciating, and some Indians did come out in small groups in 2021. Harris considered it inevitable, given

both the strength of their personalities and the pull of the tradition: “That’s in our DNA. That’s what we do. And without that, I don’t know if we ever survive.” Although he did not don a suit, he felt compelled to “step out.” He went alone to the corner of St. Bernard and Claiborne avenues. Indians began gathering at that spot in the early years of the tradition and continue to do so, decades after the I-10 interstate overpass replaced the stately oak trees that once lined Claiborne and decimated a thriving Black business community. On a typical Mardi Gras day, the corner would be “super packed, everybody cooking, grilling, doing this, having fun you know, got their little station set up” with food and drink, Harris said. But that day, the site was blocked by a chain link fence and padlocked gates. Anyone, he said, would have felt as distressed as he was at the sight: “to see nobody on a Carnival day, a Mardi Gras day, and especially on our path, where we know, where we always have been for a hundred years or more. . . . And just to think about after them one hundred and something years [and] you go and you go there—and nothing is there. You know, that was pretty sad.” The despondency Harris recalled was not unlike how Indians felt in the wake of Hurricane Katrina. Then, too, the deaths and dislocations disproportionately impacted the Black community and threatened the continuance of the Black Indian culture. Yet on Carnival Day 2006, several big chiefs and their gangs were back, a symbol of resilience and hope for New Orleans. In 2021, Miller, Harris, and others were left wondering if the tradition could survive this latest and unprecedented catastrophe.

Survival Strategies

Amid the fear and loss, Mardi Gras Indians drew upon their Black cultural landscape to help them survive. Masking embodies cultural preservation and celebration, resistance and empowerment, and mutual aid practices—necessary to endure American racism and a pandemic that hit Black New Orleanians harder because of it. Harrison-Nelson described how the tradition is both a survivalism and a survival tool:

I look at people who have cultural expressions that emanate from West Africa, Africa, period, as being cultural first responders. When all about you is tossed up and falls back, lands wherever it is, you can always put on your life preserver of your cultural

traditions, and it will keep you afloat in the darkest times—when it's light, when it's cold, when it's hot, when you're sad, when you're happy. Culture is that life preserver that keeps you afloat. (2022b)

Harrison-Nelson speaks to the ability of one's culture to provide a sense of belonging, a connection to one's ancestors and community, a rootedness to the past and the present. When confronted with the destabilization caused by the pandemic, Black people drew the strength to persevere from their ancestral knowledge and wisdom. Similarly, Second Queen of the Mandingo Warriors Resa "Cinnamon Black" Bazile describes how the practice, by connecting her to her forbearers, gives her strength: "You are your ancestors. You carry their DNA, you carry your parents' diseases, and you also carry their desires. If we lose that, what else will we have? Nothing. So, it gives you hope. It opens up that door for the reality, because this is what's real to us. It's inside our blood. We dream it, we sleep it, we eat it, we talk to people about it. And it's who we are." Her words, too, underscore how these traditions offered identity and stability through a connection to Black culture.

The Mardi Gras Indian tradition reflects Black New Orleanians' legacy of resistance and perseverance. The Indians are not only drawing on the strength it embodies but are carrying on a legacy of historical preservation—and adaptation. The tradition itself is a form of resistance in that it challenges attempts to silence and render invisible Black cultural geographies. "Warriors" and "hunters" abound in tribe names as homage to legacies of Black and Indigenous resistance (and masculinity). And the Indians are empowered by this rich legacy of cultural preservation and endurance. Preserving the Indian tradition, then, is a cultural responsibility as well as an act of self-preservation. During the pandemic, it proved its power to sustain. Said LaShundra Brown: "Masking Indian, it connects you. It's a spiritual thing, and you kind of feel the spirit of those before us. And I'm sure—it was all kind of different plagues and diseases and cultural things that people were going through way back when—they may not have had Covid, but they did go through something." The spiritual connection and the strong sense of family and community kept many grounded amid debilitating uncertainty. A recommitment to the traditional roots of solidarity and

mutual aid was essential. People rallied to support their tribe members, and tribes rallied together collectively to support each other. Bazile recalled that early in the pandemic, “There was a lot of fear, there was a lot of anxiety, but then there was always that sense of family that we have in our tribe.” What she called the Mardi Gras Indian spirit gave people hope.

The Black Indians found ways to deploy their unique talents for the good of the group, overturning hierarchies as necessary. Using her authority as a nurse, LaShundra Brown counseled her big queen, Rita Dollis, on home remedies and overrode Big Chief Bo Dollis, Jr., when he insisted on going on past the point of exhaustion. “My chief is the big chief—this I understand. But when this gang queen says, hey, I’m talking to you as a nurse, you need a break, you need to rest, he’s going to respect that.” Solidarity superseded ranking as members trusted and respected each other’s council and expertise. Rukiya Brown created thousands of masks, with the help of a team of highly skilled Black Indians, and handed them out at hospitals, bus stops, and supermarkets, and to anyone who knocked on her ground-floor window. “It was like survival skills. And we have been surviving for decades.”

The practitioners also needed to be creative to survive economically. Many of the Indians earn income as musicians or performers and work in the service industry. During lockdown, the gigs disappeared, businesses closed, and jobs became either dangerous or nonexistent. Duane “Dougie” Cruse, Wild Magnolias’ gang flag, had started a barbecue restaurant in 2017, which was booming in late 2019. The pandemic shuttered it, along with the Dollis family’s hair salon. “Keke” Gibson drives hair and make-up trucks for the movie industry; with film sets closed, he was unemployed and unpaid. They found ways to get by, individually and collectively. Harrison-Nelson helped others apply for relief grants being offered by groups like the Music and Culture Coalition of New Orleans. Cruse began offering delivery and got a catering contract during a weeks-long power outage that followed Hurricane Ida in fall 2021. Rita Dollis hosted jewelry-selling events on Facebook Live. Bo Dollis, Jr., a recording artist, performed in socially distanced situations, such as on the outdoor balcony of a French Quarter venue.

They also sewed, sometimes together on Facebook Live, preparing for the next Mardi Gras and sharing the protective power of the tribe.

“Just by us being with each other, honestly, we heal each other,” said Evans. “Because we’re medicine and our suits are medicine. So, when we see each other, we’re medicine keepers coming together.” Sewing suits communally, whether in person or virtually, preserves the culture through storytelling and by passing the skills to the next generation (Butler). The suits also tell a suppressed or forgotten history. Through their suits, Indians’ have control of a narrative about their histories, their communities, and their lives. In contrast to the continuing negative media images about Black people and persistent structural inequalities that devalue and limit Black life, these suits tell a different story. They display pride in Black history, communal resistance, and collective survival, as well as Black love, beauty, and joy. “Each one that bead, they’re telling a story,” said Rukiya Brown. In 2021, she began working on a suit with the theme of metamorphosis, the same theme as her very first suit. But she put that aside. She did not trust that story. “We weren’t ready to come out of our cocoon,” she said. Instead, for the first post-pandemic Carnival, she created an exquisite blue suit beaded with a peacock, a symbol of strength and perseverance despite hardship:

When peacocks enter into a fray, they strut in confidence and gracefully, as if nothing is wrong. The key: they strut like nothing is wrong. So not only is the peacock a symbol of beauty, but also strength and courage. . . . The peacock helps one to also use their past as a lesson and a teacher—not a burden that holds one down . . . a symbol of happiness, laughter, and having a kind heart.

Harrison-Nelson follows the tradition of her late father Donald Harrison, Sr., a legendary big chief, who believed all suits must tell a story centered on social justice. In 2016, she honored an ancestor who had been enslaved. She has a copy of the 1820 bill of sale for her ancestor—a small child. The suit she created in 2021, “Won’t Bow Down,” was inspired by the Yoruba deity, Olokun, who is the spirit of wealth (2021). While beading the suit during the pandemic, she began to think of wealth not as money but as “the tenacity to survive this.” Sewing helped pull her out of a “dark and incapacitating” depression. “Creating art is one of the ways I find my way out of the darkness,”

she said, underscoring the idea of culture as a buoy (2022a). Creative production provided a path forward.

Sewing and beading also helped LaShundra Brown feel connected to her ancestors and their wisdom. Like Harrison-Nelson's self-portrait as a phoenix, LaShundra Brown's 2022 suit embodied the will to survive. Her hands guided her toward a design representing a warrior with knowledge of traditional medicinal practices, such as the use of snake venom. The warrior on her suit is "a woman who has been through some things [but] she survived. You know, she's here. She's ready to fight another day." She recognizes it as a self-portrait: "That was huge for me—to go through a life-altering spirit like COVID-19. I'm here. I'm a survivor."

Mutual aid and an ethic of care, grounded in extended and fictive kin networks, permeate individual tribes as well as the collective of Indians. These strategies are not unique to the Indians but are reflective of cultural practices that have helped Black people survive since their arrival in this country. Tyrone Casby emphasizes the family aspect of Mardi Gras. Although sometimes the individualistic aspect is highlighted, he attests that, "The family is what makes this go." Without the family, "you don't have the culture no more." Wynoka Boudreaux Richardson, the big queen of the Golden Eagles, explains, "I'm a Queen in and out of suit," and she makes clear that she provides help to anyone in the tribe as needed, no questions asked.

This familial nature extends beyond individual tribes and exists within the collective Indian tradition. The culture emerged from a conscious intention to celebrate Black life and culture. In 1985, a legendary big chief, Tootie Montana, insisted upon the formation of the Mardi Gras Indian Council to bring tribes together. The creation of a council of dozens of tribes allowed a united front against police brutality and racist crackdowns on Black Indians parading. Tyrone Casby cites the council as representing "the whole vision of an African American culture that we don't want to go away." Solidarity among the tribes was necessary to ensure the tradition's survival.

Similarly, Rita Dollis created The Queens of the Nation Indian Council in 2010 as a means of bringing the queens together for sisterhood and to give back to the community. The Council currently has about fifteen member queens, and their fifty dollar annual membership

fee funds funeral expenses and charity such as food baskets and school supplies. In a male-dominated tradition, Queen Rita saw this as a way to strengthen their relationships with each other, to honor women for the roles they play in maintaining the culture, and to use their collective power to give back to the community at large. COVID-19 brought new challenges and once again forced the Indians to delve deeply into their traditions to survive and persevere.

The Return

Before sunset on Saturday, March 18, 2022, a jubilant crowd gathered outside a house on Governor Nicholls Street in New Orleans's legendary Tremé neighborhood, awaiting the emergence of Big Chief Victor Harris, leader of the Mardi Gras Indian tribe Mandingo Warriors (Spirit of Fi Yi Yi). After the heart-breaking hiatus due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Mardi Gras Indians would be hitting the streets for their first St. Joseph's Night parade in three years. New Orleans was ready, and the big chief did not disappoint. Amid the sounds of shekeres, tambourines, drums, and chants of "Fi Yi Yi," Harris emerged in an intricately designed suit of white beads, cowrie shells, and raffia. Wielding a six-foot staff, his face entirely covered by his trademark African-style mask, Harris was a near-mythic figure of awe and mystery. The revelers jockeyed for a closer look and raised their phones to capture the majesty; none dared touch him. The members of the tribe performed the roles assigned by rank: the wild man cleared the path for the big chief as he led the throng toward Claiborne Avenue, a traditional gathering spot for the Indians since the nineteenth century. The spy boy ran ahead to find other tribes who might be approaching for the ritualized confrontations between dueling chiefs that are the culmination of these improvised parades, a joyous face-off of song and dance to determine whose suit is "the prettiest." The electrifying pageantry drew increasing numbers of revelers into the Second Line. In addition to the unparalleled artistry of the Mardi Gras Indians, the joyous crowd was witnessing the resurgence of a century-old Black tradition that had survived the pandemic, providing a beacon of hope for a city beset by misfortunes—and for a community of Black, working-class culture bearers who were the hardest hit by COVID-19. The Mardi Gras Indians had survived the biggest threat

to their tradition in more than a century and were back with their characteristic flair, beauty, dynamism, and joy.

In 2022, some tribes returned in greater numbers than ever, full of the vibrancy and fortitude that has come to symbolize the resilience of the city itself. Gibson felt awe-struck at the sight of more than two dozen Indians from his Ninth Ward community, including Big Chief Dowee Robair of the Hard Head Hunters. “It was a beautiful thing to see. It almost brought a tear to my eye. I said, Chief Dowee, you did good.” Bazile described her sense of exaltation and relief as she joined Harris and the rest of her tribe on Mardi Gras morning: “It was like, I can see my people, we can hug. It was so very good that we can finally come out and be who we are. We can release that energy. And we can help our community because, you know, people are sad. When we come into the community, it brings joy.”

On the corner of Second Avenue and Dryades Street, in Central City, Bo Dollis, Jr., led his tribe in a song of prayer for Spy Boy Aaron White, a victim of gun violence in late 2021, and was joined by Rita Dollis, Marvin Belisle, LaShundra Brown, and the rest of the tribe. Miller, the Creole Wild West big chief, exited his Central City home wearing a beaded and feathered blue suit and carrying a peacock staff—the theme both he and his big queen Rukiya Brown had picked, long before knowing the other had done so. Miller poured libations to the lives lost to the pandemic. In the Algiers neighborhood across the river, Casby led the Mohawk Hunters, and in the Ninth Ward, Gibson found the strength to lead his tribe for one more year. Cherice Harrison-Nelson came out in ceremonial attire she had sewn to honor the lives lost to the pandemic, including Joe Jenkins.

That Mardi Gras morning in Tremé, Victor Harris addressed the huge crowd, exhorting the revelers to remember the real meaning of the day: “This is about your heart, this is not just about your game, it’s about your heart, it’s about your soul—it’s not just a party out here.” Carnival Day 2022 proved the wisdom of Cherice Harrison-Nelson’s faith in the power of the ancestors: “We stand on the shoulders of giants. . . . and it’s so strong of a foundation, no one can knock it down and take it out of you” (2022b).

Note

1. For some of the many histories of the Mardi Gras or Black Masking Indian tradition and the debates surrounding its origins, see Smith; Williams 1–42; McCusker 3–25; and Fields 184–86. Many cite the beginning in 1885 with the founding of the Creole Wild West tribe by Becate Batiste. Others, including Robin Ligon-Williams (vii), posit that the practice originated earlier or have traced its roots to early New Orleans and African traditions.

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Building Solidarity through Code-Switching: A Linguistic Examination of Spanish/English Bilingual Radio Host Banter in Los Angeles

Roshawnda A. Derrick

Introduction

Los Angeles, California is one of the most diverse, multicultural cities in the United States. Its population boasts one of the highest distributions of US Latinos in the country, representing 48.1 % of the residents (*The Hispanic Population*). As a result, it is estimated that around thirty-eight percent of Los Angeles residents speak Spanish ("Hispanics/Latinos"). Due to the high level of contact between English and Spanish in LA, many bilinguals employ Spanish/English code-switching (CS) or the use of both languages in the same utterance or sentence (Attig and Derrick). Various scholars have pointed out that US Latinos utilize CS in social situations with other bilinguals who share the same linguistic repertoire (Derrick, *Code-Switching*; Casielles-Suárez, "Spanglish"). In some cases many US Latinos in bilingual spaces prefer to use CS as their primary mode of communication, instead of English or Spanish (Caballero). In this article I use the linguistics term Spanish/English code-switching to refer to the alternating of two languages in the same conversation. However, the disk jockeys (DJs) I interviewed use the term Spanglish, which is a more casual, popular way of referring to the mixing of Spanish and English. See Casielles-Suárez's article "Spanglish" for more discussion of this term.

Furthermore, because of the prevalence of Spanish/English bilingualism in the United States, many mediums of communication

showcase the use of both languages, such as mass media (Androutsopoulos), healthcare communication (Mohan et al.), federal communication (Valdeón), social media (Derrick and Huizar), and advertisements (Derrick, “Radio-lect”). In this vein, with an interest in language use and Spanish/English CS on the radio, the present article examines the language use of bilingual radio hosts on LA’s Mega 96.3 and Cali 93.9. I am particularly interested in the linguistic nature of the Spanish/English CS utilized by the DJs in their interactions with other radio hosts, audience members, and in reporting current events on-air, and in the linguistic ethos and cultural identity created through their broadcasts.

History of Spanish-Language Radio

As early as the 1930s, the majority of Spanish-language US radio programs were concentrated geographically in the southwestern states. During this time local radio stations catered to the overwhelming majority of first-generation immigrants, providing information about Latin American events and news updates while also acting as sources of information related to immigration issues, community services, and employment opportunities (Rodriguez). By the 1960s Spanish-language radio had become more established in mainstream broadcasting, and the first full-time Spanish-language radio station was established in San Antonio (Albarran and Hutton). As more large US cities began to offer Spanish-language radio stations, corporations and advertising agencies began to focus their advertisements toward Spanish-speaking audiences, now serving both first- and second-generation Latinos. In this context second-generation Spanish speakers typically have the highest level of bilingualism, because they are often raised speaking both Spanish and English (Poplack).

This trend toward advertising to bilingual second-generation Latinos continued into the 1970s and 1980s as companies began to incorporate bilingualism into their advertisements. By the 1990s Spanish-language radio had grown one thousand percent in a twenty-year period, taking over the top ratings in Latino-dominant cities like Los Angeles, San Antonio, and Miami (Albarran and Hutton). To date ninety-four percent of US Latinos listen to the radio, an engagement rate higher than any other ethnic group in the country (“Hispanic Audiences”).

Mega 96.3 and Cali 93.9

This section traces the origins, audience type, and radio practices of LA's Mega 96.3 and Cali 93.9. In 2005 the Spanish Broadcasting System, one of the largest owners and operators of radio stations in the United States, changed the radio format of KXOL 96.3 FM to Spanish urban contemporary. Its current slogan, "LA's Party Station," aims to attract young Latino bilinguals in metropolitan LA. Victor Caballero, one of the first radio hosts of Mega 96.3 in its current format, notes that

I launched "Latino" back in 2005 in Los Angeles with the intent to give the community relevant content bilingually in both Spanish and English. Soon after launching, we became number one in the afternoon drive. I learned that our callers have a preference for Spanglish, because that's the way we talk, and it's important to connect to people in the way that's most authentic to them. (Caballero)

Raymond points out the linguistic ethos of the station:

Hosts design their opening turns so as to offer up both languages as options, without prejudice or interactional bias, thereby allowing callers to select one or both languages as the medium of exchange. This particular institution as a whole thus "does being" bilingual—that is it embodies bilingualism—through this discursive practice that effectively renders Spanish, English and code-switched Spanish–English normatively available to members of the listening community. (423)

Boasting a similar bilingual format, Mega 96.3's direct competitor, Cali 93.9, brands itself as "¡Siempre De Fiesta!" or "always partying," broadcasting popular, contemporary rhythmic music. Cali 93.9 began broadcasting in this format in the summer of 2019, right before the COVID-19 pandemic. With an interest in the similarities and differences between these stations' target audiences, I interviewed DJ Eddie One, currently a radio host at Mega 96.3, who is one of the most prolific Latino DJs in LA. It is worth pointing out that he has worked as a radio

host for both stations. He commented that the audience for Mega 96.3 is “more urban and geared towards youth. We are more Spanish urban than them [93.9] but still very pop as well because you’ll still hear pop artists, not so much just reggaetón. We are more of a hip pop station, because the days of being just Spanish urban are, I wouldn’t say done, but we have to be more open with our format because of the way that music is right now.” When I asked him to elaborate on Cali 93.9’s audience, he noted that it is “probably Mexican same like us. But I would say 96.3 is more friendly to non-Mexicans including those from Central America, South America, and people from the Caribbean, just because of our music and our lineup is a little more mixed as far as who is presenting on the radio” (One).

Though as of 2021 LA’s foreign-born population comes predominately from Mexico (around 1.2 million or 36.3 %), there is a notable presence of other Latino groups from varying regions in the city, including South Americans (around 100,000 or 2.97 %), Central Americans (532,553 or 15.61 %), and a small representation of Caribbean hispanophones (“Foreign-Born”). Thus, it seems that both stations cater primarily to young bilingual Mexican American listeners, but Mega 96.3 aspires to maintain a more inclusive attitude toward the diverse Latino communities of Los Angeles.

As both Mega 96.3 and Cali 93.9 cater to Spanish/English bilingual audiences, and the intersection of bilingualism, identity, and media studies in the US Latino community has been understudied, bilingual DJ banter on both of these LA radio stations proves worthy of scholarly inquiry. In the following section, I review the previous research on Spanish/English CS in communication and contemporary Spanish-language radio in the United States. I then discuss the linguistic methods and cultural frameworks I utilize to analyze the corpus, with a particular interest in the linguistic nature of DJ on-air language use, examining the ways in which the DJs incorporate Spanish/English CS in their broadcasts. The next section presents the linguistic analysis. Moreover, I am interested in the ways that the use of Spanish/English CS extends beyond language use as a symbol of bicultural, Latino identity in the United States and examine the ways that CS is symbolic of Latino identity on the radio. The study concludes with some general discussion and suggestions for future scholarly inquiry into this topic.

Literature Review

Spanish/English CS in Oral Discourse

Foundational linguistic studies of Spanish/English CS in the US context have examined switch points between languages, syntactic structure, and length (McClure; Lipski, "Spanish-English"). Others have created typologies that identified types of Spanish/English CS (Poplack; Lipski, "Spanish-English"). For example, Poplack distinguishes three types of CS: Tag, Inter-sentential, and Intra-sentential (583). Tag is seen when a tag phrase is taken from one language and inserted into another: "I could understand QUE [sic] [that] you don't know how to speak Spanish, ¿VERDAD? [right?]" (596). Inter-sentential CS, also known as extra-sentential, occurs when CS takes place between sentences:

A: I had a dream yesterday, last night.

B. ¿DE QUE NUMERO [sic]? [What number?]

A: EL CERO SETENTA Y CINCO. [Zero seventy-five.] (598)

Intra-sentential CS is the last and most complex switching and happens when the switch occurs within the sentence: "He was sitting down EN LA CAMA, MIRANDONOS PELEANDO, Y [in bed, watching us fighting and] really, I don't remember SI EL NOS SEPARO [if he separated us] or whatever, you know" (sic) (589). Poplack notes that only the most competent bilinguals use intra-sentential CS, because it requires a high degree of fluency in both languages. More contemporary linguistic studies that have examined CS in the US Latino context have used similar grammatical typologies to assess CS in speech (Vanhaverbeke and Enghels; Hoot and Ebert; Cruz; Chi and Bell), literary texts (Caselles-Suárez, "Radical"; Derrick, "Una Happily," "Radical"; Danler), and radio advertisements (Derrick, "Radio-lect"; Nowak), among others.

Pioneering sociolinguistic studies of Spanish/English CS have examined its use in differing cultural contexts and have identified socio-pragmatic functions pointing out why bilinguals use CS. Valdés Fallis, for example, analyzed cassette tapes assessing the bilingual CS patterns of Mexican American women and identified twelve socio-pragmatic functions of CS. In a similar vein other scholars such as McClure, Gumperz, and Zentella ("Spanish and English"), in subsequent studies of Spanish/English CS in oral discourse, have pointed out various

functions that bilingual US Latinos use in communication. Many of these recurring functions include CS as

1. contextual switches: situation and topic related to the other language;
2. triggered switches: switches due to the preceding or following lexical item;
3. identity markers: stress in-group identity;
4. quotations: to state what someone else said;
5. interjections: interjections are switches.

Outside of functions of CS in oral discourse, Zentella (“Latino”) researched US Latino identity and found that bilingual children speak English with each other and tend to shift to Spanish with their elders. In this context, both Spanish and English form their linguistic competence in a singular sense, and they use each language or their in-between depending on the context. Bailey also studied bilingual linguistic identity and found that US Latinos use Spanish/English CS as a mode of communication to signal intra-group identity of Dominican heritage. More contemporary sociolinguistic studies of Spanish/English CS in oral discourse have identified functions of CS in literary texts (Montes-Alcalá, “Code-Switching”; Derrick, *Code-Switching*; Pawelek and Derrick), social media (Derrick and Huizar; Dickinson), TV and film (Attig and Derrick; Derrick and Attig), and SMS/text communication (Montes-Alcalá, “Bilingual Texting”).

Spanish/English CS on the Radio

As noted above, there has been diverse scholarship on the use of Spanish/English CS in oral discourse. Because this study examines the use of CS on Mega 96.3 and Cali 93.9, which cater to bilingual US Latinos, here I review research that has investigated CS on Spanish-language US radio. Related to language use and identity, Tseng (“DJ Stances”) studied the ethnic branding in bilingual radio broadcasts and concluded that radio hosts utilize topic-oriented evaluative stances to highlight their on-air identity, including code-switching, circulating discourses of in-group solidarity, and engaging listeners in fictive bonds of intimacy. Tseng (“Abriendo”) examined DJ speech with a focus on closing

structures. That study pointed out that CS is used to preserve institutional identity as it relates to genre norms and structures.

Within the US context there has not been a vast amount of scholarly attention paid to the use of Spanish/English CS in radio broadcasts. However, there have been some valuable contemporary studies that have examined its use on-air. For example, De Fina ("Top-Down") analyzed language use on El Zol, broadcast in Washington, D.C., which brands itself as a radio station that caters to first-generation transnational immigrants. De Fina concluded that radio hosts utilized monolingual Spanish as the primary mode of communication to underscore that the radio station identifies as Spanish-speaking rather than bilingual (though she notes that US Latinos do use CS and that it is a part of their daily experiences). Similarly, De Fina ("Language Ideologies") investigated identity construction on-air on El Zol. Spanish-dominant hosts utilized hyper-corrective behavior toward the language use of English-dominant radio hosts and also rebuffed the use of English terms in primarily Spanish utterances on-air.

Specific to Mega 96.3, Raymond analyzed radio call-ins with an interest in on-air language practices. The study found that language interaction denotes interactional achievement, which is constructed collaboratively among participants. The study furthermore concluded that Mega 96.3 illustrates the use of Spanish and English as normative and there is no linguistic preference in the station's broadcasts for one language or the other. Also specific to Los Angeles's Mega 96.3, Derrick ("Radio-lect") examined national and DJ-endorsed advertisements with an interest in the linguistic nature of both types. The study pointed out that Spanish/English CS is becoming more widespread in advertisements geared toward Los Angeles's bilingual Latino consumers. Though national advertisements seem to show more preference for Spanish-dominant language use, DJ-endorsed advertisements are beginning to show more linguistic innovation with the use of bilingualism.

In sum many scholars have investigated Spanish/English CS in oral discourse related to its constraints, typologies, and the types of bilinguals that employ it. I have noted some contemporary studies that have used typologies pointed out for Spanish/English CS in various US discourses to analyze its linguistic nature. In relation to CS on the radio there has been some attention given to the ways in which US radio

stations cater (or not) to bilingual US Latino listeners and how different stations and DJ hosts identify linguistically according to the demographic regions in which they reside. In the next section I will discuss the frameworks and methods I used to analyze the bilingual DJ banter and personas of the hosts on Mega 96.3 and Cali 93.9.

Frameworks and Methods

Linguistic Methods

For this study I collected seventy-two hours of radio streamed from Mega 96.3 in 2017 and forty-two hours from Cali 93.9 in 2020, during the COVID-19 pandemic. Though the two corpora differ in duration, they are nonetheless comparable for analysis due to the methodological approach I employ. I focus solely on DJ speech with an interest in the use of language in their discourse. By using percentages to quantify the linguistic behavior of the radio hosts, I focus on the patterns and tendencies of the corpora rather than the raw frequency. The longer sample was originally collected for a previous study, and the emergence of Cali 93.9 prompted my interest in a comparative query into whether the discourse strategies were comparable on two radio stations broadcasting to a similar audience.

In this vein, to analyze language use on both radio stations, I eliminated the music and advertisements, leaving the dialogue of the radio hosts. To analyze the linguistic nature of Spanish, English, and Spanish/English CS, I carried out a sentence-by-sentence examination of both corpora. As mentioned above, various scholars have proposed typologies of CS related to the mixing of Spanish and English. In my analysis of the Spanish/English CS, I pay special attention to those that include intra-sentential CS as defined by Poplack, because it is utilized by the most competent bilinguals. Furthermore, the use of intra-sentential CS among US Latinos often points to linguistic identity, preference, and the building of solidarity and community with other bilingual speakers (Derrick and Attig). The use of Spanish/English intra-sentential CS on bilingual radio is telling, because it suggests that radio hosts are not merely accommodating bilingualism in general but are actively engaging with audience members in a shared code. By examining the

on-air language use on Mega 96.3 and Cali 93.9 this study can better assess the degree to which each station is linguistically attuned to its audience and how bilingualism is being used as a strategic tool for identity construction, solidarity, or stylistic branding.

To guide my analysis of intra-sentential CS, I utilize the framework for analysis of multilingual sentences that I developed in *Code-Switching*. This framework allows me to assess the language distribution of the DJ banter sentence by sentence to decipher the linguistic nature of the language used by radio hosts on-air. In particular this framework takes into consideration bilingual intra-sentential sentences that do not have a matrix or base language, and it deciphers three types of bilingual sentences: English-base bilingual sentences, Spanish-base bilingual sentences, and hybrid sentences. In this case, the base language is considered to be the language that provides the grammatical structure for the sentences and most of their lexical items. Below, I provide examples from my corpus of bilingual radio advertisements on Mega 96.3 ("Radio-lect"). Here and throughout, I have placed the Spanish-language text in bold for simpler visual division between the two languages when they appear in the same sentence.

English-base bilingual sentence, advertisement by Beverly Hills Physicians

I mean are you looking forward to putting on a bikini, **un traje de baño**, and strutting your stuff in front of everybody at the **playa**?

I mean are you looking forward to putting on a bikini, a bathing suit, and strutting your stuff in front of everybody at the beach? (Mega 96.3 qtd. in Derrick, "Radio-lect" 12)

Spanish-base bilingual sentence, advertisement by Villa Ford of Orange

Se compraron su carrito, salieron bien contentos, se fueron para la casa y les señalaron el carro a todo el mundo, y ahora el dealer les está llamando y diciendo que necesitan

un co-signer, que el pago no va a ser de \$400, que va a ser de \$600.

You bought yourselves a car, you were very happy, you went home and showed everyone your car, and now the dealer is calling you and telling you that you need a co-signer, and that the payment isn't going to be \$400, rather \$600. (Mega 96.3 qtd. in Derrick, "Radio-lect" 11)

Hybrid sentence, advertisement by Boards Cosmetic Surgery

Hey it's Sandra Peña de Mega 96.3 **y me has escuchado hablar de cómo mis doctores, los doctores certificados de** Boards Cosmetic and how they get down, right?

Hey it's Sandra Peña from 96.3 and you have heard me talk about how my doctors, the certified doctors from Boards Cosmetic, and how they get down, right? (Mega 96.3 qtd. in Derrick, "Radio-lect" 12)

Because the DJ banter also includes English and Spanish monolingual sentences, I analyze all the sentence types in the corpus to quantify how much the DJs are using Spanish, English, and Spanish/English CS on-air. My framework provides the following sentential categorizations.

1. Monolingual English sentences: sentences that include only English
2. English-base bilingual sentences: sentences that have English as the base language and one or more Spanish insertions
3. Monolingual Spanish sentences: sentences that include only Spanish
4. Spanish-base bilingual sentences: sentences that have Spanish as the base language and one or more English insertions
5. Hybrid sentences: sentences with no base language and include insertions and alternations

To clarify, English-base bilingual sentences and Spanish-base bilingual sentences involve insertion, while hybrid sentences show no clear base language and often include a mix of insertions and alternations.

My framework allows for the determination of the types of CS that the radio hosts utilize on Mega 96.3, pointing out the linguistic nature of on-air bilingual language use.

Cultural Frameworks

In considering the linguistic identities of the DJ hosts and Mega 96.3's and Cali 93.9's ethos related to broadcasting practices for US bilingual Latino audiences, I look to Felix M. Padilla's (1985) notion of "Latino ethnic consciousness" and Anna De Fina's ("Top-Down") strategies for the creation of pan-Latino unity on US radio. These frameworks are helpful as we consider the creation of a shared Latino sensibility in broadcasting content (advertisements, DJ hosted shows, contest announcements, the news, etc.) to bilingual Los Angelinos.

Padilla's research examines intermixed Mexican and Puerto Rican communities in Chicago in the 1970s, looking into their formation of a shared consciousness and hybrid Latino identity. He concluded that multiple Spanish-speaking groups cocreate a distinct shared identity due to their collective communal experiences, which acknowledges their shared linguistic and cultural practices. In this way, Latino ethnic consciousness is created as "Latino ethnicity is fabricated out of cultural and structural similarities and functions according to the needs of Spanish-speaking groups" (Padilla 5). Moreover, specifically related to US radio host strategies for emphasizing pan-Latino identity or this shared identity of US Latinos, De Fina ("Language Ideologies") details devices that radio hosts use to highlight their communal experience: the use of terms such as *Latino*, *raza*, and *nuestra comunidad*; and performance rituals, which celebrate unity.

To complement this analysis, I incorporate highlights from my interview with DJ Eddie One, who offers additional insight into the motivations, constraints, and strategic decisions in bilingual programming. Furthermore, his experience provides a rare perspective from which to consider how bilingual DJs favor or avoid language mixing in differing contexts. These perspectives provide a valuable guide for understanding the patterns pointed out within the data and the ways in which both radio stations operationalize bilingualism in their broadcasts.

Thus, in considering the multiplicity of Latino identities among the DJ hosts and bilingual audiences of Mega 96.3 and Cali 93.9, Padilla's

Latino ethnic consciousness and De Fina's strategies for highlighting pan-Latino identity on-air can be applied to the creation of intergroup identity, consciousness, and solidarity-building practices. These frameworks and the inside perspectives from DJ Eddie One can serve as fruitful vantages from which to engage with Spanish/English CS among radio hosts in LA and the creation of a linguistic ethos within their broadcasts.

Linguistic Analysis

I counted and categorized all the sentences in both corpora containing DJ banter from Mega 96.3 and Cali 93.9. In Figures 1 and 2, I categorize the language use, highlighting the percentage of monolingual Spanish and English as well as bilingual sentences. As seen in the figures, both radio stations utilize a similar amount of monolingual, bilingual, and hybrid sentences, which I discuss in more detail below.

Monolingual Spanish

As seen in Figures 1 and 2, monolingual Spanish stands out as the most prevalent sentence type for Mega 96.3 (thirty-eight percent) and Cali 93.9 (thirty-seven percent). Examples of monolingual Spanish sentences from the DJ hosts on both radio stations are exemplified below.

Hay suficiente tiempo para preparar las chelas y la carne asada.

(Mega 96.3, 23 Mar. 2017)

Dicen que quieren escuchar, algo de J Balvin. (Mega 96.3, 23

Mar. 2017)

Todos los detalles después de su canción aquí en Cali 93.9.

(Cali 93.9, 3 Feb. 2020)

Déjame recordarte que el lunes te estaré regalando mil dólares

a las cuatro de la tarde. (Cali 93.9, 4 Feb. 2020)

In these instances, Spanish is used normatively. Specific to language use on-air, DJ Eddie One comments that when they hire DJ hosts, the station prioritizes those that have native-like fluency in Spanish over English. He says, "When it comes to Monday–Friday full-time DJs that are on-the-air every day, we are looking for Spanish first and English second." He goes on to clarify, "Well, I would say we are looking for Spanish first, Spanglish second, and English last, that would be the better order."

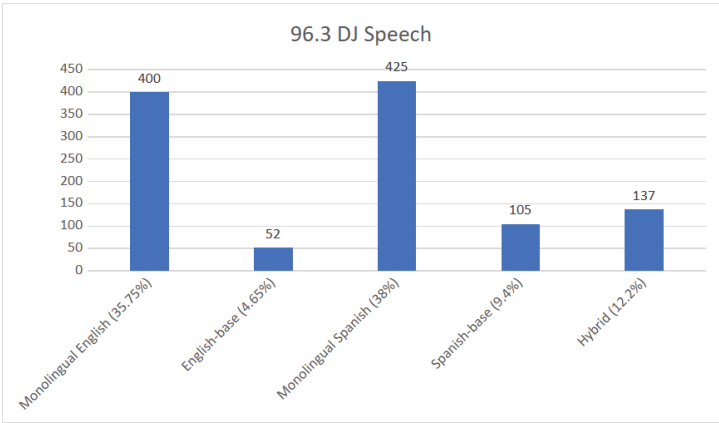


Figure 1: Language choice in DJ Speech on 96.3

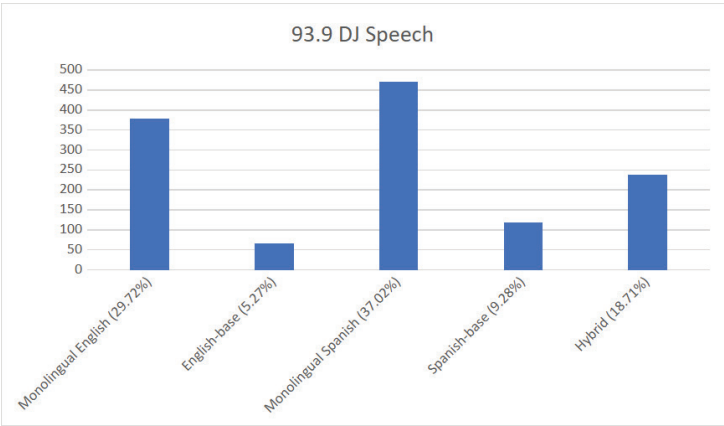


Figure 2: Language choice in DJ Speech on 93.9

These findings are on par with studies such as De Fina’s (“Language Ideologies”), which found that radio hosts on El Zol have a preference for monolingual Spanish. Similarly, my own work (“Radio-lect”) concluded that national advertisers who cater to the audience of Mega 96.3 tend to use monolingual Spanish more normatively than monolingual English or Spanish/English CS in order to appease consumers.

Monolingual English

Similar to monolingual Spanish sentences, monolingual English sentences have a high representation in both corpora: Mega 96.3 35.7 % and Cali 93.9 29.7 %. Some instances of monolingual sentences from the corpora are highlighted below.

I'm gonna tell you right now and that was hard because "One Dance" is a really good song, but I think Justin Bieber did us right with this one. (Mega 96.3, 25 Mar. 2017)

Alex, Gabriella, and Daniel, you just won tickets to Disneyland! (Mega 96.3, 24 Mar. 2017)

It's DJ Eddie One, I'm in the mix. (Cali 93.9, 3 Feb. 2020)

If you need a bounce back the day before Valentine's Day, we're having the Cali Singles Night. (Cali 93.9, 4 Feb. 2020)

Monolingual English is used just as normatively as monolingual Spanish. This strategy is inclusive as it accounts for those US Latinos that do not have high receptive fluency in Spanish. In other mainstream mediums like TV and film (Derrick and Attig) and literary texts (Derrick, "Una Happily"), it has been noted that monolingual English is the preferred code for US Latino audiences. Additionally, considering DJ Eddie One's comments about language preference, it would seem appropriate that English would appear second to Spanish in terms of percentage of language use on-air. In regard to the high use of English DJ Eddie One says that "I try to connect with as many people that speak Spanish, but I also remember that we have youngsters that don't speak perfect Spanish, and they want to hear some English." In this context, as noted by Raymond above, the use of both monolingual Spanish and English as a standard practice further denotes the lack of interactional bias related to either language by effectively embodying bilingualism.

Spanish-Base Bilingual Sentences

I found evidence of bilingual sentences in the corpus. Some examples of Spanish-base bilingual sentences from Mega 96.3 (9.4 %) and Cali 93.9 (9.3 %) include the following.

Entonces, sé que mi hijo es super hyper. (Cali. 93.9, 3 Feb. 2020)
Amigos, pregunta: te hace falta dinero porque te descansaron
del trabajo te corrieron en el trabajo durante estos momen-
tos del coronavirus pandemic? (Cali 93.9, 29 Jan. 2020)
 Those coffeecakes **que los daban, y creo que todavía los dan en**
las escuelas aquí del condado de Los Ángeles. (Cali 93.9, 3
 Feb. 2020)

Intra-sentential bilingual sentences have been commonly used in contemporary US Latino productions to denote hybrid linguistic practices and language preferences (Poplack; Casielles-Suárez, “Radical”; Derrick, “Una Happily”). Specific to the use of bilingualism on-the-air, when I asked DJ Eddie One about the use of Spanish/English CS to enhance the listener experience and how DJ hosts utilize language, he said about Mega 96.3 that “the format of the station was that we would play two Spanish songs and then one English song. That ended up changing and then it became three Spanish and one English song, and then it would keep changing, but the whole point of using Spanglish was because it was what was in. We used Spanglish because that’s what the people wanted to hear.” Thus, the radio station’s linguistic ethos has always been to use Spanish/English CS as a tool to connect with their bilingual audience.

English-Base Bilingual Sentences

Similar to the Spanish-base bilingual sentences, English-base bilingual sentences show a comparable balance on both radio stations: Mega 96.3 at 4.6 % and Cali 93.9 at 5.3 %. Some sentences from the corpora include the following.

What a beautiful **fin de semana** we had. (Mega 96.3, 24 Mar. 2017)
 Yo, how many shots do we have to take **antes**, uh before we can
 blame it on the alcohol. (Mega 96.3, 25 Mar. 2017)
Saludos to everybody that’s making sure we’re staying healthy.
 (Cali 93.9, 4 Feb. 2020)

Every cage is completely **vacío**, so everyone took a puppy home, a cat home, a bunny home, and I think that that's such a beautiful thing. (Cali 93.9, 3 Feb. 2020)

The likeness in percentages denotes the parallel use of Spanish-base and English-base bilingual sentences and further illuminates the hybrid nature of Spanish/English CS being used on Mega 96.3 and Cali 93.9 in relation to language use among radio hosts. The next section will examine the hybrid sentences, or those intra-sentential sentences for which a base language cannot be established.

Hybrid Sentences

In the corpora, like the monolingual and bilingual sentences, there was a similar representation of hybrid sentences in both Mega 96.3 (12.2 %) and Cali 93.9 (18.7 %). Examples of hybrid sentences from the corpora are noted below.

Entonces yo tuve que entender que I can't be mama bear all the time. (Mega 96.3, 25 Mar. 2017)

So, I had to understand that I can't be mama bear all the time.

Across the street, there's a hole in the wall restaurant **que es bien sabroso que se llama** The Teriyaki House. (Mega 96.3, 24 Mar. 2017)

Across the street, there's a hole in the wall restaurant that is really good called The Teriyake House.

Asegurate de lavarte las manos por veinte segundos o más to prevent the spread of coronavirus, because it's the right thing to do. (Cali 93.9, 3 Feb. 2020)

Be sure to wash your hands for twenty seconds or more to prevent the spread of coronavirus, because it's the right thing to do.

Y pues como todos andan chillin' en sus hogares porque that's what they told us to do, stay home safe, Cali 93.9 **resulta pues, no hay tráfico, aquí**, it has been reported that the state of Kalifas, the traffic has fallen to eighty percent **o sea, las calles**

casi vacías, which is something that we love, right? (Cali 93.9, 4 Feb. 2020)

And well, everyone is chillin' in their homes because that's what they told us to do, stay home safe, Cali 93.9 it seems that there isn't any traffic and it has been reported that the state of Kalifas, the traffic has fallen to eighty percent, or rather the streets are almost empty, which is something we love, right?

When I asked DJ Eddie One about the formula they use to showcase Spanish/English CS as the primary code of the radio station, he said,

You know we've talked about that so many times at the radio station and nothing would ever stick. We would say ok we need to do seventy-thirty or sixty-forty, but not everybody is the same. I probably speak seventy-thirty or sixty-forty but it always depends on what I'm talking about, as far as the subject and there are certain things that translate well and certain things that don't. I don't open up the mic and say I'm going to say this in Spanish and say that in English, it's whatever comes out. Whatever flows naturally, and there are certain words that sound better in Spanish and certain things that sound better in English. (One)

It seems that there is no specific strategy the radio hosts utilize to create the hybrid linguistic ethos showcased on both radio stations. The use of bilingualism seems to be more connected to the real-life use of Spanish/English CS that bilingual US Latinos utilize in communication with each other on a variety of topics related to their cultural and daily practices.

Linguistic Elements of CS and Latino Ethnic Consciousness Building

The use of CS on-the-air, in addition to emphasizing linguistic preference of the radio hosts and audience members, points to a shared cultural and ethnic identity. Indeed, as indicated by the large Latino population of LA, over 4.8 million ("Hispanics/Latinos"), Spanish/English CS stands out as a vehicle to connect multiple groups of Latinos in public spaces. Language use, in particular bilingualism, is a way to

create group identification and solidarity among various cultural groups of bilingual Latinos that share language as a daily practice within their day-to-day experiences.

As Padilla notes about Latino ethnic consciousness, group identity and solidarity emerge over time as two or more Spanish-speaking groups engage in intergroup relations and communication (5). Related to relationship building on-air, O'Keefe comments that "through talk, DJs create a pseudo-relationship of trust and intimacy with the audience, creating a shared range of shared space, cache of shared knowledge, and a sense of common identity" (127). In this way, both Mega 96.3 and Cali 93.9 act as one of many public mediums through which there is continued communication and relationship building using Spanish/English CS as a device to form connection, engagement, and solidarity. This shared identity and linguistic preference is emphasized through their broadcasts of the news, local and national advertisements, contests, giveaways, and DJ hosted shows. As mentioned above, De Fina points out that radio hosts use terms like *Latino*, *raza*, and *nuestra comunidad* to highlight pan-Latino unity. Examples of the De Fina-identified terms include the following:

Dejame decirles latinos, si no sabe la gente a donde ir a votar ni a donde se registraron, nosotros pusimos un link on our Facebook, Mega 963, donde básicamente te dice, enter your address, le pones, y ahí te dice a dónde vas a ir a votar. (Mega 96.3, 24 Mar. 2017)

Let me tell you Latinos, if you do not know where to go to vote or to register, we put the link on our Facebook, Mega 963, where it basically tells you, enter your address, you put it and there it tells you where you will to go vote.

Si, anoche sí que brillaron las estrellas latinas: Shakira, J.Lo, Bad Bunny, and J Balvin on stage. (Cali 93.9, 3 Feb. 2020)
Yes, yesterday the Latino stars shined: Shakira, J.Lo, Bad Bunny, and J Balvin on stage.

Examples of performance rituals include the following:

Cali 93.9 number one for **reggaetón y más, anoche los latinos definitivamente si que representaron en el Super Bowl, Shakira, sacó a Bad Bunny, cuando salió a cantar, yo pensé que iba a sacar a Maluma con la canción “Chantaje,” pero, you know en vez, sacó a Bad Bunny y J.Lo, también, definitivamente, se fajó y sacó a J Balvin, también en su presentación.** (Cali 93.9, 3 Feb. 2020)

Cali 93.9, number one for reggaeton and more, last night the Latinos definitely represented at the Super Bowl, Shakira brought out Bad Bunny when she came to sing, and I thought she was going to bring out Maluma with the song “Chantaje,” but you know instead, she brought out Bad Bunny and J.Lo also, definitely out did herself and brought out J Balvin also in her show.

Estás invitados a nuestro virtual Easter egg hunt **para los babies** tomorrow—**estás escuchando Cali 93.9 número uno** for **reggaetón y más.** (Cali 93.9, 3 Apr. 2020)

You’re invited to our virtual Easter egg hunt for the babies tomorrow—you’re listening to Cali 93.9, number one for reggaeton and more.

Tseng (“Abriendo,” 483) notes that radio station show identities are conveyed through sequential structures that are used across multiple interactions during broadcasts. These include formulaic elements such as “verbal logos” or “symbolic branding.” These verbal logos are routinized and show up as the repetition of segments, instances, and sequences. For Mega 96.3 and Cali 93.9, Spanish/English CS is a tool to add a signature logo to their broadcasts.

Mega noventa y seis tres LA’s number one party station (Mega 96.3, 23 Mar. 2017)

Mega ninety-six three . . .

Están escuchando a Mega noventa y seis tres, LA’s number one party station (Mega 96.3, 23 Mar. 2017)

You guys are listening to Mega ninety-six three . . .

Let's get back into more music, **Cali 93.9 número uno para el reggaetón y más.** (Cali 93.9, 4 Apr. 2020)
 . . . Cali 93.9 number one for reggaeton and more.

Cali noventa y tres nueve number one for **reggaetón y más**, DJ Eddie One I'm in the mix **sin comerciales aquí** to take you off to the weekend. (Cali 93.9, 3 Apr. 2020)
 Cali ninety-three nine number one for reggaeton and more, DJ Eddie One I'm in the mix without commercials here to take you off to the weekend.

Spanish/English CS is thus a strategy used on-air to connect multiple groups of diverse Latinos in LA that listen to these radio stations. The use of this linguistic variety on the radio acts as a channel through which to form and maintain Latino ethnic consciousness and a pan-Latino identity. Furthermore, through community specific terms, Latino DJ hosts are able to build relationships, intimacy, and trust with their audience, uniting their bilingual listeners in solidarity and cultural sameness. Additionally, repetitive verbal logos given in Spanish/English CS on both radio stations illuminate another tool radio stations use to build station identity and linguistic ethos.

The COVID–19 Pandemic and Solidarity on Cali 93.9

In analyzing Latino ethnic consciousness and pan-Latino identity formation and maintenance on the radio and hybrid language use, I identified some noteworthy results from my research into language use on Cali 93.9 during the COVID–19 pandemic. Those who experienced life during this time may recall feeling loneliness, separation, isolation, uncertainty, and anxiety. In the examination of the corpus, the DJ hosts on Cali 93.9 made many efforts to offer resources, using hybrid sentences to maintain a cultural and intimate relationship with their audience members. These efforts were exemplified through words of encouragement, shout-outs to frontline workers, call-in requests to check in, virtual contests, and engagement with social media, to name a few. Linguistic code stands out as a powerful strategy to connect with the bilingual radio audience during this difficult time. Some examples of these relationship-building efforts are highlighted below.

Hola, aquí Carita Márquez de Cali 93.9 invitando que me acompañen de diez a tres, todos los días, espero que me dejen entrar en su hogar, whether you're at home cleaning, cooking, sleeping, **ayudando a los nenes, gritándoles de nuevo,** or whatever it is, I wanna be right there right by your side, **asi que tú y yo tenemos una cita todos los días, no me falles.** (Cali 93.9, 3 Apr. 2020)

Hi, Carita Marquez from Cali 93.9 here inviting you to join me from ten to three, every day, I hope you allow me to enter into your home, whether you're at home cleaning, cooking, sleeping, helping your kids, screaming at them again, or whatever it is, I wanna be right there by your side, so you and I have a date every day, don't let me down.

Cali 93.9 número uno en reggaetón y más, muy buenos dias, feliz, feliz jueves, el día nueve de abril, espero amanecido al cien and that you definitely are enjoying this cozy weather indoors, being safe **con la familia, una mañana tu quizás** bake cookies, get yourself a little **cafecito**, some **tecito** going on. **Si te toca salir de la casa, con mucho cuidado.** They are **sugiriendo** that this week and next week is the days that only if necessary step out the house, if not just stay home, but if you're out there still working, **espero que sean felices.** Be safe and tune in to Cali 93.9. (Cali 93.9, 9 Apr. 2020)

Cali 93.9 number one in reggaeton and more, good morning, happy, happy Thursday, it's April 9th, I hope you're waking up at one hundred percent and that you definitely are enjoying this cozy weather indoors, being safe with your family, a morning that you can maybe bake cookies, get yourself a little coffee, some tea going on. If you have to step out the house, be careful. They are suggesting that this week and next week is the days that only if necessary, step out of the house, if not just stay home, but if you're out there still working, I hope you are happy. Be safe and tune in to Cali 93.9.

Si conoces a alguien que lo está pasando mal en este momento del Coronavirus pandemic, you need to pay lots of attention y pasar la voz in regards to resources **que hay para esas persona**. If you feel depression, and you're stressed, alone, **hay un hotline**, there are people out there that are ready to help you, **y la información** is on my Instagram, @carolmarquez, **pasa la voz**. (Cali 93.9, 9 Apr. 2020)

If you know someone that is having a hard time because of the Coronavirus pandemic, you need to pay lots of attention and spread the word in regards to resources that exist for these people. If you feel depression, and you're stressed, alone, there is a hotline, there are people out there that are ready to help you, and the information is on my Instagram, @carolmarquez, spread the word.

So, kudos to Dominos Pizza **y todas las companias que definitivamente** they're doing their part to help out everyone else in need, we're definitely all in this together, **no hay que dejar de pensar en eso, okay?** (Cali 93.9, 9 Apr. 2020)

So kudos to Dominos Pizza and all of the companies that definitely they're doing their part to help out everyone else in need, we're definitely all in this together, you don't have to doubt that, okay?

When I asked DJ Eddie One, who was one of the radio hosts during this time, about the institutional messages given to radio hosts about on-air communication with the audience, he mentioned that "during COVID our priority was to keep people informed and to give them more information about what was going on in our community. The points that we had to share were definitely more informational and geared towards keeping the audience tuned in and united." In this way, hybrid Spanish/English sentences were an important solidarity-building device to maintain connection within the US Latino community during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Discussion and Conclusions

Due to the lack of research on the topic of Spanish language radio in the United States, I have previously recommended ("Radio-lect") more

scholarly inquiry into the on-air linguistic practices of bilingual radio hosts. In turn, this paper has examined the DJ banter of two LA radio stations, Mega 96.3 and Cali 93.9, geared toward today's Latino youth. This research has noted that both radio stations share the same linguistic ethos, as noted by the linguistic analysis, which highlights a similar use of monolingual English and Spanish and sentences that include intra-sentential CS. These findings also show that both radio stations utilize Spanish/English CS as a linguistic strategy to connect to their audience through their shared bilingual and bicultural experiences. Caballero furthermore mentioned that radio hosts are not instructed on which language to use on the air; however, the linguistic ethos prioritizes not showing a preference for either language. Spanish/English CS functions as a unifier that brings together the diverse bilingual listenership of both radio stations.

This study has examined how these two radio stations use Spanish/English CS as a way to foster a pan-Latino identity and a shared Latino ethnic consciousness among multiple, diverse groups of Latinos in LA. The creation of a pan-Latino identity builds in-group solidarity and is moreover facilitated by the radio hosts' use of connector terms, as described by De Fina ("Language Ideologies"). The use of bilingualism in both radio stations' verbal logos also signals Mega 96.3 and Cali 93.9 as a means through which to build community utilizing Spanish/English CS to signal in-group language preference. Additionally, as pointed out in Cali 93.9's broadcasts during the COVID-19 pandemic, garnering solidarity among bilingual Latinos using Spanish/English CS promoted community building and allowed radio hosts to foster cultural connections with audience members through words of encouragement, check-ins, shout-outs, virtual contests, and a strong social media presence.

The growing presence of Spanish and Spanish/English CS on the radio in the United States provides an opportunity for a more diverse representation of Latino linguistic practices in different communities (González Tosat). Language use on Latino radio also showcases regional cultures and identities as they relate to the bilingual and bicultural communities in the United States (Hinger). Mega 96.3 and Cali 93.9 offer a space where the use of Spanish/English CS is a means through which to construct solidarity and shared cultural and linguistic

identity. Bilingualism on Latino radio in LA showcases cultural power for the largest minority group in the country while simultaneously giving a hybrid voice and representation to the shared real-life experiences of Latinos. Further research into this topic might consider US Latino bilingual podcasts or *YouTube* channels to consider how the audiovisual component of their broadcasts foster solidarity and cultural unity.

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Más allá del estereotipo: solidaridad lingüística y reivindicación *Latinx* en *Dexter*

José Manuel Medrano

Introducción

En un contexto mediático que con frecuencia perpetúa narrativas de exclusión, la serie *Dexter* (Showtime, 2006–2013) ofrece un terreno fértil para analizar cómo el español puede convertirse en una herramienta de resistencia cultural y de solidaridad lingüística. Ambientada en Miami, la serie combina el drama criminal con una exploración psicológica singular: su protagonista, Dexter Morgan (interpretado por Michael C. Hall), es un forense especializado en análisis de sangre que lleva una doble vida como asesino en serie guiado por un “código moral”. Dentro del departamento de policía destacan personajes latinos como María LaGuerta, capitana de policía, interpretada por Lauren Vélez, y Ángel Batista, detective, interpretado por David Zayas, quienes no solo aportan a la trama desde sus roles institucionales, sino también desde el peso simbólico de su bilingüismo.

El contexto sociolingüístico de Miami resulta crucial para comprender estas dinámicas. Según datos del U.S. Census Bureau (2020), más del 70 % de la población de Miami-Dade County se identifica como hispana o latina, con una fuerte presencia de origen cubano. En este escenario multicultural, el español convive con el inglés como lengua de comunicación cotidiana y también como marcador de pertenencia cultural, capital social y recurso profesional. Este trasfondo convierte a

la ciudad en un escenario privilegiado para analizar cómo *Dexter* representa el bilingüismo tanto como un déficit como una fortaleza identitaria y narrativa.

Las representaciones mediáticas moldean de manera decisiva la identidad cultural y la percepción pública de las comunidades marginadas. Con frecuencia, las narrativas dominantes reproducen estereotipos que refuerzan desigualdades sociales y lingüísticas, relegando a las voces minoritarias a posiciones subordinadas. Frente a este escenario, el lenguaje puede convertirse en un medio de resistencia y en una herramienta para forjar solidaridades. Este artículo sostiene que los personajes *Latinx* en *Dexter*, como María LaGuerta y Ángel Batista, no solo hablan español, sino que lo emplean estratégicamente para desafiar estructuras opresivas y reclamar un lugar en el imaginario cultural estadounidense. El término *Latinx* se utiliza aquí como alternativa inclusiva y no binaria a *latino* y *latina*, en sintonía con los debates académicos actuales sobre género, inclusión y representación cultural.

Un momento temprano de la serie lo ilustra con claridad: en el episodio “Return to Sender” (“Devolver al remitente”), LaGuerta se dirige a un niño inmigrante en español: “Mijito, todo está bien, te vamos a ayudar.” La breve interacción calma al niño después de que la comunicación en inglés había fracasado, revelando cómo el idioma actúa como puente emocional en situaciones de crisis. LaGuerta traduce empatía con sus palabras: su tono, su elección del diminutivo “mijito” y su decisión de cambiar de código lingüístico expresan una comprensión profunda del contexto cultural y del trauma del niño. La escena destaca que el lenguaje no se limita a transmitir información, sino que también media relaciones de poder, afecto y pertenencia.

Este momento, breve pero significativo, condensa varias de las dimensiones que este artículo explora. En primer lugar, el español aparece como un recurso de empatía que permite a LaGuerta acceder emocionalmente a un personaje marginalizado, en contraste con la incapacidad comunicativa del agente anglófono Doakes. En segundo lugar, su uso del idioma opera como una forma de autoridad profesional: al establecer comunicación efectiva donde otros fallan, LaGuerta reafirma su competencia y liderazgo dentro del cuerpo policial. Finalmente, este gesto lingüístico constituye un acto de resistencia y afirmación identitaria, pues desafía la hegemonía del inglés en un entorno institucional y

mediático que históricamente ha relegado las lenguas minoritarias a los márgenes. En este sentido, la escena anticipa el argumento central del análisis: en *Dexter*, el español no es un simple elemento ornamental ni un marcador de diferencia exótica, sino una práctica sociocultural cargada de significado político. El gesto de LaGuerta representa una forma de solidaridad cultural que trasciende las jerarquías lingüísticas, reconfigurando las relaciones de poder y visibilizando la autodeterminación de los personajes *Latinx* dentro del espacio narrativo.

Para desarrollar este argumento, el análisis se organiza en cinco secciones principales: primero, se examinan los estereotipos que han dominado la representación de la latinidad en la televisión estadounidense; en segundo lugar, se presenta un marco teórico de sociolingüística fundamental que, a partir de los aportes de Ana Celia Zentella, Pierre Bourdieu y Jane H. Hill, permite comprender la dimensión política y cultural del bilingüismo; en tercer lugar, se revisan debates de los estudios culturales y de medios latinos que iluminan las tensiones entre representación, economía política y recepción; se hace una comparación con la serie *Devious Maids* (2013) y finalmente, se estudia *Dexter* como una contranarrativa que, mediante el uso del español, subvierte estereotipos y propone la solidaridad lingüística como forma de resistencia cultural.

Metodológicamente, este artículo se basa en un análisis textual y discursivo de la serie *Dexter*, con especial atención al episodio “Return to Sender”, en el que el uso del español resulta central para la construcción de vínculos afectivos y profesionales. Este episodio constituye el eje del análisis, complementado con escenas de otros capítulos de la primera temporada que también evidencian cómo el idioma funciona como un recurso narrativo y cultural. Se seleccionaron fragmentos significativos en los que María LaGuerta y Ángel Batista emplean el español para establecer conexiones emocionales, ejercer autoridad o interactuar en contextos de vulnerabilidad. Estos pasajes se contrastan con representaciones estereotípicas presentes en otros productos mediáticos, como *Modern Family* y la comedia de George López, con el fin de situar el análisis en un panorama más amplio de la televisión estadounidense. El procedimiento analítico combina marcos de los estudios culturales (Angharad N. Valdivia, Mary C. Beltrán, Frederick Luis Aldama, Camilla Fojas) y de la sociolingüística crítica (Zentella, Bourdieu, Hill), lo que permite examinar cómo el uso del español funciona simultáneamente

como práctica lingüística y como estrategia de resistencia cultural. Este enfoque se inscribe dentro de la metodología del análisis crítico del discurso (ACD), entendiendo el lenguaje como práctica social que refleja y reproduce relaciones de poder.

Estereotipos mediáticos: representaciones limitadas de la latinidad

Cuando se realiza una búsqueda en línea sobre hispanos o latinos en la televisión estadounidense, los nombres de Sofía Vergara y George López emergen como algunos de los más visibles. Sin embargo, estas figuras, aunque prominentes, perpetúan representaciones problemáticas que refuerzan estereotipos negativos. Por ejemplo, Sofía Vergara, en su papel como Gloria en el exitoso programa *Modern Family* (ganador del Emmy como mejor comedia), interpreta a una mujer colombiana que habla con un marcado acento y recurre al *code-mixing* (cambio de código), combinando expresiones en español como “¿Qué pasó?” con frases en inglés como “Are you crazy?” o referencias a la “privacy” en el hogar. Estas formas de alternancia lingüística, lejos de reflejar un bilingüismo auténtico, funcionan como un recurso humorístico que, como señala Molina-Guzmán, contribuye a disciplinar la latinidad mediante la comedia, reforzando estereotipos sobre las comunidades *Latinx* como ruidosas, emocionales y culturalmente ajenas al contexto estadounidense. Es interesante notar que Sofía Vergara, aunque representa a una mujer colombiana, no creció como bilingüe en los Estados Unidos. Su uso del español mezclado con inglés en la serie es una construcción artificial diseñada para entretenimiento, lo que limita su capacidad para representar con precisión las experiencias de las personas *Latinx* bilingües. Este fenómeno refleja una falta de variaciones auténticas del español en los medios estadounidenses, donde las representaciones se reducen a estereotipos simplificados.

Por otro lado, George López, conocido por sus monólogos y programas de comedia, utiliza el humor basado en estereotipos para conectar con su audiencia. En su especial *George Lopez: America's Mexican* (2007), afirma: “We are always going to speak Spanglish,” y presenta ejemplos como: “¿Qué pasó, tía?” seguido por: “I went to the store to buy los zapatos that I like, pero estaban gone. Los shoes amarillos.” Este uso del *code-mixing*, lejos de reflejar la complejidad sociolingüística del

bilingüismo, lo reduce a una caricatura que enfatiza la hibridez lingüística como fuente de humor. Aunque López intenta representar la experiencia cultural de los latinos en Estados Unidos, su enfoque a menudo refuerza estereotipos en lugar de desafiarlos.

En 2013, *The Huffington Post* (ahora conocido como *HuffPost*) publicó un video titulado “10 Latino Stereotypes That Must Go” donde se argumenta que, a medida que crece la población latina, los estereotipos en la televisión deben cambiar. Entre los ejemplos destacados están las representaciones de las latinas como “crazy Latina moms” o sirvientas, y de los latinos como “loud” y pobres, donde todos hablan español. El video también señala el racismo lingüístico dentro de la comunidad latina, como se refleja en una escena de *Orange Is the New Black*: una latina dice: “I don’t speak Spanish”, a lo que otra responde con sarcasmo: “Great, another coconut”, refiriéndose al color de piel y a la falta de conexión con el idioma español.

Estas representaciones, como señala Adam M. Croom, “actually harm the social identity and practical action-possibilities of Mexican Americans” (155). Al reducir la identidad *Latinx* a caricaturas y estereotipos simplificados, estas representaciones perpetúan narrativas erróneas que afectan no solo la percepción pública, sino también las posibilidades de acción práctica y de solidaridad de las comunidades *Latinx*. Estos retratos, diseñados para entretenimiento masivo, ocultan la diversidad cultural, lingüística y socioeconómica que caracteriza a las comunidades *Latinx* en los Estados Unidos. Además, estas representaciones limitan la capacidad de los latinos para participar en narrativas más amplias de inclusión y justicia social, pues refuerzan una imagen monolítica que los sitúa como culturalmente distantes y uniformemente marginalizados. Al perpetuar la idea de que los latinos no pertenecen plenamente a la sociedad estadounidense, los medios de comunicación contribuyen a mantener las barreras estructurales que dificultan su integración y acceso a oportunidades socioeconómicas.

Más allá de su impacto en la percepción pública, estos estereotipos afectan materialmente a las comunidades *Latinx*. Las políticas públicas y las decisiones institucionales a menudo se basan en estas narrativas reduccionistas, lo que refuerza las desigualdades en áreas como la educación, el empleo y el acceso a recursos. En este sentido, abordar las representaciones estereotipadas es un asunto de justicia cultural y una acción

fundamental para dismantlar las estructuras de exclusión que perpetúan estas desigualdades. Finalmente, al perpetuar jerarquías lingüísticas que marginan a los hablantes de español o a los bilingües, los medios refuerzan una narrativa de otredad que ignora el bilingüismo como una fortaleza cultural y social. Esto subraya la necesidad de representaciones mediáticas que celebren la diversidad y promuevan una visión más inclusiva y matizada de la identidad *Latinx* en los Estados Unidos.

Además, los comentarios de López, aunque diseñados para entretener, suelen reforzar dinámicas excluyentes que perpetúan estereotipos negativos sobre las comunidades *Latinx*. En su monólogo *America's Mexican*, por ejemplo, exclama: "Arnold Schwarzenegger, fuck that puto. He is in favor of English only". Aunque su intención podría ser criticar las políticas lingüísticas restrictivas que imponen el inglés como idioma dominante, López recurre a un lenguaje que refuerza estereotipos ofensivos sobre género y orientación sexual. El uso del término *puto* no solo trivializa la lucha por la equidad de género y la inclusión LGBTQI+, sino que también perpetúa actitudes homófobas profundamente arraigadas en ciertos sectores de la comunidad latina. Estas bromas, aunque diseñadas para resaltar hipocresías sociales y políticas, a menudo posicionan a los latinos como intolerantes y culturalmente rezagados, perpetuando una imagen negativa que invalida la diversidad y complejidad de estas comunidades. En lugar de ofrecer una crítica constructiva que desafíe las jerarquías lingüísticas o culturales, el humor de López a menudo refuerza dinámicas de exclusión al recurrir a clichés que consolidan la percepción de los latinos como incapaces de participar en discursos progresistas e inclusivos.

La estrategia humorística de López tiende a simplificar temas complejos, como las políticas lingüísticas y la identidad cultural, reduciendo la lucha de las comunidades *Latinx* a caricaturas que buscan provocar risas a expensas de un análisis más profundo. Esto refleja un problema mayor en las representaciones mediáticas: el humor que critica sistemas opresivos puede perder su efecto transformador si perpetúa las mismas narrativas dañinas que pretende subvertir. En el caso de López, su comedia, aunque popular, no siempre logra trascender los límites de la representación superficial, dejando intactas las estructuras de poder que contribuyen a la exclusión y marginación de las comunidades que busca representar.

López también critica la inmigración en su especial *George Lopez: America's Mexican* (2007) al afirmar: “They want to build a ditch and put crocodiles in it. Build that ditch; in an hour, they will be belts and shoes.” Este comentario, aunque humorístico, refuerza narrativas deshumanizadoras sobre los inmigrantes latinos, subrayando la necesidad de representaciones más responsables en los medios. Según Croom, “Slurs such as spic, slut, wetback, and whore are linguistic expressions that are primarily understood to derogate certain group members on the basis of their descriptive attributes...” (Croom 146–47). Estas expresiones, utilizadas para el humor, reafirman jerarquías lingüísticas y culturales que marginan a las comunidades *Latinx*.

En resumen, las representaciones de Sofía Vergara y George López, aunque ampliamente populares y reconocibles, reflejan una preocupante falta de diversidad y autenticidad en las narrativas latinas presentadas en los medios estadounidenses. Estas figuras, en lugar de proporcionar una representación completa y matizada de las experiencias latinas, perpetúan estereotipos limitantes que reducen la identidad de estas comunidades a clichés superficiales. Mientras que Vergara, en su papel de Gloria en *Modern Family*, se asocia con el tropo de la “latina exótica” y emocional, López recurre a una comedia que refuerza caricaturas sobre el español y el Spanglish como signos de deficiencia cultural o lingüística.

Esta carencia de diversidad en las representaciones no solo limita la comprensión del público sobre las complejidades de las comunidades *Latinx*, sino que también afecta la percepción que los propios latinos tienen de sí mismos. Las narrativas que ofrecen Vergara y López tienden a reforzar las mismas dinámicas de exclusión que los latinos enfrentan en otros espacios, promoviendo la idea de que el éxito mediático está intrínsecamente ligado a la aceptación de roles estereotípicos. Estas representaciones actúan como barreras invisibles que dificultan la creación de personajes que puedan romper con estas dinámicas y ofrecer una visión más auténtica y empoderadora de la experiencia latina. En esto se nota la urgencia de diseñar personajes que desafíen los estereotipos y celebren la riqueza lingüística, cultural y social de las comunidades *Latinx*. Más allá de ser simplemente entretenidos, estos personajes tienen el potencial de reconfigurar el panorama mediático al mostrar la diversidad que define a estas comunidades: desde su bilingüismo dinámico hasta su

capacidad para navegar múltiples contextos culturales. Al romper con las narrativas monolíticas que han dominado durante décadas, se pueden abrir espacios para historias que reflejen las complejidades de la vida latina y también promuevan el entendimiento, la empatía y la solidaridad entre culturas.

Si bien estos ejemplos ilustran con claridad los estereotipos dominantes que han marcado la representación de las comunidades *Latinx* en los medios, como los acentos caricaturescos, los papeles hipersexualizados o el humor que trivializa el bilingüismo, es precisamente frente a estas limitaciones que *Dexter* propone una alternativa radicalmente distinta. La serie en vez de recurrir al español como un recurso humorístico o como un marcador de diferencia que aísla a los personajes lo integra de manera orgánica como un vehículo de comunicación auténtica, de solidaridad cultural y de resistencia simbólica. A través de personajes como María LaGuerta y Ángel Batista, el español se convierte en un medio para construir vínculos emocionales, para ejercer autoridad profesional y para desafiar las jerarquías lingüísticas que suelen relegar a los latinos a posiciones subordinadas. En este sentido, *Dexter* no solo contrasta con representaciones reductoras como las de Sofía Vergara o George López, sino que también abre un espacio para analizar el bilingüismo y la mezcla de código como prácticas de afirmación identitaria que complejizan el panorama mediático estadounidense.

La representación auténtica en los medios no es un simple acto de inclusión; también es una herramienta poderosa para construir una sociedad más equitativa. Los medios tienen el poder de moldear percepciones culturales y de influir en políticas públicas y actitudes sociales. Por lo tanto, es crucial que las narrativas mediáticas evolucionen para abrazar la riqueza de las comunidades *Latinx* en toda su diversidad, contribuyendo a una cultura donde estas voces sean escuchadas, valoradas y respetadas.

El impacto de los estereotipos lingüísticos en la representación de los latinos en los medios

En el 2012, Sara Gates, en un artículo publicado por *The Huffington Post* titulado “Impact of Latino Stereotypes: Latin Americans Viewed Most Negatively in Immigrant Comparison Study”, argumenta que los estereotipos latinos en los medios de comunicación influyen directamente

en la percepción pública y en las actitudes hacia la comunidad latina. Según un estudio de la Universidad de Cincinnati citado por Gates, la mayoría de los encuestados asocia a los latinos con características negativas en términos de riqueza, inteligencia, dependencia, conformidad y violencia. Gates enfatiza que, a diferencia de otros grupos de inmigrantes como asiáticos, europeos y personas del Medio Oriente, los latinos son vistos de manera más crítica y perjudicial en el debate sobre inmigración. "Those surveyed did not affix their beliefs about Asian, European and Middle Eastern immigrants to the impact on U.S. immigration" (2).

Un personaje ficticio como Gloria, interpretado por Sofia Vergara en *Modern Family*, refuerza estos estereotipos con implicaciones sociales profundas. Gloria valida la percepción de que los latinos se resisten a aprender inglés y que, debido a su fuerte acento y uso de un dialecto no estándar, tienen un nivel educativo bajo. Gates destaca cómo estas percepciones afectan la política de inmigración y exacerban los debates en temas como el desempleo, el sistema educativo y el crimen: "[H]ow Americans view Latino immigrants affects how they feel about immigration policy, and, in this case, Latino stereotypes have a negative impact on immigration, especially on hot-button issues such as unemployment, schools and crime" (3). En varias escenas, el personaje expresa frustración por la barrera lingüística y enfatiza la dificultad de comunicarse en inglés, lo que refuerza la idea de que los latinos, al no dominar plenamente el idioma, quedan aislados de la cultura dominante.

Desde una perspectiva sociolingüística, el término *lengua* no solo denota un sistema de comunicación, sino también un marcador de identidad individual y colectiva. Como describe Gates, los estereotipos lingüísticos marginan a los latinos y los relegan a la periferia cultural, construyendo barreras que perpetúan desigualdades sociales y económicas. Esto coincide con lo que Ana Celia Zentella denomina "disparaged dialects," o dialectos despreciados, los cuales son utilizados para etiquetar a sus hablantes como inferiores. Gloria, con su acento marcadamente colombiano y su mezcla de inglés y español, encarna este tipo de estigmatización lingüística. Según Zentella, "Incorrect aspects of grammar or pronunciation label their speakers as inferior..." ("Dime con quién" 26), lo que convierte al personaje de Gloria en una representación que limita la posibilidad de empatía y conexión por parte de la audiencia.

Isabel Molina-Guzmán, en su artículo “Modern Family’s Latina Spitfire in the Era of White Resentment”, señala que el humor racial en *Modern Family* mantiene las jerarquías socioeconómicas estadounidenses: “By disciplining her Latinidad through humor, US socio-economic racial hierarchies are maintained. While most of the time the racial humor in the show is subtle—a mischievous glance, a mispronounced or misspoken word, sometimes the racial comedy surrounding Gloria is more explicit” (1). Aunque Gloria a menudo genera risas, su personaje no desafía las estructuras de poder ni ofrece una alternativa transformadora a las narrativas estereotípicas de Hollywood. Como indica la autora, su representación no logra “fully destabilize the dominant anti-Latino immigration discourse” (2). Por el contrario, su personaje refuerza los estereotipos existentes.

La investigación en estudios de medios *Latinx* ha demostrado que las representaciones estereotipadas no son fenómenos aislados; forman parte de un patrón histórico que atraviesa décadas de producción televisiva y cinematográfica en Estados Unidos. Como explica Angharad N. Valdivia en *Latina/os and the Media*, “The Latina/o presence in U.S. television has historically been shaped by tropes of exoticism, marginalization, and comic relief rather than multidimensional representation” (3). Esta observación confirma que personajes como Gloria en *Modern Family* o las caricaturas de George López no surgen en un vacío, sino que continúan una tradición de representaciones limitantes que reducen a los latinos a figuras cómicas o periféricas dentro del panorama cultural estadounidense.

Mary C. Beltrán amplía esta discusión en *Latina/o Stars in U.S. Eyes: The Making and Meanings of Film and TV Stardom* al señalar que “The stardom of Latina/o performers has often relied on recycled stereotypes that obscure the diversity of Latina/o communities and perpetuate narrow views of identity” (25). Beltrán evidencia cómo incluso la fama y el éxito de actores *Latinx* en Hollywood han dependido en gran medida de la aceptación de papeles que refuerzan visiones reduccionistas de la latinidad. Este fenómeno explica por qué figuras tan visibles como Sofía Vergara o George López alcanzan popularidad masiva, al mismo tiempo que consolidan clichés de exotización, comicidad excesiva o marginalidad cultural.

A esta lógica de representación se suma lo que Frederick Luis Aldama denomina una tensión permanente entre autenticidad y mercado. En

Latino/a Screenwriters and Filmmakers: The Search for Visibility, Aldama sostiene que “Latina/o media makers continually struggle against an industry that pressures them to conform to stereotypical narratives even as they seek to tell more authentic and complex stories” (12). En este marco, el problema va más allá de la existencia de personajes estereotipados. También implica la presión estructural que enfrentan creadores *Latinx* para reproducir narrativas rentables aunque estas limiten la diversidad y la complejidad cultural de sus comunidades.

Por último, Camilla Fojas enfatiza en *Border Bandits: Hollywood on the Southern Frontier* cómo los medios estadounidenses han vinculado de manera persistente a los latinos con narrativas de criminalidad y marginalidad. Según la autora, “Latinos in U.S. media are repeatedly situated within narratives of criminality and illegality, a pattern that normalizes exclusion and justifies marginalization” (56). Este marco de exclusión tiende a configurar la percepción pública y legitimar políticas y actitudes sociales que perpetúan la discriminación hacia estas comunidades.

En conjunto, estas aportaciones sitúan los ejemplos de Sofía Vergara y George López dentro de una genealogía más amplia de representaciones mediáticas que refuerzan jerarquías culturales y lingüísticas. Asimismo, permiten comprender con mayor precisión por qué resulta significativo que una serie como *Dexter* ofrezca una contranarrativa, al presentar personajes latinos que utilizan el español no como fuente de comicidad o estigma, sino como recurso de autoridad profesional, solidaridad comunitaria y resistencia cultural.

La incorporación de estas perspectivas críticas permite situar la representación latina en *Dexter* dentro de un marco histórico y académico más amplio. Si Valdivia, Beltrán, Aldama y Fojas han demostrado cómo la televisión estadounidense ha recurrido de manera reiterada a tropos reductores de la latinidad, el valor de *Dexter* radica precisamente en subvertir esa tradición. A diferencia de otras producciones que capitalizan la exotización o la comicidad, la serie integra el español como un recurso narrativo legítimo y multifacético que refleja la complejidad cultural de Miami. Este contraste evidencia la persistencia de estereotipos en la cultura popular y también la posibilidad de construir contranarrativas donde el bilingüismo se reconozca como una fortaleza cultural y no como un déficit. Con este trasfondo, resulta pertinente examinar cómo

Dexter materializa en la pantalla muchas de las tensiones teóricas sobre lenguaje, identidad y poder que han sido destacadas en los estudios de medios latinos.

La representación de Gloria también perpetúa una conexión problemática entre lengua y clase social. Como destaca Zentella, los acentos extranjeros y los errores gramaticales son percibidos como indicadores de falta de disciplina o educación, especialmente en el caso de inmigrantes pobres y no blancos (26). Gloria, al no dominar el inglés, simboliza la clase baja según las teorías de Pierre Bourdieu, quien sostiene que la desigualdad en el acceso al capital cultural y a las formas legítimas de competencia lingüística contribuye a reproducir las jerarquías sociales. En este sentido, Gloria, al no hablar inglés con fluidez, es representada como dependiente económicamente de su esposo y como objeto de burla más que de respeto. Además, la dinámica lingüística en la serie enfatiza las diferencias generacionales: en varias escenas, su hijo Manny corrige sus errores en inglés, lo que refuerza la percepción de que su competencia lingüística es insuficiente. Esta dependencia lingüística contribuye a la idea de que los inmigrantes latinos no logran integrarse plenamente sin la mediación de otros.

La combinación de estereotipos de género, clase y lengua en el personaje de Gloria subraya la necesidad de representaciones más complejas y positivas de los latinos en los medios. Mientras que personajes como Gloria perpetúan narrativas dañinas, es crucial desarrollar figuras que reflejen la diversidad y la capacidad de las comunidades *Latinx* para trascender estas limitaciones. La representación auténtica del bilingüismo, lejos de caricaturizarlo, puede actuar como un puente cultural que fomente la empatía y desmantele las jerarquías sociales y lingüísticas que estas representaciones actualmente refuerzan.

Sociolingüística fundamental: Lengua, identidad y poder en *Dexter*

El análisis del uso del español en la serie *Dexter* requiere situarse dentro de un marco sociolingüístico amplio que permita entender la interrelación entre lenguaje, identidad y poder. La serie se desarrolla en el contexto de Miami, una ciudad donde el español y el inglés coexisten en constante negociación, y donde las identidades latinas se expresan y se perciben a través de una compleja red de ideologías lingüísticas y

raciales. Desde una perspectiva crítica, el bilingüismo y el cambio de código no se reducen a un rasgo estilístico, sino que actúan como mecanismos de representación social que revelan tensiones entre visibilidad, hegemonía cultural y autenticidad.

Este marco se nutre de distintas corrientes: la sociolingüística crítica, la raciolingüística, los estudios sobre ideologías lingüísticas y los análisis de medios que abordan la racialización del acento y la voz. En *Dexter*, el español se convierte en un espacio de negociación cultural y política. Los personajes latinos, especialmente LaGuerta, Batista y Miguel Prado, articulan su identidad mediante el uso del idioma, desafiando el monolingüismo institucional y la ideología del “inglés como lengua de poder” que, históricamente, ha caracterizado las representaciones televisivas.

Bilingüismo y performatividad mediática

En la sociolingüística contemporánea, el cambio de código (*code-switching*) se entiende como un acto pragmático y social. Cecilia Montes-Alcalá sostiene que la alternancia entre idiomas en los medios no es aleatoria, sino una estrategia para indexar identidades biculturales y legitimar la experiencia bilingüe (134). Su estudio sobre la serie *¿Qué Pasa, USA?* muestra que el humor y la autenticidad surgen precisamente de esa mezcla lingüística que refleja la vida cotidiana de los latinos en los Estados Unidos.

En *Dexter*, estas funciones se observan en el episodio “I Had a Dream” de la temporada 3, cuando Miguel Prado pasa del inglés al español en momentos de intimidad o tensión, utilizando frases como “bájale a la música”. Este acto pragmático no busca solo realismo, sino que simboliza la pertenencia cultural y la solidaridad. El bilingüismo se convierte en un marcador de poder simbólico: quien domina ambos códigos puede cruzar fronteras discursivas, mientras que el monolingüe queda limitado a un registro institucional.

Camilla Fojas advierte que el uso del español en los medios audiovisuales funciona como un espacio de resistencia, aunque también de exotismo. Los personajes bilingües, señala, se mueven entre la transgresión y la comercialización: su diferencia lingüística se convierte en un recurso narrativo que cuestiona el orden cultural dominante, pero a la vez reafirma jerarquías al ser mediada por la mirada anglo (15). Angharad N. Valdivia coincide con Fojas al describir cómo la industria

estadounidense celebra la diversidad latina mientras la encasilla en estereotipos de sensualidad, violencia o marginalidad (22).

La voz latina en *Dexter* participa de esta tensión. Los personajes bilingües son visibles y competentes, pero su uso del español todavía se presenta como una marca de otredad. LaGuerta, por ejemplo, asciende en la jerarquía policial, pero su acento y su español la mantienen en una posición ambivalente, simultáneamente dentro y fuera de la norma institucional.

Aquí cobra relevancia el análisis de Mary C. Beltrán, quien explora cómo Hollywood ha construido históricamente la “voz latina” como signo racializado (18–22). Para Beltrán, la sonoridad del español —su ritmo, su acento y su musicalidad— ha sido utilizada para codificar exotismo, deseo y amenaza. Esta racialización de la voz se articula con lo que Rosina Lippi-Green denomina la “ideología del lenguaje estándar”: la creencia en una norma lingüística asociada con pureza, moralidad y competencia profesional (166). En *Dexter*, las variaciones fonéticas de los personajes latinos se representan tanto como errores percibidos dentro de esta ideología como marcas audibles de diferencia que delimitan el inglés “neutral” del protagonista frente al español “cargado” de los personajes secundarios.

Beltrán analiza también el fenómeno del *crossover stardom*: la posibilidad de que artistas latinos circulen entre el mercado hispano y el anglo, traduciendo su latinidad para audiencias diversas (132–138). Este concepto puede aplicarse al uso del español en *Dexter*, donde el bilingüismo funciona como una forma de mediación cultural que permite a los personajes transitar entre distintos mundos lingüísticos y sociales. Los personajes que alternan idiomas funcionan como mediadores entre mundos, del mismo modo que las estrellas latinas que navegan entre industrias y públicos distintos. Sin embargo, como advierte Beltrán, ese cruce siempre está condicionado por estructuras de poder que regulan cuánto “accento” o “diferencia” puede tolerar el público anglófono (39).

El bilingüismo en *Dexter* es, por tanto, performativo y político. La alternancia de códigos, lejos de ser un reflejo natural del entorno de Miami, actúa como un comentario sobre la inclusión y la exclusión. Los personajes latinos encarnan lo que Jonathan Rosa denomina la *raciolinguistic enregisterment*: el proceso mediante el cual las formas de habla se vinculan a categorías raciales, haciendo que la diferencia lingüística se perciba como diferencia ontológica (5).

Miami y las fronteras del español

El contexto de Miami es clave para entender las dinámicas lingüísticas de *Dexter*. Andrew Lynch describe el español de esta ciudad como un repertorio complejo que combina rasgos caribeños, andinos y estadounidenses (7–10). Más que una lengua homogénea, el “español miamense” funciona como un índice de clase, raza y pertenencia local. En sus palabras, la lengua es una forma de “capital simbólico” que confiere legitimidad a los hablantes dentro de la comunidad.

En *Dexter*, la presencia del español cumple justamente esa función. Cuando LaGuerta se comunica con testigos hispanohablantes o cuando Batista traduce declaraciones para sus colegas, la lengua se convierte en herramienta de mediación institucional. A diferencia del inglés, que opera como idioma de poder formal, el español permite acceder a la empatía y la confianza de las comunidades *Latinx*. Esta dualidad encarna lo que Kathryn A. Woolard y Bambi B. Schieffelin definen como la relación entre lenguaje e ideología moral: cada idioma expresa un conjunto de valores y posicionamientos políticos (57).

Phillip Carter complementa esta lectura al mostrar que las variaciones dentro del español de Miami, por ejemplo entre el acento cubano y el colombiano, también reproducen jerarquías raciales y económicas (68). En el contexto sociolingüístico latinoamericano y estadounidense, las variedades caribeñas como el español cubano han sido históricamente estigmatizadas y percibidas como menos “estándar”, en contraste con variedades asociadas con mayor prestigio educativo o social. En *Dexter*, el habla de Batista, de origen cubano, se asocia con una forma de autenticidad local, mientras que el español de Miguel Prado, representado con rasgos más controlados y formales, puede interpretarse como portador de autoridad y distancia social. Esta oposición sugiere una distinción entre variedades percibidas como populares y otras asociadas con capital cultural o elitismo lingüístico. En este sentido, la serie reproduce lo que Lynch denomina “indexicalidad de clase”: los rasgos fonéticos se convierten en marcadores sociales que el público reconoce y valora (9).

La escena del episodio “Return to Sender” (temporada 1) es un ejemplo ilustrativo. Cuando LaGuerta se dirige a un niño inmigrante cubano llamándolo “mijito”, la serie activa una dimensión afectiva del español que Catherine E. Travis identifica como pragmática del diminutivo (252–255). Según Travis, los diminutivos en el español latinoamericano

expresan empatía, mitigación y solidaridad. En este caso, la forma lingüística no solo suaviza el discurso policial, sino que también afirma una pertenencia compartida dentro del universo latino de la ciudad.

Desde la perspectiva de la raciolingüística, esta escena subvierte temporalmente el poder del inglés. Jonathan Rosa explica que las prácticas lingüísticas racializadas pueden invertir jerarquías al desplazar al oyente dominante: quien no comprende el español experimenta la exclusión que normalmente sufren los hablantes minoritarios (8). *Dexter* utiliza este efecto para invertir la asimetría comunicativa y visibilizar el costo emocional de la marginalidad lingüística.

Beltrán también ayuda a entender esta dinámica al analizar cómo las voces latinas femeninas en Hollywood, como la de Jennifer López, se han convertido en símbolos de autenticidad cultural y a la vez de consumo global (139–144). El habla de LaGuerta, con su mezcla de autoridad y calidez, reproduce esa paradoja: representa el liderazgo femenino latino dentro de una estructura institucional anglo, pero su diferencia lingüística sigue siendo parte del espectáculo de la diversidad.

Raza, lengua y poder

La perspectiva raciolingüística, desarrollada por Rosa y Flores, permite comprender que las ideologías sobre el habla no se limitan a juicios lingüísticos, sino que constituyen mecanismos de racialización. Jonathan Rosa explica que las nociones de “buena pronunciación” o “habla correcta” están imbricadas con estereotipos raciales que asocian el inglés estándar con la blancura y la legitimidad (5). Desde esta mirada, los personajes latinos de *Dexter* son racializados no solo por su apariencia, sino también por sus voces. El bilingüismo, más que un signo de competencia, se convierte en una marca de diferencia audible.

Rosina Lippi-Green argumenta que la ideología del lenguaje estándar es una de las principales formas de mantener la discriminación en Estados Unidos (166). En su análisis de casos judiciales, muestra cómo los acentos se convierten en pretextos para excluir o deslegitimar a hablantes no nativos. *Dexter* refleja esta dinámica en el ámbito policial: mientras el inglés “neutral” de Dexter se asocia con racionalidad y autoridad, el español de Batista y LaGuerta funciona como una diferencia marcada, útil cuando se requiere “traducir” lo latino, pero no del todo integrada al centro del poder institucional.

Terrence Wiley y Marguerite Lukes sostienen que los movimientos *English-only* se basan en la idea de que el monolingüismo equivale a patriotismo (513). En *Dexter*, sin embargo, el monolingüismo limita la eficacia comunicativa. El episodio “Crocodile” de la temporada 1 evidencia esta tensión cuando Doakes necesita depender de Batista para interrogar a un testigo en español. La escena ilustra lo que Bonnie Urciuoli denomina “prejuicio lingüístico estructural”: la subordinación de las lenguas minoritarias en contextos donde la competencia bilingüe es indispensable (27).

Bonnie Urciuoli añade que en el discurso neoliberal contemporáneo la diversidad lingüística se celebra simbólicamente mientras se mantiene la desigualdad práctica (12). La visibilidad de los personajes bilingües de *Dexter* encarna esta paradoja: el español se reconoce como un valor cultural, pero permanece subordinado a la jerarquía del inglés. Desde la teoría mediática, Mary C. Beltrán ofrece una explicación complementaria (142). Al estudiar a las estrellas *Latinx* en Hollywood, señala que la voz y el acento se convierten en “capital cultural” cuando pueden ser comercializados sin amenazar el orden racial dominante. LaGuerta y Batista encarnan esta lógica: su bilingüismo los hace útiles dentro del sistema, pero su diferencia lingüística sigue funcionando como marca de espectáculo y exotismo.

Ideologías lingüísticas y mediación cultural

Las ideologías lingüísticas operan como puentes entre la estructura social y la práctica discursiva. Kathryn A. Woolard y Bambi B. Schieffelin explican que los juicios sobre el lenguaje están ligados a valores morales y políticos, de modo que hablar “correctamente” implica adoptar una posición social legítima (57). En *Dexter*, el inglés policial representa la voz de la ley y la racionalidad, mientras que el español representa la del afecto y la comunidad. Sin embargo, esta división no es neutral: reproduce una jerarquía donde la emocionalidad latina complementa la frialdad anglo, reforzando estereotipos de género y etnicidad.

Beltrán describe un proceso similar en la construcción de las estrellas latinas, cuyas voces se asocian con la pasión y la autenticidad (139). LaGuerta se inscribe en esta tradición: su liderazgo combina autoridad institucional y calidez maternal, una dualidad que el guion utiliza para dotar de humanidad al aparato policial, pero que a la vez perpetúa el

imaginario de la mujer latina como mediadora emocional. El análisis de Lippi-Green resulta pertinente aquí: cuando se rechaza un acento, también se rechaza la identidad de quien lo porta (164). En este sentido, la serie plantea una contradicción ideológica: promueve la diversidad lingüística como valor, pero mantiene el inglés como idioma del poder. Desde su posición de latino bilingüe, Batista traduce para los testigos que lo necesiten (otros latinos), pero Dexter, como protagonista anglo, nunca necesita hacerlo; el español se tolera, no se comparte.

Desde la teoría cultural, Fojas propone entender el bilingüismo mediático como una forma de frontera simbólica (15). Cada uso del español en una serie anglófona reactiva los límites entre “ellos” y “nosotros”. En *Dexter*, esa frontera se visibiliza cada vez que el diálogo cambia de idioma: el espectador monolingüe experimenta una exclusión momentánea, mientras el espectador bilingüe encuentra un espacio de reconocimiento.

Pragmatismo lingüístico y afecto

La dimensión afectiva del español en *Dexter* merece atención especial. Catherine E. Travis demuestra que los diminutivos en el español conversacional no solo reducen el tamaño de lo designado, sino que comunican cercanía, mitigación y cortesía (252–255). En el episodio “Return to Sender”, cuando LaGuerta llama “mijito” al niño cubano, la palabra funciona como estrategia pragmática de empatía y contención. Este gesto lingüístico contrasta con la frialdad profesional de Dexter, para quien el lenguaje opera como instrumento de análisis y control.

Desde la semiótica del afecto, el diminutivo actúa como marcador de identidad colectiva: conecta a hablantes de distintas procedencias latinoamericanas en un mismo marco emocional. Lynch sugiere que este tipo de rasgos, aparentemente menores, son fundamentales para entender el español de Miami como práctica comunitaria y no solo como vehículo de comunicación (10). En la serie, el uso del diminutivo dramatiza la tensión entre institucionalidad y afecto, entre la racionalidad del inglés y la empatía del español.

Lenguaje, identidad y economía del exotismo

La dimensión económica del lenguaje emerge al considerar las reflexiones de Beltrán sobre el *crossover* (132–138). Las industrias culturales

estadounidenses convierten la latinidad en mercancía mediante la traducción controlada de sus signos lingüísticos y visuales. En este sentido, el bilingüismo en *Dexter* puede leerse como un recurso de autenticidad destinado a aumentar la verosimilitud del relato, pero también como un gesto de mercantilización del “color local” de Miami.

Valdivia advierte que la visibilidad mediática latina suele estar condicionada por esta economía del exotismo: se permite la diferencia solo cuando resulta rentable o decorativa (25). En la serie, el español aparece estratégicamente en contextos emocionales o culturales, pero rara vez en los momentos de racionalidad narrativa. El idioma, así, se convierte en signo de humanidad y sensibilidad, atributos que refuerzan la dicotomía entre el protagonista anglo y su entorno multicultural.

Urciuoli denomina a esta lógica “diversidad neoliberal”: una inclusión simbólica que no transforma las estructuras de poder (14). *Dexter* ofrece una diversidad lingüística administrada, donde el español se muestra, pero no se comparte; se exhibe como valor estético más que como práctica cotidiana.

Hacia una sociolingüística crítica del audiovisual

La articulación de estos enfoques permite entender el uso del español en *Dexter* como una forma de comentario social sobre la lengua, la raza y el poder. Desde Montes-Alcalá hasta Beltrán, los estudios revisados coinciden en que el lenguaje audiovisual refleja y produce ideologías. En la serie, el bilingüismo opera simultáneamente como signo de inclusión y de control.

El español, en su dimensión pragmática, afectiva y racializada, constituye una herramienta de mediación entre la institución policial y las comunidades *Latinx*, pero también un recordatorio de los límites de esa mediación. Como sugiere Rosa, los hablantes racializados se mueven en un espacio de doble consciencia lingüística: deben dominar los códigos dominantes sin perder la autenticidad cultural que se les exige representar (8).

Dexter reitera y cuestiona esa paradoja de manera constante. Al incorporar el español en su narrativa, la serie reconoce la realidad plurilingüe y multicultural de Miami, una ciudad en la que las fronteras entre inglés y español son porosas y negociadas diariamente. El uso del español en boca de personajes latinos no es meramente decorativo, sino que evidencia la coexistencia de lenguajes, ideologías y jerarquías. Sin

embargo, esta inclusión no implica una democratización plena del espacio lingüístico. Al mantener el inglés como lengua principal del relato y del poder institucional, la serie perpetúa lo que Lippi-Green denomina la “ideología del lenguaje estándar”, en la cual el inglés se asocia con racionalidad, control y autoridad, mientras que el español ocupa un lugar subordinado, afectivo o anecdótico (166).

Esta contradicción revela una tensión estructural del imaginario estadounidense contemporáneo. *Dexter* muestra cómo el español se ha vuelto indispensable para representar la autenticidad de lo urbano y lo diverso, pero al mismo tiempo, ese mismo idioma es domesticado dentro de los límites del discurso dominante. La serie se apropia del español para construir verosimilitud, pero no para cederle el control de la narración. Así, el bilingüismo funciona como espejo de las relaciones de poder: visibiliza la diferencia cultural y la celebra superficialmente, sin desestabilizar las jerarquías que subordinan lo latino a lo anglo.

En este sentido, *Dexter* condensa una paradoja cultural más amplia en los Estados Unidos del siglo XXI. Por un lado, el español se erige como lengua de mercado, identidad y conexión emocional; por otro, continúa siendo un marcador de otredad y sospecha. La serie dramatiza esta dualidad al situar el español en el espacio de lo íntimo, lo comunitario y lo emocional, mientras reserva el inglés para la racionalidad, la ciencia forense y la autoridad institucional. Esta división lingüística traduce el modo en que la sociedad estadounidense gestiona su diversidad: incorporando la diferencia sin renunciar al privilegio del inglés como símbolo de cohesión nacional.

Al hacerlo, *Dexter* se convierte en un texto emblemático de lo que Bonnie Urciuoli describe como “diversidad neoliberal”: una inclusión aparente que celebra la multiplicidad cultural mientras conserva intactos los regímenes de poder (14). El español en la serie actúa como signo de integración simbólica, pero no como vehículo de agencia. En términos de Jonathan Rosa, la representación del bilingüismo reproduce lo que él denomina “enregistración raciolingüística” de la latinidad: el español se asocia con emoción, comunidad y corporalidad, mientras que el inglés se vincula con inteligencia, objetividad y autoridad (8).

En última instancia, *Dexter* transforma el bilingüismo en un espejo que refleja las tensiones socioculturales de los Estados Unidos contemporáneos. Es un país que necesita del español para narrarse a sí mismo,

para representar su diversidad y su futuro demográfico, pero que aún teme su poder simbólico como signo de alteridad. El resultado es un retrato ambivalente: una nación que consume el español como parte de su identidad cultural, pero que sigue marcando distancia con los cuerpos y las voces que lo encarnan.

La mezcla de código como herramienta de identidad, resistencia y solidaridad

Cuando un bilingüe mezcla de código entre el español y el inglés, ya sea de manera consciente o inconsciente, está realizando mucho más que un acto comunicativo; está expresando su pertenencia simultánea a múltiples mundos lingüísticos y culturales. Este fenómeno, lejos de ser una práctica desorganizada, es una afirmación deliberada y significativa de identidad que refleja la capacidad de los hablantes para navegar entre diversos contextos sociales y culturales. Según Ana Celia Zentella, el cambio de código constituye una declaración poderosa: “I belong to two worlds and can function in either, but I am most at ease when I can shift back and forth from one to the other” (54). Esta flexibilidad lingüística no solo evidencia la riqueza de la experiencia bilingüe, sino que también desafía la imposición de normas monolingües que, históricamente, han intentado homogeneizar y marginar las identidades híbridas.

La mezcla de código trasciende su rol funcional y se convierte en una herramienta de resistencia frente a las jerarquías lingüísticas y culturales que han relegado a las comunidades bilingües a los márgenes del discurso dominante. En este contexto, alternar entre idiomas no solo desafía las expectativas impuestas por las estructuras hegemónicas, sino que también crea espacios de solidaridad y pertenencia dentro de estas comunidades. Al cambiar de código, los hablantes envían un mensaje implícito de inclusión y reconocimiento hacia sus interlocutores, validando sus historias compartidas, luchas colectivas y capacidad de adaptación. Este acto lingüístico, por tanto, no es una mera respuesta a la necesidad comunicativa, sino una declaración política y cultural que afirma la multiplicidad de identidades.

Además de ser un acto de resistencia, la mezcla de código fomenta la solidaridad y el sentido de pertenencia al actuar como un puente que conecta generaciones, contextos históricos y realidades socioculturales diversas. Por ejemplo, en un ámbito familiar o comunitario, alternar

entre español e inglés puede crear un espacio seguro donde se validan y celebran ambas identidades culturales. Este acto, lejos de ser caótico, sigue reglas implícitas que los miembros de estas comunidades dominan con fluidez. La alternancia lingüística simboliza así la riqueza de la experiencia bilingüe y la capacidad de los hablantes para moverse entre mundos aparentemente separados, sin abandonar su esencia.

En contextos familiares, la mezcla de código también puede actuar como una herramienta para transmitir valores culturales y lingüísticos a las generaciones más jóvenes. Por ejemplo, un padre que habla en español con su hijo pero incorpora frases en inglés refleja la realidad bilingüe de muchas familias latinas, pero también un esfuerzo consciente por mantener viva la conexión cultural. Este intercambio intergeneracional es clave para preservar la identidad colectiva de estas comunidades en un entorno que a menudo presiona por la asimilación lingüística.

En el ámbito de los medios de comunicación y la representación cultural, la mezcla de código es igualmente significativa, ya que desafía los estereotipos impuestos sobre el bilingüismo y redefine las narrativas dominantes. Tradicionalmente, el bilingüismo ha sido representado como un defecto o una carencia, un signo de falta de asimilación o competencia lingüística. Sin embargo, cuando el cambio de código se representa de manera auténtica, como en producciones que reflejan fielmente las dinámicas de las comunidades bilingües, se convierte en una herramienta poderosa para validar estas experiencias y promover una mayor comprensión cultural.

Producciones como *Dexter*, por ejemplo, utilizan la mezcla de código para destacar la autenticidad de sus personajes latinos, mostrando cómo estos navegantes culturales emplean el lenguaje para construir conexiones y desafiar las estructuras hegemónicas. En contraste, representaciones que reducen la mezcla de código a un recurso humorístico o una caricatura perpetúan estereotipos dañinos que desvalorizan la experiencia bilingüe. En este sentido, la representación auténtica de la mezcla de código en los medios dignifica a las comunidades bilingües al mismo tiempo que también educa a las audiencias sobre la riqueza y complejidad de estas prácticas lingüísticas.

La mezcla de código también tiene un componente político. Al rechazar la idea de que los hablantes deben conformarse a un solo idioma o conjunto de normas culturales, las comunidades bilingües

están desafiando activamente las narrativas de homogenización que históricamente han intentado silenciar sus voces. Este acto lingüístico se convierte en una forma de resistencia frente a las estructuras que buscan invisibilizar la diversidad, reafirmando al mismo tiempo la legitimidad de las experiencias híbridas.

Por otro lado, la mezcla de código fomenta la solidaridad al unir a individuos que comparten experiencias similares de desplazamiento, marginalización y adaptación cultural. Cuando un hablante alterna entre español e inglés en una conversación, envía un mensaje de reconocimiento y aceptación a quienes entienden y valoran esta práctica, en particular a quienes han pasado por procesos similares. En este sentido, la mezcla de código se transforma en un acto inclusivo que promueve la empatía y refuerza los lazos comunitarios, al mismo tiempo que refleja las experiencias compartidas de negociación cultural y lingüística.

En resumen, la mezcla de código simboliza la resistencia frente a la homogenización cultural y lingüística y actúa como un gesto de solidaridad hacia aquellos que enfrentan luchas similares. Este acto lingüístico, lejos de ser un simple recurso comunicativo, es una poderosa afirmación de identidad híbrida y un medio para construir narrativas que trascienden las barreras impuestas por las estructuras dominantes. Al abrazar la mezcla de código como una expresión de orgullo cultural y un puente hacia la conexión comunitaria, las comunidades bilingües están reivindicando su lugar en un mundo que, aunque a menudo busca marginarlas, también depende de su capacidad para adaptarse y prosperar en la diferencia. Estos planteamientos teóricos encuentran un correlato directo en *Dexter*, donde el español y la mezcla de códigos no aparecen como defectos cómicos, sino como recursos narrativos que profundizan la trama y dotan de autenticidad a los personajes latinos. La serie pone en escena de manera concreta lo que la teoría subraya: el bilingüismo como capital cultural y como espacio de resistencia frente a la homogeneización lingüística.

El español en *Dexter*: Puente emocional, capital cultural y resistencia mediática

En el contexto de *Dexter*, ambientado en Miami, una ciudad cuya identidad cultural está profundamente marcada por su significativa población cubana, el español desempeña un papel central en la narrativa y en la

construcción de los personajes. Más que un simple medio de comunicación, el idioma se erige como un recurso multifacético que conecta a los personajes con sus raíces culturales, desafiando estereotipos limitantes y proporcionando representaciones más auténticas y matizadas de la comunidad latina. A través del uso del español, *Dexter* construye una contranarrativa frente a las representaciones mediáticas dominantes, mostrando cómo el lenguaje puede actuar como una herramienta de resistencia, solidaridad y empoderamiento.

Uno de los momentos más conmovedores y simbólicos de la serie ocurre cuando la capitana bilingüe María LaGuerta utiliza el español para establecer una conexión afectiva con una víctima vulnerable. En una escena particularmente emotiva de la primera temporada, un niño asustado y sucio, claramente traumatizado, reza el “Padre nuestro” mientras el capitán James Doakes intenta comunicarse con él en inglés: “You alright, kid?” Sin embargo, la barrera lingüística exacerba el pánico del niño, intensificando su miedo y sensación de aislamiento. En este contexto de incomunicación, LaGuerta interviene con suavidad, utilizando el español para calmar al niño: “Mijito, todo está bien, te vamos a ayudar”.

La elección del diminutivo “mijito” en este diálogo es particularmente significativa. Como señala Amado Alonso, el diminutivo no solo atenúa la dureza del mensaje, sino que también actúa como un puente emocional cargado de afecto y calidez, estableciendo una conexión inmediata y de confianza entre los interlocutores. Este recurso lingüístico, profundamente arraigado en las dinámicas familiares y culturales de las comunidades hispanohablantes, simboliza el cuidado y la empatía inherentes a la interacción. Al utilizar un lenguaje familiar y reconfortante, LaGuerta logra calmar al niño al mismo tiempo que también refuerza el mensaje de protección y consuelo, mostrando cómo el idioma puede trascender las palabras para transmitir un sentido de seguridad en momentos de crisis. Más allá de este uso afectivo del español, la serie también resalta su dimensión profesional y estratégica. En el caso de Batista, el idioma se convierte en una herramienta indispensable para interactuar con la comunidad latina, obtener información crucial y consolidar su papel como puente cultural dentro del departamento policial.

La dirección de cámara amplifica este efecto emocional a través del uso del contra-picado, que presenta la perspectiva del niño hacia

LaGuerta. Esta decisión estética enfatiza el alivio y la confianza que ella genera y también subraya su papel como una figura protectora y maternal dentro de la narrativa. La interacción no solo humaniza al niño en un momento de extrema vulnerabilidad, sino que también resalta cómo el español se convierte en una herramienta clave para construir empatía y solidaridad. En este caso, el idioma trasciende su función básica para transformarse en un recurso cultural que dismantela las jerarquías lingüísticas implícitas en las dinámicas sociales y mediáticas.

Más allá de este momento específico, el español en *Dexter* opera como un recurso estratégico y profesional que refuerza la eficacia y la relevancia de los personajes dentro de su entorno. Según Pierre Bourdieu, el lenguaje puede generar “...a profit of distinction on the occasion of each social exchange” (66). En el caso de LaGuerta, su bilingüismo le permite desempeñar su trabajo de manera efectiva mientras la posiciona como una líder respetada en una comunidad mayoritariamente latina como Miami.

La habilidad de LaGuerta y de su colega Ángel Batista para alternar entre el inglés y el español refleja la realidad cotidiana de muchos latinos en los Estados Unidos y los posiciona como personajes competentes y culturalmente conectados. Este recurso lingüístico les permite navegar con soltura en un entorno multicultural, sirviendo como puentes culturales entre sus colegas y las comunidades a las que atienden. Además, su dominio del español se presenta como más que una habilidad técnica: es un símbolo de autenticidad y compromiso con sus raíces culturales, desafiando las narrativas que perciben el bilingüismo como una desventaja o una barrera.

La representación del español en *Dexter* también destaca por su capacidad de normalizar y dignificar el bilingüismo en un contexto mediático donde a menudo aparece como un elemento caricaturesco o humorístico. En lugar de limitarse a usar el idioma como un recurso narrativo superficial, la serie lo integra de manera orgánica en las interacciones y dinámicas de los personajes, mostrando cómo el español puede ser una herramienta para la construcción de identidades híbridas y para la promoción de una representación más inclusiva de las comunidades *Latinx*. Este enfoque desafía las percepciones tradicionales sobre la relación entre el idioma y el poder, posicionando al español como un recurso valioso tanto cultural como profesionalmente.

Por último, *Dexter* ilustra cómo el español puede actuar como un símbolo de inclusión, resiliencia y empoderamiento. A través de personajes como LaGuerta y Batista, la serie demuestra que el idioma no es solo un medio de comunicación, sino una herramienta poderosa para construir conexiones, dismantelar estereotipos y reivindicar el lugar de las comunidades *Latinx* en un entorno multicultural. Este enfoque enriquece la narrativa de la serie, promoviendo un entendimiento más profundo y matizado de la riqueza cultural que el español aporta a la sociedad estadounidense.

Resistencia frente a los estereotipos mediáticos

En contraste con personajes como Gloria de *Modern Family*, que perpetúan estereotipos sobre el acento extranjero y la dependencia, LaGuerta y Batista en *Dexter* representan un esfuerzo consciente por ofrecer una narrativa más inclusiva y respetuosa sobre la comunidad latina. Mientras que Gloria es caricaturizada por su supuesta incapacidad para asimilarse lingüística o culturalmente al entorno estadounidense, los personajes de *Dexter* no utilizan el español como un símbolo de diferencia o aislamiento; lo utilizan como una herramienta de afirmación cultural y profesional. Cabe señalar que los géneros televisivos moldean la representación. Las comedias suelen recurrir a la exageración y la caricatura, lo que explica en parte los acentos estereotipados en *Modern Family* o el humor de López. Por el contrario, el drama criminal de *Dexter* favorece una representación más matizada y realista del bilingüismo, lo que refuerza su potencial como contranarrativa. Esta representación no solo dignifica el bilingüismo, sino que también desafía las narrativas simplistas que reducen la identidad *Latinx* a clichés y estereotipos.

El contraste con personajes mediáticos interpretados por Sofía Vergara y George López es evidente. Ambos actores, aunque muy populares, han basado parte de su éxito en perpetuar representaciones cómicas que refuerzan percepciones negativas sobre los latinos, ya sea mediante acentos exagerados o humor basado en estereotipos. En cambio, *Dexter* presenta a personajes como LaGuerta y Batista como individuos complejos, capaces de navegar tanto los desafíos del bilingüismo como las dinámicas de poder en una sociedad multicultural. El español, en lugar de limitar su participación, les otorga una ventaja cultural y profesional,

desafiando las jerarquías que históricamente han relegado a las comunidades *Latinx* a roles secundarios o estereotipados.

El uso del español en *Dexter* trasciende su función comunicativa básica para convertirse en un símbolo de identidad, resistencia y capital cultural. A través de personajes como LaGuerta y Batista, la serie demuestra que el bilingüismo no es una simple habilidad práctica; es una herramienta poderosa para superar barreras, construir puentes culturales y resistir las narrativas dominantes que perpetúan la marginalización. Estos personajes se convierten en ejemplos de cómo la capacidad de hablar dos idiomas puede servir como un recurso para dismantelar prejuicios y construir solidaridad entre diferentes comunidades.

En un contexto mediático donde las representaciones *Latinx* suelen ser limitadas y estereotipadas, *Dexter* ofrece un modelo alternativo que celebra la diversidad lingüística y cultural. Al desafiar las percepciones tradicionales sobre el lugar del español en la sociedad estadounidense, la serie fomenta una narrativa más inclusiva, empoderando a las comunidades *Latinx* y promoviendo una mayor empatía y comprensión entre culturas. En lugar de presentar el bilingüismo como una deficiencia, lo convierte en un recurso estratégico y cultural que enriquece tanto a los personajes como a la narrativa en general.

Más allá de los aspectos profesionales, *Dexter* también humaniza a sus personajes latinos al mostrar cómo el lenguaje puede actuar como un vehículo de solidaridad. María LaGuerta y Ángel Batista utilizan el español, y en particular el diminutivo, como un recurso lingüístico que establece vínculos afectivos y crea conexiones en momentos de vulnerabilidad. En situaciones críticas, como cuando se enfrentan a víctimas o personas en peligro, sus palabras cargadas de afecto y cercanía calman a las personas y validan las emociones y experiencias del otro.

Según Amado Alonso, el diminutivo “parece significar un aumento de concepto, una concreción del concepto al caso particular, resultante de la emoción del que habla” (36). En este sentido, el diminutivo no es simplemente una forma gramatical, sino un recurso cargado de significado emocional y cultural que crea un espacio de intimidad y comprensión. Esto es especialmente relevante en situaciones donde la diferencia lingüística o cultural podría ser una barrera para la comunicación efectiva.

Emilio Nández Fernández refuerza esta idea al señalar que el diminutivo es un signo “de comunicación nocional y de apreciación axiológica”,

lo que implica que refleja tanto la postura del hablante hacia el oyente como un reconocimiento de la humanidad compartida entre ambos. En el caso de LaGuerta y Batista, el uso del diminutivo expresa afecto y actúa como un gesto de solidaridad, validando la experiencia del otro y demostrando cómo el lenguaje puede ser un puente para la empatía y la conexión emocional.

Esta representación lingüística en *Dexter* ofrece una narrativa más rica y compleja sobre la experiencia latina en los Estados Unidos, desafiando estereotipos y promoviendo una visión más matizada y empoderadora. Al posicionar el español como una herramienta de resistencia cultural y profesional, la serie reivindica la importancia de la diversidad lingüística en la construcción de identidades *Latinx* auténticas y en la promoción de una sociedad más inclusiva.

LaGuerta como figura maternal y solidaria

Aunque María LaGuerta no tiene hijos, su lenguaje y acciones a menudo la posicionan como una figura maternal que dismantla los estereotipos tradicionales asociados con las mujeres latinas en los medios. En el episodio “Return to Sender,” LaGuerta exhibe esta cualidad al interactuar con Óscar, un niño inmigrante cubano rescatado de un coyote. La escena, cargada de simbolismo y emoción, muestra a Óscar sentado en un carro, rezando el “Padre nuestro,” mientras una trabajadora social intenta, sin éxito, que baje del vehículo hablándole en inglés. El niño, incapaz de entender el idioma, permanece inmóvil, atrapado entre el miedo y la incertidumbre. Es en este momento crítico cuando LaGuerta interviene, hablando en español con una suavidad y calidez que rompen el aislamiento del niño: “¿Tú quieres venir conmigo?”

El uso del diminutivo “mijito” en este diálogo no es casual. Este término, profundamente enraizado en las prácticas lingüísticas y culturales de las comunidades *Latinx*, actúa como un vehículo de empatía y solidaridad. Más que una simple palabra, “mijito” establece un vínculo inmediato que humaniza la interacción, transmitiendo protección y cercanía en un contexto de vulnerabilidad. La cámara refuerza este gesto mediante un plano que muestra a LaGuerta reflejada en la ventana del carro, simbolizando el puente de confianza que ella construye con Óscar. Este momento cinematográfico tranquiliza al niño al mismo tiempo que

resalta cómo el idioma puede convertirse en una herramienta crucial para generar solidaridad y confianza en situaciones de crisis.

Aunque la representación maternal de LaGuerta podría interpretarse como una reiteración del estereotipo de la mujer latina cuidadora, su rol de capitana de policía y su bilingüismo resignifican este tropo de manera profunda. A diferencia de personajes como Carmen en *Devious Maids*, reducida al rol de empleada doméstica, LaGuerta ejerce autoridad institucional y cultural, mostrando cómo la empatía maternal puede coexistir con el poder profesional. Así, el tropo de la cuidadora se transforma en un recurso de liderazgo y solidaridad, no en una limitación. En lugar de reducirla a una figura doméstica confinada al ámbito privado, la serie la sitúa en una posición de autoridad institucional donde la empatía y el cuidado no disminuyen su poder, sino que lo potencian. Su maternidad simbólica se entrelaza con su capacidad profesional y con el capital cultural que le otorga el dominio del español, lo que complejiza la representación y la aleja de una lectura simplista. Lejos de reproducir el arquetipo de la “madre sacrificada” o de la “nanny” que domina la televisión estadounidense, LaGuerta encarna una figura híbrida: protectora y solidaria, pero también una persona que es líder y estratega. Esta tensión demuestra cómo los gestos maternos pueden resignificarse como recursos de resistencia y autoridad, desafiando las narrativas que históricamente han limitado a las mujeres latinas a roles unidimensionales.

La figura de LaGuerta, por lo tanto, no se limita a consolar. Su presencia maternal y solidaria subvierte los discursos que representan a las mujeres latinas como sujetos pasivos o hipersexualizados, y en su lugar la posiciona como una protectora y guía emocional capaz de utilizar el lenguaje y la empatía para enfrentar situaciones complejas y establecer vínculos significativos. Este enfoque tiene el efecto de humanizar a los personajes latinos y promover una representación más matizada y auténtica de la mujer latina en los medios, reconociendo la coexistencia entre autoridad profesional y sensibilidad cultural.

En una escena posterior, Ángel Batista emplea una estrategia similar para establecer una conexión con Óscar, consolidando aún más el papel del lenguaje como herramienta de solidaridad. Mientras el niño come un pastelito, Batista comenta: “I forgot how much I loved pastelitos

growing-up. I was barely his age when I came to this country. I threw up the whole way.” Esta confesión personal, cargada de nostalgia, no solo crea un ambiente de confianza, sino que también utiliza el español y la experiencia compartida de la inmigración como un medio para generar empatía. Al compartir su propia historia de infancia, Batista valida las emociones y temores de Óscar, estableciendo un vínculo que trasciende las palabras y que refleja la interconexión de sus experiencias.

Este intercambio entre Batista y Óscar subraya cómo el lenguaje, la memoria y la narrativa personal pueden actuar como poderosas herramientas para construir solidaridad. En este caso, la nostalgia no es simplemente un recordatorio del pasado, sino un medio para conectar generaciones y contextos culturales, creando un espacio donde las experiencias compartidas son reconocidas y validadas. Este acto refuerza la idea de que el español es un recurso cultural y emocional que fomenta la unidad y la resiliencia.

A través de estos momentos, *Dexter* muestra cómo personajes como LaGuerta y Batista trascienden los estereotipos tradicionales para ofrecer representaciones más profundas y auténticas de las comunidades *Latinx*. Al utilizar el idioma como un puente para la empatía y la solidaridad, desafían las representaciones mediáticas que reducen a los latinos a caricaturas. En cambio, se presentan como figuras complejas y multidimensionales, capaces de construir conexiones emocionales y culturales en situaciones de extrema vulnerabilidad. Este enfoque reivindica la riqueza del lenguaje y la cultura latina, posicionando al español como una herramienta central en la promoción de la comprensión y la solidaridad intergeneracional.

El español como símbolo de solidaridad cultural

En *Dexter*, el español se convierte en un recurso multifacético que fomenta la solidaridad cultural en un contexto de diversidad. A diferencia de personajes como Gloria en *Modern Family*, que refuerzan nociones de dependencia y aislamiento a través de su representación lingüística, LaGuerta y Batista utilizan el idioma para construir conexiones significativas y afirmar su identidad cultural. Este enfoque transforma al español en una herramienta poderosa para resistir las jerarquías sociales y promover la justicia cultural, posicionando el bilingüismo como una fortaleza en lugar de una deficiencia.

La representación de LaGuerta y Batista trasciende los límites del guion televisivo, ofreciendo una reflexión profunda sobre el poder del lenguaje como un catalizador de solidaridad, tanto dentro como fuera de la pantalla. En lugar de reducir el español a un recurso narrativo superficial o a un elemento humorístico, *Dexter* lo integra de manera orgánica en las interacciones de sus personajes, subrayando su papel central en la construcción de relaciones humanas y en la afirmación de identidades híbridas.

Más allá de su dimensión emocional y cultural, el español en *Dexter* es también una herramienta profesional esencial. En una escena del episodio, Ángel Batista utiliza su dominio del español para obtener información crucial de una víctima, consolidando su posición como un recurso indispensable dentro del equipo policial. Este contraste es particularmente evidente en relación con el sargento Doakes, quien, a pesar de su fortaleza y habilidades, carece de competencia en español y depende de Batista para interactuar con la comunidad latina. Este escenario enfatiza la relevancia del español en un contexto como el de Miami mientras cuestiona la percepción del inglés como la única lengua válida en los Estados Unidos, sugiriendo que el español puede tener un valor igual o incluso superior en ciertos contextos.

Pierre Bourdieu señala que la promoción de un idioma oficial como lengua nacional otorga un “de facto monopoly of politics” (45). Sin embargo, *Dexter* subraya cómo, en una ciudad como Miami, el español es más que culturalmente relevante; es también económicamente valioso. Doakes, a pesar de su educación universitaria, se encuentra en desventaja porque no puede comunicarse eficazmente con las víctimas latinas, lo que refuerza el argumento de Bourdieu de que los sistemas educativos tradicionales tienden a devaluar las formas lingüísticas populares al considerarlas menos legítimas. En este contexto, el español se convierte en una herramienta de empoderamiento y resistencia frente a las jerarquías lingüísticas tradicionales.

Un ejemplo clave ocurre cuando Batista asegura a Mariel, una testigo, en español: “Estos son mis amigos de los que te platicué.” Mientras Mariel evita hacer contacto visual con Doakes, responde a Batista con confianza y revela información crucial sobre un coyote que había mantenido a varios cubanos en condiciones deplorables. Este momento subraya cómo el español no solo facilita la comunicación, sino que

también genera confianza y solidaridad en situaciones de alta tensión. La capacidad de Batista para conectar con la comunidad a través del idioma refleja su competencia profesional y su empatía cultural.

La mezcla de código entre el español y el inglés constituye otro recurso significativo en *Dexter*. Más allá de su función lingüística, este fenómeno configura un espacio compartido que permite a los personajes establecer vínculos en un plano social y cultural. Por ejemplo, en “I Had a Dream” (“Tuve un sueño”), el episodio once de la tercera temporada, Miguel Prado, interpretado por Jimmy Smits, recurre a la alternancia de códigos para generar camaradería con Dexter al incorporar expresiones en español que funcionan como marcadores de cercanía, complicidad e identidad compartida. Durante una despedida de soltero, Prado llama a Dexter “gilipolla,” un término coloquial de carácter despectivo, propio del español peninsular, que en este contexto funciona como marcador de cercanía e inclusión. El uso de esta forma léxica, ajena al español cubano, sugiere que la representación del español en la serie no responde a una variedad homogénea, sino que incorpora registros diversos que circulan más allá de identidades nacionales específicas. Como señala Adam M. Croom, “Estos usos no despectivos son posibles gracias al hecho de que los miembros de un mismo grupo suelen compartir muchas de las mismas luchas discriminatorias y enfrentarse a prejuicios similares” (148).

Prado también utiliza la mezcla de código para incluir a Dexter en su círculo íntimo, diciendo: “Okay, let’s bring the music down, bájale a la música. Put your packages away...” Pieter Muysken explica que este fenómeno, conocido como alternancia, ocurre cuando las estructuras de dos idiomas se mezclan, manteniendo su integridad relativa. Este recurso lingüístico refuerza la autenticidad cultural, pero también sirve como un gesto de solidaridad y amistad.

Al final de la interacción, Dexter, quien normalmente se mantiene al margen de las expresiones culturales de otros personajes, despidе a Prado diciendo: “Adiós, amigo”. Este pequeño gesto indica cómo el español ha comenzado a influir en él, no solo como idioma, sino como símbolo de las conexiones culturales que ha desarrollado en Miami. Este cambio sutil en el comportamiento de Dexter demuestra cómo el lenguaje puede actuar como un puente entre mundos aparentemente distintos, promoviendo la inclusión y el entendimiento mutuo.

En su conjunto, *Dexter* posiciona al español como un recurso cultural y social de gran valor, capaz de fomentar la solidaridad y desafiar las estructuras de poder que históricamente han marginado a las comunidades *Latinx*. Al presentar el español como una herramienta para la empatía, la conexión y la resistencia, la serie ofrece una representación más rica y matizada de la diversidad cultural en los Estados Unidos, destacando la importancia de las lenguas minoritarias en la construcción de una sociedad más inclusiva.

El español como resistencia cultural y puente narrativo en *Dexter*

En *Dexter*, el uso del español no solo refuerza las dinámicas narrativas, sino que también desvía la atención del espectador que lo entiende, convirtiéndose en un recurso poderoso para construir identidad cultural y romper con normas lingüísticas estandarizadas. El dialecto cubano utilizado por los personajes cuestiona la obsesión de algunos sectores latinos por hablar un español “correcto”, a menudo influido por normas lingüísticas elitistas que desvalorizan variaciones populares. Como señala Ana Celia Zentella, las variantes caribeñas suelen ser estigmatizadas, particularmente por la omisión de ciertos morfemas o la incorporación de anglicismos. Sin embargo, esta preocupación, más común en las clases medias, contrasta con el sentido de comunidad, confianza y afecto que el español regional puede generar dentro de las comunidades inmigrantes (31).

LaGuerta y Batista, lejos de someterse al estigma de ser identificados como inmigrantes cubanos, celebran su identidad colectiva y usan el español como una herramienta de resistencia cultural. Este orgullo se refleja en múltiples escenas de la serie, como en el episodio piloto, “Dexter” (temporada 1, episodio 1), cuando Dexter Morgan conduce hacia una escena del crimen mientras come una banana y reflexiona: “Time to enjoy my favorite tropical fruit”. La cámara muestra las calles de Miami, acompañada por el bolero de Benny Moré, cuya letra refuerza un sentido de nostalgia y arraigo cultural: “Mi cariño es sincero / te lo digo de veras / y te llevo en el alma junto a mi corazón”. Este recurso visual y auditivo conecta al espectador con la diversidad cultural de la ciudad, presentándola como un espacio cosmopolita enriquecido por las influencias latinas.

La interacción entre LaGuerta y Batista en espacios públicos también evidencia cómo el español invade lo que Jane H. Hill describe como el “White public space.” Según Hill, este espacio es mantenido a través de una vigilancia intensa del habla de las poblaciones racializadas, mientras que se normalizan prácticas similares en el habla de personas blancas (680). Al usar expresiones como “Detective, buena” en un espacio público y responder con “buena,” los personajes latinos ocupan un espacio lingüístico que desafía las normas establecidas y reivindica el español como parte integral del tejido social de Miami.

En una conversación crucial al final del episodio, LaGuerta y Batista dialogan completamente en español, sin subtítulos para el público angloparlante. Este recurso narrativo destaca la conexión cultural entre los personajes y también posiciona al español como una herramienta que puede excluir a los espectadores que no lo entienden, invirtiendo las dinámicas tradicionales de poder lingüístico. Como explican los creadores del sitio web *Seeing Stars*, la ausencia de subtítulos es una decisión deliberada para sumergir al espectador en la experiencia del personaje que no comprende el idioma, privándolo de información intencionadamente.

Este juego con el lenguaje se convierte en un elemento esencial para la narrativa de *Dexter*, ya que subraya cómo el español no solo actúa como un puente de emoción e información, sino también como un medio para preservar secretos y reforzar una identidad cultural compartida. En una toma final, Dexter reflexiona desde su bañera: “There are no secrets in life. Just hidden truths that lie beneath the surface”. Este comentario sugiere que, aunque Dexter no habla español, ha sido profundamente influido por la cultura cubana que lo rodea, lo que evidencia cómo el idioma y la cultura pueden penetrar incluso en aquellos aparentemente ajenos a ellas.

***Dexter* como contranarrativa**

Siguiendo las ideas de Jennifer Esposito, *Dexter* desafía la noción de que vivimos en una sociedad post-racial, señalando que “race still structures our lives. Before we can begin to erase the importance of race, we must first come to an understanding of the ways difference becomes naturalized through our discourses” (522). En este sentido, *Dexter* reconoce que el racismo y las jerarquías lingüísticas persisten, y la serie desmantela

la idea de que estas divisiones han sido superadas. Al hacerlo, propone una alternativa poderosa: una representación que coloca en el centro la historia y el idioma como herramientas de resistencia, en lugar de perpetuar estereotipos simplistas que limitan a las comunidades *Latinx* a roles marginales o caricaturescos.

La importancia de *Dexter* radica en su capacidad para reconfigurar las dinámicas de poder y representación al utilizar el español no como un símbolo de exclusión, sino como un medio de inclusión y empoderamiento. En un entorno mediático que con frecuencia define a los latinos por su supuesta incapacidad para asimilarse cultural o lingüísticamente, la serie subvierte esta lógica al integrar el bilingüismo dentro de estructuras institucionales de autoridad. El español no aparece como una marca de marginalidad, sino como un recurso legítimo dentro del aparato policial, capaz de producir eficacia, confianza y capital simbólico. En este sentido, *Dexter* desplaza la ideología monolingüe que asocia el inglés con racionalidad y competencia, y presenta el bilingüismo como una forma de agencia que transforma las relaciones entre comunidad e institución.

Pierre Bourdieu sostiene que el lenguaje puede generar un “profit of distinction on the occasion of each social exchange” (66), en la medida en que la competencia lingüística legítima funciona como una forma de capital simbólico que produce valor dentro de las interacciones sociales. Este concepto se refleja claramente en el impacto del bilingüismo de María LaGuerta y Ángel Batista dentro del Departamento de Policía de Miami-Dade. Su habilidad para comunicarse en español les permite resolver casos más eficazmente y fortalece su conexión con las comunidades *Latinx* a las que sirven. En un entorno multicultural como el de Miami, el español se convierte en un recurso que desafía la noción de que el inglés es la única lengua válida o dominante, mostrando que la competencia lingüística puede transformar dinámicas de poder al validar y empoderar a quienes hablan idiomas históricamente marginados.

Dexter subvierte las jerarquías lingüísticas al presentar a personajes que utilizan el español como una herramienta para navegar y negociar las estructuras de poder. Además de “Return to Sender,” hay múltiples escenas que ilustran este patrón: en “Crocodile” (temporada 1, episodio 2), Batista traduce para una víctima latina cuando Doakes no puede comunicarse. Estos ejemplos muestran que, el bilingüismo es un capital

cultural que otorga ventajas profesionales y sociales frente al monolingüismo. LaGuerta y Batista no solo actúan como intermediarios culturales entre el Departamento de Policía y la comunidad latina, sino que también reivindican el valor del español como un idioma que enriquece, en lugar de obstaculizar, la interacción social y profesional. Al hacerlo, la serie ofrece una contranarrativa a las representaciones mediáticas tradicionales, que a menudo perpetúan la idea de que los latinos deben abandonar su idioma y cultura para ser aceptados o exitosos en la sociedad estadounidense. En lugar de perpetuar una narrativa de asimilación, *Dexter* aboga por la coexistencia de múltiples identidades culturales y lingüísticas, mostrando que la diversidad es una fortaleza en lugar de un obstáculo.

Finalmente, *Dexter* como contranarrativa desafía las estructuras de poder lingüísticas y culturales, pero a la vez invita a las audiencias a reconsiderar sus propios prejuicios sobre el idioma y la identidad. Al situar el español como un recurso central en la narrativa, la serie redefine lo que significa ser bilingüe en los Estados Unidos, mostrando que el idioma es tanto una herramienta práctica como un símbolo de resiliencia y conexión cultural. De este modo, *Dexter* no solo enriquece la representación de las comunidades *Latinx* en los medios, sino que también ofrece una crítica incisiva a las dinámicas de exclusión que aún persisten en la sociedad contemporánea. El contraste con representaciones mediáticas más estereotipadas confirma la importancia de este enfoque. Al posicionar el español como un recurso de inclusión y resiliencia, *Dexter* anticipa debates actuales sobre justicia cultural y representación auténtica, lo cual prepara el terreno para las reflexiones finales de este análisis.

Reivindicando la identidad *Latinx* a través del idioma

En el análisis de *Dexter*, el español emerge como un recurso multifacético que desafía las jerarquías tradicionales y reivindica la identidad *Latinx* en un contexto mediático históricamente excluyente. A diferencia de personajes como Gloria de *Modern Family*, quienes refuerzan estereotipos sobre el acento extranjero y la dependencia, los personajes de *Dexter* utilizan el idioma para crear conexiones emocionales, fomentar la solidaridad y construir una narrativa positiva que celebra la diversidad cultural.

Siguiendo las aportaciones de Ana Celia Zentella, el uso del español en *Dexter* también desafía las normas lingüísticas impuestas que estigmatizan a los hablantes de dialectos no estándar. Zentella señala que “[i]n English, persistent foreign accents and non-standard verbs also signal an unwillingness to assimilate and a lack of discipline that requires external controls” (26). En *Dexter*, sin embargo, el español es utilizado de manera intencional para mostrar que estas percepciones no son inherentes al idioma, sino que pertenecen al marco cultural que perpetúa estas jerarquías. Al posicionar el español como un idioma de valor cultural y profesional, la serie subraya la importancia de romper con estas narrativas impuestas.

Al igual, *Dexter* ofrece una visión alternativa de lo que la representación mediática puede y debe ser para las comunidades *Latinx*. Al destacar personajes que utilizan el español como una herramienta de resistencia y afirmación cultural, la serie demuestra que las narrativas inclusivas no solo son posibles, sino necesarias en un contexto mediático que a menudo minimiza la diversidad. Este enfoque hace algo más que desafiar los estereotipos establecidos: abre la puerta para futuras representaciones que celebren la riqueza lingüística y cultural de las comunidades *Latinx*; establece un modelo para futuras narrativas que prioricen la autenticidad, la solidaridad y la justicia cultural.

Comparación con *Devious Maids*: El español como código subalterno

En *Devious Maids* (2013–2016), el español aparece en un contexto narrativo muy distinto al de *Dexter*. Mientras que en el drama criminal de Showtime el bilingüismo se asocia con figuras de autoridad institucional como María LaGuerta y Ángel Batista, en la comedia-drama de Marc Cherry se relaciona con mujeres latinas que ocupan una posición social subalterna como trabajadoras domésticas en Beverly Hills. Esta diferencia es fundamental, ya que demuestra cómo el mismo idioma puede cargarse de significados radicalmente distintos según el género televisivo y el contexto sociocultural en el que se inserta.

La noción de subalternidad es clave para comprender *Devious Maids*. Gayatri Spivak define al subalterno como aquellos sujetos relegados a la periferia del poder político, económico y cultural, cuyas voces son sistemáticamente silenciadas o mediadas por estructuras de dominación

(271). Las protagonistas de *Devious Maids* encarnan precisamente esa condición: mujeres racializadas, empleadas en labores domésticas, constantemente vigiladas y expuestas a la precariedad. Sin embargo, como muestra la serie, esta posición no las convierte en sujetos pasivos. Desde su marginalidad, las protagonistas aprovechan el español como recurso de resistencia, creando espacios de agencia y solidaridad que les permiten ejercer un poder indirecto en un entorno hostil.

El episodio piloto es revelador en este sentido. Evelyn, una de las patronas blancas de clase alta, pronuncia un discurso hacia sus empleadas que oscila entre el elogio y la amenaza: “You wash clothes you can’t afford. You polish silver you will never dine with. You mop floors for people who don’t bother to learn your last names”. Finalmente, culmina con una advertencia directa: “That said, if you don’t stop screwing my husband, I’m going to have you deported. Comprende?” Aquí el lenguaje revela de manera explícita la jerarquía de poder. El uso del verbo “deport” no solo enfatiza la vulnerabilidad legal de las trabajadoras, sino que también refuerza la amenaza de exclusión total del espacio social. El “comprende” final ejemplifica lo que Jane H. Hill denomina Mock Spanish, una práctica en la que los anglos utilizan palabras en español de manera distorsionada, burlesca y caricaturesca. Según Hill, “Anglo uses of Spanish are strategic, constituting an important symbolic component of a broader project through which Anglos have reduced the... Hispanic community, in both cultural and economic domains, to a profound marginality” (147). En otras palabras, la apropiación del español por parte de Evelyn no busca comunicarse, sino degradar simbólicamente a las empleadas, reforzando las jerarquías raciales y de clase que estructuran la relación empleadora-empleada.

La amenaza de deportación, acompañada del Mock Spanish, convierte al español en un signo de vulnerabilidad. Sin embargo, las protagonistas de *Devious Maids* reconfiguran este mismo idioma en un arma de resistencia. Como señala el análisis, uno de los aspectos positivos de *Devious Maids* es que muestra cómo el poder de hablar español crea una red de apoyo emocional y financiero entre las sirvientas. Esta conexión lingüística les permite formar lazos más fuertes y enfrentar juntas las dificultades que surgen en su trabajo y en su vida personal. Al comunicarse en español entre ellas, las sirvientas generan un espacio íntimo de complicidad que escapa al control de sus empleadores anglófonos. En

este sentido, el idioma se vuelve un refugio frente a la vigilancia y una herramienta para negociar estratégicamente en un entorno dominado por el poder blanco.

En este mismo episodio la dinámica entre Zoila y Rosie tras la muerte de Flora ilustra este uso del idioma como estrategia comunitaria. Cuando Rosie insiste en ir a la policía, Zoila responde: “We could get in trouble. This was Flora’s secret. I say we let it die with her”. Aquí el lenguaje no solo comunica información, sino que refleja la construcción de una red de protección frente a instituciones que podrían criminalizarlas en lugar de ayudarlas. En este sentido, el español, y más ampliamente el bilingüismo, actúa como un recurso para tomar decisiones colectivas en momentos de vulnerabilidad.

El caso de Marisol merece un análisis aparte. A diferencia de las otras protagonistas, ella domina perfectamente el inglés y el español, lo que la sitúa en una posición liminal dentro de la jerarquía social de la serie. Marisol encarna lo que propongo llamar la “traidora intermediaria”, una figura cuya competencia lingüística le permite desplazarse entre espacios de poder y acceder a información vedada para las demás sirvientas. Esta posición estratégica le facilita moverse entre el mundo de las trabajadoras domésticas y el de la élite blanca, infiltrándose en la casa de Evelyn y Adrian Powell con el objetivo de descubrir la verdad sobre la muerte de Flora. Mientras que las patronas recurren a un español caricaturesco para reafirmar su autoridad y marcar distancia social, Marisol utiliza el bilingüismo como herramienta de investigación, solidaridad y resistencia. De este modo, la serie evidencia cómo la competencia lingüística puede transformarse en un recurso estratégico capaz de subvertir, aunque sea parcialmente, las jerarquías sociales que estructuran el espacio doméstico y racializado de Beverly Hills.

En conjunto, *Devious Maids* presenta una narrativa compleja en la que el español oscila entre la amenaza y la resistencia. En boca de Evelyn, el idioma se degrada a un recurso de burla que acompaña la amenaza de deportación, reforzando la marginalidad de las empleadas. En boca de las protagonistas, en cambio, el español se convierte en un código secreto, una red de solidaridad y un instrumento para resistir las jerarquías. Esta dinámica ilustra lo que Spivak identifica como la paradoja del subalterno: aunque históricamente silenciado, encuentra modos de hablar y hacerse visible desde los márgenes del poder.

Este contraste con *Dexter* es fundamental. Mientras que en Miami el español aparece legitimado como capital cultural y profesional dentro de una institución estatal, en Beverly Hills surge marcado por la subordinación, pero resignificado por las protagonistas como vehículo de resistencia. Así, el mismo idioma revela su plasticidad semiótica: en un contexto se convierte en amenaza de exclusión y deportación; en otro, en símbolo de autoridad y empatía. En ambos casos, sin embargo, el español demuestra ser un recurso político y cultural cargado de poder.

Reivindicación del español como herramienta de resistencia y solidaridad cultural

El análisis de *Dexter* como una contranarrativa en el panorama mediático estadounidense revela el papel crucial del español como una herramienta para construir solidaridad cultural y desafiar las estructuras de exclusión. En un contexto donde las jerarquías lingüísticas y los discursos post-raciales buscan minimizar las luchas de las comunidades marginadas, la serie muestra cómo el lenguaje puede generar conexiones significativas, promover la inclusión y actuar como un medio de resistencia. Al posicionar el español como un recurso central, *Dexter* trasciende las narrativas dominantes que reducen el bilingüismo a un símbolo de marginalización, transformándolo en un eje para la justicia cultural y la solidaridad.

Los personajes de María LaGuerta y Ángel Batista encarnan esta idea al utilizar el español como una herramienta profesional y un puente que conecta mundos culturales, emocionales y sociales. Sus interacciones reflejan cómo el lenguaje, más allá de la comunicación, puede validar experiencias compartidas, generar confianza y crear espacios seguros para quienes enfrentan vulnerabilidad o exclusión. Este enfoque resalta cómo las prácticas lingüísticas pueden fomentar la solidaridad al reconocer y dignificar las historias de aquellos que han sido históricamente marginados.

El bilingüismo en *Dexter* se convierte en un medio para resistir las jerarquías impuestas y crear redes de apoyo. A través de la alternancia de código y el uso estratégico del español, la serie amplía la comprensión de cómo las prácticas lingüísticas trascienden las barreras sociales y culturales, promoviendo alianzas sostenidas entre comunidades diversas. Este acto lingüístico no solo desafía las estructuras dominantes, sino que también refuerza el sentido de pertenencia y empoderamiento colectivo.

El español en *Dexter* permite a los personajes navegar en un entorno multicultural como Miami al mismo tiempo que la serie redefine la percepción del idioma como un marcador de identidad híbrida. Al destacar la mezcla de código y la integración del español en los diálogos, la serie demuestra cómo las lenguas minoritarias pueden actuar como vehículos de solidaridad que conectan generaciones, contextos históricos y experiencias compartidas. Estas representaciones invitan a reflexionar sobre la capacidad del lenguaje para promover la empatía y para generar cambios en la percepción pública sobre las comunidades *Latinx*.

Este análisis también aborda cómo el español, como herramienta de solidaridad, puede contribuir a transformar las dinámicas de poder en entornos profesionales y comunitarios. En la serie, el español no solo facilita la resolución de casos y la conexión con víctimas, sino que también desafía la percepción del inglés como la única lengua válida, demostrando que el bilingüismo es un recurso estratégico que enriquece tanto a los individuos como a las instituciones. Este enfoque tiene implicaciones más amplias para los estudios de sociolingüística y representación mediática, sugiriendo que las lenguas minoritarias tienen el potencial de catalizar movimientos hacia la equidad cultural.

En el contexto más amplio de los movimientos sociales contemporáneos, *Dexter* responde a la necesidad de construir una solidaridad que no sea efímera, sino transformadora. Al centrar el español como una herramienta para construir relaciones duraderas y desafiar narrativas opresivas, la serie encarna las posibilidades de una solidaridad que reconoce la diversidad y la celebra como una fuerza unificadora. Este enfoque demuestra cómo las prácticas culturales, incluidas las lingüísticas, pueden fortalecer las alianzas y generar cambios sistémicos.

En conclusión, *Dexter* redefine el papel del español en los medios de comunicación, pero también demuestra cómo las representaciones mediáticas pueden actuar como plataformas para construir solidaridad y resistencia. Al utilizar el lenguaje como un símbolo de inclusión, resiliencia y empoderamiento, la serie ofrece una contribución valiosa a los estudios de solidaridad cultural, mostrando que los medios pueden ser agentes activos en la promoción de una sociedad más equitativa y conectada. Este análisis amplía el campo académico al resaltar cómo el lenguaje puede trascender su función comunicativa para convertirse en una

herramienta transformadora que fomenta la empatía, la acción colectiva y la justicia social.

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Connecting Curriculum with Cultural Context: The 2020 #ScholarStrike and Teaching Responsibility in the German Language Classroom

Cynthia D. Porter

“It’s easy to critique, but harder to build.
Yet we owe it to ourselves and our students
not only to point out the vast array of problematic
areas of the higher educational landscape but
also to offer tangible and meaningful alternatives.
Neither the language of critique nor the language
of possibility is powerful enough on its own;
only working in tandem can they help us
create the pedagogy grounded in radical hope.”
—Kevin M. Gannon, *Radical Hope: A Teaching Manifesto*, 12

As a visiting instructor of German returning to my alma mater for a year, I knew that taking on the role came with a lot of potential as well as a lot of risk. I was given an opportunity, because I was still a doctoral candidate at the time, to enhance my teaching skills through full-time experience at a highly ranked liberal arts institution. I returned to my old stomping grounds excited, looking forward to standing on the other side of the classroom and eager to engage my students in an immersive language-learning experience. I anticipated small class sizes, a strong community feel, and the warm collegiality of my colleagues. And, across the board, the college met these expectations. I

felt seen by my colleagues, my opinion was valued, and my students fostered genuine connections with me and my research. What I did not anticipate was the arrival of COVID–19, the subsequent lockdowns and distancing protocols, and the impact the pandemic would have on teaching, communing, connecting, and learning. In a context where educators were, in accordance with every other sector, swiftly pushed into a space of uncertainty and unfamiliarity, I found an anchor point in matters of social justice. In light of the ever-shifting teaching and learning landscape of 2020, I found an opportunity to show up for my students in a way that recognized them, as well as myself, as whole individuals experiencing multiple blows to their foundation of stability. In an embrace of community, I decided to participate in the 2020 Scholar Strike against police brutality and offer teach-ins for my students so we might communally honor the troubling context we were all struggling to navigate.

Having started my position in January 2020, I looked into the summer of that year with somewhat bloodshot eyes resulting from my determination to juggle my teaching load with continued progress on my dissertation. Only a few short weeks after I celebrated closing out my first semester teaching full time, the murder of George Floyd and the subsequent surge of civil rights activism in conjunction with the Black Lives Matter movement rattled the United States. Accordingly, international eyes were keenly drawn to the unrest on the front of racial justice which afflicts both American history and the American present.

My summer was steeped in frustration, disappointment, heartache, fear, and worry. Yet a silver lining came from feeling that I was also making a real impact. I published my first peer-reviewed article, voicing my perspective as a Black American woman—a perspective underrepresented in the field of German studies that had a dearth of black scholars—as I linked the international reverberations of George Floyd’s murder to my research in media studies. I explored issues that are painfully close to my heart: the relationships between the moving image, trust, policing tactics, and infringements on civil rights. These explorations were especially challenging to undertake in the face of my desire to physically engage in political demonstration at a time when I also felt compelled to stay safely and quietly at home.

As the fall semester of 2020 began, I continued to keep an eye and ear

**ProfB**

@AntheaButler



I would be down as a professor to follow the NBA and Strike for a few days to protest police violence in America.

5:39 PM · 26 Aug 20 · [Twitter Web App](#)

68 Retweets **14 Quote Tweets** **440 Likes**

Figure 1. A screenshot of a Tweet on X, formerly known as Twitter, posted by Scholar Strike co-initiator, Anthea Butler, on August 26, 2020.

on the developments of social discourse and discord linked to the Black Lives Matter Movement. The many protests, outcries for justice, and masked faces of anguish and despair made it a time of historical importance—one of tension and unrest. By the time September rolled around, I began to feel a solid rapport with my students, some of whom I now had for the second time. I recall being up late one evening, attempting to achieve some degree of mental reprieve in an attempt to unwind before bed, when—while doom-scrolling on *Twitter* (now *X*)—I saw a call for educators to participate in a so-called #ScholarStrike (see Figure 1.)

The Scholar Strike was born from a force unique to the digital era: a tweet going viral. Anthea Butler, associate professor of African and African American religious studies at the University of Pennsylvania, and Kevin Gannon, director of the Center for the Advancement of Faculty Excellence and professor of history at Queens University of Charlotte, are credited with launching the Scholar Strike. In an opinion piece, they declare this strike to be a call for change,

a movement designed to bring recognition to the mounting numbers of deaths of African Americans and others by excessive

use of violence and force by police. Scholar Strike [was] a two-day action on September 8–9 where professors, staff, students and even administrators [stepped] away from their regular duties and classes to engage in teach-ins about racial injustice in America, policing, and racism in America. (Gannon and Butler)

Inspired, I joined others in offering teach-ins (Scholar Strike). Since my institution was already using a hybrid/hyflex model in response to the COVID–19 pandemic, which meant that I was already prerecording my lessons using the screen-recording software Loom,¹ it became easier for me to extend this practice to make new content for the Scholar Strike. Students residing on campus could also attend the in-person lessons in the classroom.

Confident that I could participate in the Scholar Strike with my dual lesson preparation structure already in place, I asked myself a number of questions. As a German instructor teaching with an immersive approach, how can I fold discussions about contemporary police brutality into a lesson where we are scheduled to explore, say, reflexive verbs? Do my students even want to talk about police violence? What are the practices of policing in Germany in comparison to the United States? How can I, as a Black woman, invite my students to engage in these conversations without simultaneously investing the occasion with pressure? Should I just stick to the curriculum as it stands? What would my colleagues think of my participation in the Scholar Strike? But what about my responsibilities to my students? Better yet, what about my responsibilities to myself and my communities? As you can likely tell, I was starting to spiral.

But in the midst of this spiraling, I remembered that I had made certain commitments to myself and to my students. While preparing for the so-called job market (though I understood it more as a type of job gauntlet), I completed a certificate in college teaching at Vanderbilt University. Over the course of that certificate program, we discussed, drafted, and received feedback on our teaching philosophies. This was the first structured opportunity to contemplate, create, and thoroughly articulate my teaching outlook, methods, and aims. What my later self-reflection brought me back to from that teaching philosophy was a certain vision of what it is to have an impact as an educator: the wish

to instigate a resonance with my students that could embolden them to show up to challenging discussions, welcome thought-provoking push-back and provocation to continue their self-development, and to seek out genuine connection with those who are like-minded as well as those who are not. One drive behind supporting such aims was to emotionally support student recognition of education as an exercise in self-investment, not solely in monetary or necessarily professional-preparedness terms, but rather for the sake of continuing to build students' mental endurance as they engage in the often painstaking endeavor of self-exploration in thought, opinion, and civic responsibility. My own sense of responsibility as an educator motivated my participation in the Scholar Strike. I shared the sentiment of renowned Black feminist theorist bell hooks in *Teaching to Transgress*: "I am reminded of the power we have as teachers as well as the awesome responsibility. Commitment to engaged pedagogy carries with it the willingness to be responsible, not to pretend that professors do not have the power to change the direction of our students' lives" (206).

Learning of the planned Scholar Strike felt like being presented with a golden opportunity. I had a couple of days to put together my presentations for the teach-ins. While the timeframe was not ideal, it was not impossible. With the support of my department chair, I planned out two sessions addressing Blackness in connection with passing, stereotyping, and what was then a recent wave of demonstrations linked to the #BLM movement in Germany. Having published about the Black Lives Matter Movement in relation to the media theory and social commentary of Fritz Lang's 1936 American debut film *Fury* (Porter), I felt well equipped to put together a presentation that engaged the context in which we found ourselves, where social contemplation of the power investment in the police was positioned with unique visibility. Further, having participated in protests in support of the Black Lives Matter message in Berlin, I could speak on the international resonances of American approaches to policing and the subject of civil rights as it was taken up in German-speaking Europe with a sharp eye to events unfolding in the United States. With scholarship focused on policing approaches and police–civilian politics freshly developing in Germany, I felt I could enrich the education of my students with a tailored set of lessons that engaged discourse around the function and expectation of

police in a German context—content that I doubted they would experience in another course. Since I was already in the routine of crafting asynchronous lessons, I saw it as an opportunity to accomplish multiple goals simultaneously:

1. **Encourage student agency and autonomy.** Empower my students to make informed decisions about their participation in voluntary teach-ins by providing flexible options, including access to regularly scheduled lesson recordings via the Loom platform.
2. **Foster an inclusive and supportive learning environment.** Create a safe space for students to engage in voluntary discussions about critical social issues. Specifically, the safe space would be created to enable education linked to the recent public discourse on police excessive use of force and the correlating politics tied to social justice and fundamental civil rights, without pressure or obligation.
3. **Promote critical thinking and dialogue.** Offer opportunities for my students to engage in deeper, more meaningful conversations on complex societal topics, connecting academic learning with real-world issues. Student learning would be enhanced by an international scope linking the German-speaking cultures and communities discussed in our curriculum with contemporary social developments in the United States.
4. **Build connections between students and their educator(s).** Strengthen the student-professor relationship by demonstrating openness, availability, vulnerability, and empathy in addressing sensitive and relevant topics.

Many of the goals above have been discussed by academics striving to enrich their teaching with skills pertinent to real-world situations, especially in the context of growing cultural turbulence (*Higher Ed Rising*; Piontak; Wassell et al.).

As a German and media scholar focusing on the manifold forms of politics, both social and governmental, directed at the body, I found that my research and motivation to create educational opportunity for my students were organically aligned. It was my background working

with research around policing and demonstrations against police brutality in an international—particularly American and German—context that prepared me to participate in the Scholar Strike. Although I was trained to invest my language pedagogy with cultural content to boost students' cultural and intercultural competencies and understanding of different experiences of community, questions of social change and social justice remained largely absent from my training in language acquisition. Recognizing the Scholar Strike as presenting a unique opportunity to show up for my students, institution, and discipline, I accepted the invitation.

The question was then how exactly to use precious teach-in time. I had my work cut out for me. In total, my students and I had 170 minutes to direct toward such broad subjects as social movement(s) and change in a focused, comparative discussion of policing in American and German cultures. With solidarity in vulnerability in mind, I knew I wanted to include my own testimony of engaging in Black Lives Matter demonstrations in Berlin in 2016. I used my own experience to provide context to the movement as a whole. In the years since the Scholar Strike, many students, and even more individuals hailing from and/or residing outside the United States, have proven ignorant about the cause and duration of the movement. Many mistakenly believe it began in the summer of 2020. With numerous precursors, like the famous example of police brutality like the gruesome beating of Rodney King in 1991, or the 2009 killing of Oscar Grant in Oakland, California, Black Lives Matter came into being in 2013, following the 2012 murder of seventeen-year-old Trayvon Martin by George Zimmerman. It was upon the news of Zimmerman's acquittal in June 2013 that three African American women—Alicia Garza, Opal Tometi, and Patrisse Cullors—launched Black Lives Matter as the most recent chapter in the long history of America's Civil Rights Movement. The Black Lives Matter movement came to face specific institutional challenges, because focus on the organization has been used to undermine the message of the movement—namely, to advocate for “an ideological and political intervention in a world where Black lives are systematically and intentionally targeted for demise. [The movement is] an affirmation of Black folks' contributions to this society, our humanity, and our resilience in the face of deadly oppression” (Garza).

As an emerging instructor juggling the demands of course planning, teaching preparation, and research progress, the context of my life when George Floyd was murdered was one of stress, uncertainty, and emotional and mental fatigue, mitigated largely by routines of self-care. It was key to nurture my relationship to my Self—both physically and mentally. Scaffolding and regimented time during my week focused on my own relationship with the world, and my participation in it, was the routine that caught and supported me when the news of yet another Black American dying at the hands of police officers reached me. Reflecting on this moment, I recall an all-encompassing sense of deep, spiritually dark dread mingled with a recognition of defeat on the fronts of so-called progress and integration. Such thoughts jogged my memory to the words of author James Baldwin, who stated, “You always told me it takes time. It has taken my father’s time, my mother’s time, my uncle’s time, my brothers’ and my sisters’ time, my nieces’ and my nephews’ time. How much time do you want for your ‘progress?’” (qtd in. *The Bluegrass Professors*). And from my ally network, my phone remained quiet. It was this silence that ushered in some of the lowest points for me as I reluctantly recognized how many Americans continue to view our country’s civil rights issues in terms of isolated incidents and local misfortunes; if the injustices are not happening in their community, then they do not register as “their problem.” If only everyone recognized how America’s approach to policing is our collective problem. If we share a structure—American society—that has carved out space, time, financial support, investments of power and influence, and a social gray area where a considerable degree of abuse, harassment, embarrassment, and death befalls our fellow American citizens, so consistently and unilaterally at the hands of one institutional branch of “protection,” then we need to face the attitudes that enable or perpetuate this situation:

1. Willful ignorance: We do not want to see the truth about our weaknesses and are not seeking the strength or resolve to protect what we claim to be American rights.
2. Comfortable complicity: We have accepted the current state of media integration and the resulting intervention it has made on our ability to relate to and connect with one another to the point of opting out of opportunities to commune in order to see change realized.²

With two eighty-five-minute sessions to offer my students, I had a significant task of content prioritization ahead of me. I started by informing my students about my *why* with the question, “Why is participating in the Scholar Strike important to me?” Coupled with that was the question, “Why is it important to me to create space for additional communing opportunities with my students linked to the current social climate around Black and Brown people of color and their relationship to policing?” One answer to both questions was my desire to show up for my students in a time of social and cultural turmoil, like the college had modeled for me when I was a student over a decade prior. Since other answers to these questions are fundamental to my interpretation of how higher education could and should function, they did not neatly fold into the varying language competencies of the group, ranging from novice to intermediate-high speakers. In reflection of the various language abilities represented by my students, I decided to conduct the teach-ins in English. While this decision appeared to be the most logical in consideration of student preparedness and the specific subject matter at hand, I could relate to the frustration expressed by other educators, which was tied to the desire to stay in the target language while trying to invest one’s curriculum with conversations tied to civil engagement.

In a 2019 study of how K–16 language teachers engage in incorporating topics of social justice into the classroom, participants were “very clear that there was a struggle to find resources that were both developmentally appropriate and appropriate for the language proficiency level of the students” (Wassell et al. 276–77). Yet, like I practiced in my own teach-ins, there are further studies that show “that teachers took creative approaches to the existing curriculum and used strategies such as honoring and supporting students’ concerns; emphasizing advocacy and multiple perspectives; and modeling activism” (Wassell et al. 280; Osborn; Wade). When teaching a German-as-language course, my approach is one of immersion starting from Day 1 of class. While this launch into language is daunting and often intimidating to my students, we discuss the correlating demands of my teaching style in English as we go over our syllabus for the semester. And there are other moments, such as engaging in bookkeeping discussions tied to class (like important deadlines, seeking student feedback during the semester, etc.), that are often strategically and intentionally conducted in English to ensure

successful understanding of the information. And the supportive scaffolding of conducting infrastructural conversations in English provides an organic structure to connect with students on subjects of social justice in the language classroom, regardless of level. As I write this, I am predominantly thinking about the introductory and intermediate levels of language learning, when students are first establishing a foundation in the language and are therefore typically ill-equipped, linguistically speaking, to discuss topics of social justice in the target language. However, there are ways to fold in (if not introduce) key terms in the target language, even if the primary language of the discussion is one that everyone already has in common. For example, the term “discrimination” in German is a cognate, *Diskriminierung*. Students can easily recognize the relationship and meaning between the two words, and opting for the target language interspersed in an English discussion could be one way to effectively embed the conversation with some—even if minimal—target-language engagement.

The Teach-Ins: September 8–9, 2020

Launching Day 1 of the teach-ins on September 8, 2020, we started with a check-in to take the mental, emotional, and spiritual temperature of those in attendance, myself included. I took the opportunity to practice closing the gap between my personal and professional personas, attempting to prepare a bridge for my students. One of the key goals for the session was to invest our student–instructor relationships with vulnerability, since the subject at hand resonates so deeply and personally for me in ways that may be differently configured than for my students. Some of the discussion points for the first day of the teach-ins included the exploitation of Blackness in both American and European cultural contexts, the topic of police reform, and displays of international solidarity in the face of unrest linked to discrimination and structural racism on the international stage (Benner; Martin; Gearty; Hofer and dpa; “Black Lives Matter’ Demonstration”; Walsh).

Opening the discussion, I used Poll Everywhere to gauge my students’ emotional states, which enabled us to circumvent the arduous task of attempting to process and present subjective feelings in a semi-public forum (given that the students in attendance were from different courses at the college). My own participation in the discussions

was motivated by my desire to practice engagement in vulnerability from the position of discussion organizer and facilitator, but also as an alumna and mentor in the lives of my students.

Spotlit on Day 2 of our discussion were German approaches to protecting the freedom to participate in peaceful demonstrations (*Demonstrationsrecht* or *Versammlungsfreiheit*, the freedom to assemble); “Friedlich und ohne Waffen,” or peacefully and without weapons, is a significant condition of this freedom (Soliman). Included in the protection of this freedom is to have police escort when someone with German citizenship registers or schedules a demonstration. Having participated in several demonstrations in Germany for over a decade, I have many positive associations with German police presence at organized events. However, I am also aware that such experiences are not to be taken for granted (“Berlin”; Hofer and dpa; “Germany Corona-virus”; “Mass Arrests”).

One benefit of holding the two teach-in meetings was presenting my students—across introductory, intermediate, and advanced German language levels—with the opportunity to not only talk about contemporary trends in policing tactics but also to create a virtual space for themselves to commune with one another, as peers. The students in attendance embraced the opportunity for an educational discussion that exceeded the original configuration of the curriculum. As such, the process of giving voice to our frustrations, fears, and anxieties shed light on ways in which systems of oppression function.³

On Day 2, we touched on the subject of institutional racism, a concept that was coined by Stokely Carmichael and Charles Hamilton to address a level of racist politics not reducible to individual acts of racism between White and Black Americans (Carmichael and Hamilton).⁴ They state:

Racism is both overt and covert. It takes two, closely related forms: individual whites acting against individual blacks, and acts by the total white community against the black community. We call these individual racism and institutional racism. The first consists of overt acts by individuals, which cause death, injury or the violent destruction of property. This type can be recorded by television cameras; it can frequently be observed

in the process of commission. The second type is less overt, far more subtle, less identifiable in terms of *specific* individuals committing the acts. But it is no less destructive of human life. The second type originates in the operation of established and respected forces in the society, and thus receives far less public condemnation than the first type. (4)

The original definition from 1967 provides a valuable foundation, presenting the historical ways race in the United States has been instrumentalized and used against racialized groups with the support of insights of its (in)visibility. However, when it comes to the context of the present, Carmichael and Hamilton's explanation does not align with my understanding of the relationship between individual participation in and the manifestation of the ways in which race is factored in to support the institutional perpetuation of inequities, discrimination, and oppression. As citizens and scholars have continued to work at making elements of systemic subjugation and oppression visible, a more contemporary description from Keeanga-Yamahtta Taylor's book, *From #BlackLivesMatter to Black Liberation*, is a valuable working definition for the current context:

Institutional racism, or structural racism, can be defined as the policies, programs, and practices of public and private institutions that result in greater rates of poverty, dispossession, criminalization, illness, and ultimately mortality of African Americans. Most importantly, it is the *outcome* that matters, not the intentions of the individuals involved. (8, emphasis original)⁵

With the limited time available in the teach-ins, our discussions of institutional racism remained limited to addressing these working definitions in relation to the topics of mass incarceration and policing practices. And, with the growing politicization of potential negative emotional resonances experienced by White individuals when engaging topics like institutional racism (Balmert; Tatum),⁶ our students face a real structural danger of perpetuating the normalized prioritization to maintain the status quo over the physical, mental, psychosocial, and

spiritual toll experienced by those on the receiving end of oppressive institutional structures (CDC; Williams et al.; Firestone; Picower).⁷

As the conversation of the teach-in progressed, after discussing structural oppression and the forms of its (in)visibility, it was time to check in with my students and their experience with the discussion thus far. Asked to submit some key words reflecting on their feelings and emotions, they registered a spectrum of resonances, including anger at perpetuated forms of injustice, revulsion in the face of the statistics collected about incarceration rates, and a recognition of the need for unity and the assumption of responsibility. In short, those present experienced emotional resonances, but that is to be expected. After all, given the international scope of the discussion—first of German–American comparisons and commonalities in policing, followed by a discussion of global statistics of incarceration rates—we were talking about their homes, their communities, their worlds, both respectively and collectively.

The Stakes

In her book *Teaching to Transgress*, hooks discusses the transformative experiences White students face as a result of their acquired ability to recognize the systems of oppression in which they exist. hooks provides an example of her own students who reported that, due to their increased awareness of the systems of oppression maintaining the status quo, they felt unable to “enjoy life anymore” (42), leading to her own, corresponding realization:

I saw for the first time that there can be, and usually is, some degree of pain involved in giving up old ways of thinking and knowing and learning new approaches. I respect that pain. And I include recognition of it now when I teach, that is to say, I teach about shifting paradigms and talk about the discomfort it can cause. White students learning to think more critically about questions of race and racism may go home for the holidays and suddenly see their parents in a different light. They may recognize nonprogressive thinking, racism, and so on, and it may hurt them that new ways of knowing may create estrangement where there was none. (43)

On the one hand, it is understandable that the individual would want to safeguard, and thus maintain and protect, their perception of the status quo, because it provides a foundation of their world view; they want to hold on to their sense of stability as it pertains to the structures of the world and, in correlation, their role in it. Risking the destabilization of one's understanding of their culture and, therefore, themselves would generate emotions of fear, uncertainty, and reluctance. However, opting out of such a fundamental understanding of how our social structures are constructed, under the guise of maintaining one's stability, the individual maintains and therefore opts into the oppressive structures that have been created to position minoritized individuals in a fixed, perpetual position of subjugation (Lipsitz; McGhee). By continuing to participate in the structures as they are currently configured, networked for the continued normalization of what hooks aptly describes as a "white supremacist capitalist society" (26), the individual is rendered complicit in the structures of oppression, supporting it by way of continued participation in its perpetuation. When that same individual is recognized as complicit—by way of maintaining the oppressive status quo, rather than disrupting it—they often react with emotions that serve to redirect or avoid further focus on the act or behavior in support of systemic oppression. Robin DiAngelo, critical discourse and Whiteness studies scholar, experienced facilitator of racial equity training, and best-selling author of the book *White Fragility*, writes that "if and when an educational program does directly address racism and the privileging of whites, common white responses include anger, withdrawal, emotional incapacitation, guilt, argumentation, and cognitive dissonance (all of which reinforce the pressure on facilitators to avoid directly addressing racism)" (101). Equipped with my own experiences with the range of reactions and discussions that render the shrouded realities of systemic oppression transparent, I chalk up my continued engagement in such challenging discussions to being part of my responsibility as an educator. Knowledge is often steeped in discomfort. But this same discomfort can be understood as proof of the potential for growth, change, and eventually—if continually pursued and embraced, rather than discarded and avoided—progress (Enns-Kananen; Osborn; Jones and Reddick).

As a budding language instructor four weeks into the semester, I was confident that I had established enough of a rapport with my

students that they would view my invitation to participate in the teach-ins as a bid for community and connection. But, despite having started my teaching career six years prior, I did have some considerable concerns to keep in mind. Most of these were directed toward myself and my developing teaching objectives and corresponding approach to realize them. Contemplations pertaining to how I wanted to show up for my students—to say nothing of showing up for myself—led me to consider the stakes of presenting the international bridge of educational input as an additional enhancement of my students’ college careers.

Recognizing the fertile ground offered by the language classroom, Magda Tarnawka Senel provides us with a framework rooted in the identification of the far-reaching applicability of skills acquired in class. Acknowledging the potential for change embedded in practices of critical pedagogy,⁸ Senel details ways in which traditional learning outcomes could be enhanced for the betterment of society as a whole:

The language classroom has the capacity to foster open-mindedness, inclusivity, empathy, and civic engagement. These educational outcomes are arguably among the most needed in the twenty-first century. However, these outcomes are missing from the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) *World-Readiness Standards for Learning Languages*. (63, emphasis original)

In recognition of the foundational outcomes of the so-called five Cs emphasized by ACTFL (Communication, Cultures, Comparisons, Connections and Communities), Senel suggests that the addition of “goal areas . . . *Criticality, Complexity, Contexts, Connectedness, and Civic Engagement*—could better prepare students to confront many challenges facing us today” (70, emphasis original). The latter list speaks to the core of what I aimed for in the two teach-ins I offered my students.

Upon reflecting on the compounding social atmosphere of isolation during the fall of 2020—exacerbated by the need to exercise social distancing, shifts in teaching methods and modes, and for some, displacement from their loved ones—I wanted to provide my students with an option to connect. As their instructor, I found myself desiring to give my students a chance to participate in discussions about social unrest

tied to injustice and oppression so as to broaden their perspectives on international resonances around issues of social justice. Many of the concerns informing my drive to offer students additional opportunities to discuss the disheartening, fear-inducing, and largely disappointing contemporary approaches to policing, especially for minority Americans and migrants, connected with Senel's articulation of a pedagogy of Civic Engagement. Crediting overlap with the work of Henry Giroux, Senel recommends the approach of social justice pedagogy, or as Giroux describes it, being "responsive to the deepest problems and conflicts of our time," which can then produce engaged citizens who will drive social action and safeguard democracy (8–9).

Among potential strategies for supporting students who seek continuing guidance on their educational journey toward an increased cultural awareness of structural, social, and institutional factors of racism and of diversity in perspective or narrative is the teaching of media resources for mass audiences addressing these topics. For example, a recent study found that popular American cinema featuring topics of social justice can have an impact on audience understanding of moral questions, dilemmas, and social responsibility. Researchers Sharifa Simon-Roberts and Owen Eagan write, "The perspectives of respondents call attention to the fact that well-crafted content that depicts the multifaceted nature of racism and its far-reaching consequences, and rings true to audiences can increase moral understanding and spur a desire for societal change" (275).

And I am certainly not alone in discussing the benefits of introducing challenging subjects like racism, sexism, systemic oppression, and other symptoms linked to White supremacist hegemonic norms (like homogenization of perspective, opinion, gender performance, sexual orientation, and religious affiliation in curricula) into the German language classroom. Complementing my account of how such discussions open opportunities to connect with language students on many interwoven international sites of politics, German studies scholar Priscilla Layne writes, "I have witnessed firsthand how introducing topics like racism and discrimination in a German context allowed students to make connections to the United States that made them more willing to be critical and view their culture from the outside" (86). Speaking to the matter of decolonizing German Studies, Layne continues, "If we want

to make German Studies a more inclusive discipline and a discipline that has something to contribute to larger conversations in the academy, we can start by decolonizing the curriculum and thinking more critically about what we teach, who(m) we teach, and how we teach. Decolonizing the German canon does not mean throwing out all of the dead white men" (98). For many, allocating space for pluralities of opinions, experiences, and perspectives has organically recognized Black voices and experiences. Further, German studies scholar Jamele Watkins lends voice to the ways in which one's own identities and engagement in the creation of knowledge, which thereby broaden the scope of our field(s), are coupled with a drive and recognition of the required risks at stake. Watkins states, "Throughout my career, I have had to advocate for myself, for this research, and for bringing both into the classroom to prove that Blackness is essential in a German studies curriculum" (291).

My participation in the Scholar Strike was one of the fundamental moves I made to recognize how my teaching self, scholarly self, personal self, and socially critical self are interconnected, culminating in an increased recognition of how I translate my interpretations of professional and personal responsibilities into my societal position. While contemplating the potential risks I faced by participating in the teach-ins, I considered the possibilities for retaliation, animosity, or being professionally typecast as a disruptor. In the Appendix below, you will find the reflection questions I posed to myself while contemplating my participation in the strike, calculating the risks and various atmospheric factors I considered to be in play. But, in the end, I recognized the risk from not participating—jeopardizing my integrity—greatly outweighed my concerns of external scrutiny. Or, as Watkins beautifully and succinctly puts it, "My Blackness is in who I am, is in what I do, and is in how I do things. . . . It is in my body and my experiences, and how I see scholarship. . . . I have taken this notion of what is possible into my pedagogy to confront anti-Blackness" (304).

As a group taking up the call to disrupt the status quo, my students and I represented a contingent of individuals who showed up to challenge disheartening subjects rooted in the topics of injustice, oppressive systems, and the general societal context impacting how such issues do, or do not, garner broad social engagement. As Scholar Strike co-organizer Kevin Gannon phrased it, "I think what heartens me the most is

not only the number of folks who've eagerly signed on and expressed solidarity, but the range of academic places, positions, and career locations we have. In our current moment, so much is precarious in academe. A commitment to racial justice is not" (Gavazzi).

Appendix

Lesson Template: Teach-Ins for #ScholarStrike

Time availability: 170 minutes; two 85-minute sessions

The following lesson template has been adjusted into a table to help teach-in and educational facilitators envision how they may be able to show up in a topic- or subject-based or world languages course to acknowledge connections with current events. The document features open-ended questions with sample answers reflecting my own contemplations when considering participation in the Scholar Strike. The intention behind this document is to illustrate some of the behind-the-scenes conceptualizing work that was in play as I endeavored to create a productive educational offering for my students.

Open-ended self-reflection questions:

Q: Framing: What is the current event in focus for the session?

A: The murder of George Floyd in Minneapolis, Minnesota, in May 2020, and the subsequent protests and demonstrations, clashes between protesters and police, and ongoing conversations on the politics of policing as they pertain to the creed to "protect and serve."

Q: Framing: What is the subject matter/discipline tied to the course being taught?

A: German studies / German as a second language

Q: Framing and Fit: Which areas of my research connect the course subject with the current event?

A: Transnational politics between Germany and the United States; media circulation and trust; American history of lynching; American history of policing; the Black Lives Matter Movement and demonstrations; politics of representation; body culture studies.

Q: Support: Does your institution or department support your participation in the event?

A: Yes. I communicated my intention to participate in the strike via providing teach-ins to the chair of my department, who was supportive of my engagement. I felt fortunate to have a collegial relationship with my chair so that I could communicate my motivations and justifications for offering teach-ins without fearing negative repercussions. I also overtly asked if there were any institutional considerations that I should keep in mind before offering the teach-ins, to which he responded in the negative.

Q: Facilitation: In-person vs. virtual?

A: The teach-ins are facilitated virtually, with prerecorded lessons from the syllabus provided via the virtual teaching portal (Blackboard).

Q: Facilitation: Can students participate in the initially scheduled lesson for the day?

A: Yes. The lesson originally scheduled in accordance with the syllabus was recorded in advance via Loom and posted for students to watch in lieu of attending the teach-in.

Q: Facilitation: Tools used as part of the teach-ins.

A: Screen recording: Loom (alternatives: Zoom, Teams, Clipchamp); anonymous polling: Poll Everywhere (alternatives: Google Forms, Mentimeter, Doodle)

Q: Communication: Will participation be voluntary?

A: Yes. Students will have the choice to complete a prerecorded lesson that aligns with the originally scheduled curriculum for the day. Student participation will not be recorded for credit. Students will not be penalized for not attending the teach-ins.

Q: Communication: Notice—Is there enough time to prepare for the lesson(s) before the intended meeting? Is there enough notice for students to be aware of the opportunity?

A: Yes. Students were notified of the voluntary teach-in opportunities two days in advance, as well as of the information on the lesson recording initially scheduled for the time slots. The information about the teach-ins was also mentioned in class, during in-person sessions before the teach-ins were scheduled to take place. Students were informed that the teach-in was

intended to provide them with an opportunity to discuss current events in connection with the broader subject matter of the course (German studies) as well as gain greater insight into my areas of research, linking the two.

#ScholarStrike Teach-In—Day 1: Checking-in and Setting up a Foundation for Discussion

The teach-in lesson plan templates below are intended to give a bare-bones presentation of how I set up my presentations and discussions with students. Aiding in the categorization and goal identification for each component, I used the University of Arkansas's digital resource, "Using Bloom's Taxonomy to Write Effective Learning Objectives."

Table 1. Overview of Teach-In Session Structure, Activities, and Learning Goals for Day 1 of #ScholarStrike in 2020.

Time allocated & section type	Slide #	Slide Subject	Discussion/Activity	Goal
2 min. Warm-Up Activity	1	Title Slide	Words of welcome and appreciation for coming to the teach-in conversation.	Fostering connection and acknowledgment of presence.
Student Check-in (Poll Everywhere)—Block				
Prompts for Reflection; Poll/Crowd-Sourcing Activities; Sharing Results	2–4	Student Check-In	Check-in on student emotions: Pose questions to students for reflection on their current emotional state. Resource(s) via Chat: Poll Everywhere (PE) link Voluntary involvement Anonymized results <i>Note: Show all three questions on each slide, emphasizing the question in focus in bold, so students can begin contemplating their answers to the other questions.</i>	Students evaluate their emotions and mental impact resulting from recent cultural events and describe them to the group.
Q1 PE Response: 4 min. Discuss: 3 min.	2		Q1. Invite students to share their own emotional resonances collaboratively; build a word cloud.	
Q2 PE Response: 4 min. Discuss: 5 min.	3		Q2. Invite students to rate their anxiety as linked to Police–Civilian relations in the current moment from 0 (no anxiety) to 10 (debilitating anxiety).	
Q3 PE Response: 4 min. Discuss: 5 min.	4		Q3. Invite students to provide a short-form, anonymous text detailing their emotional, physical, and psychological states.	
5 min. Input: Context	5	#ScholarStrike Context and Background: Facilitators	Introduction to the #ScholarStrike and its originating facilitators. Acknowledge and provide context about the individuals who launched the Scholar Strike on social media	Students will be able to describe the main motivators and professionals behind the scholar strike.

5 min. Input: Context	6	#ScholarStrike Context and Background: Intention	Give students context behind the call to strike, in general, through teach-ins. Communicate why I have chosen to offer two teach-ins.	Students will be able to summarize the intentions for the Scholar Strike from the side of the organizers, as well as their instructor's motivation for participating with a teach-in format.
5 min. Input: Context and Motivation	7	My "Why" for Participating in the #ScholarStrike	Offer students my own motivations behind the teach-in, demonstrating vulnerability, and acknowledging that faculty and staff are struggling in the current moment, too. Model an investment in community.	Students will be able to summarize their instructor's motivation for participating in the Scholar Strike.
10 min. Lived Experiences; Community Building	8	Personal Experience	Share my own personal experience(s) participating in demonstrations tied to Black Lives Matter in Germany. Potentially include images, audio, video, etc. Offer to answer questions about first-hand accounts.	Students will be able to build a personalized association with demonstrating in the target culture. Should students pose questions, they will be able to analyze, potentially compare and contrast, and evaluate the personal account presented with their own experiences or contemplations about demonstrations.
13 min. Input: Cultural Analysis and Reflection	9	Blackness in Media and Culture: Exploitation	Provide students with cultural examples where Blackness and social unrest are linked to help contextualize a larger, broader history tied to the event at hand. This serves as an additional opportunity for students to connect their cultural references and literacy to the subject. Misrepresentation of racial identity. - Dr. Jessica Krug - Rachel Dolezal - Vijay Chokal-Ingam - Klemen Slakonja Historical background (Ex. minstrelsy vs. "modern minstrelsy") Invite students to contribute other examples that come to mind. Resource(s) via Chat: Share article links about the cases discussed (Benner; Clemmons; Coates; Davies; "Eurovision Star Faces Backlash;" Flaherty; "White Lies;" Pearson).	Students will be able to name examples of individuals in American and European contexts that have participated in appropriating Blackness for personal gain. Students will be able to detail some of the complexities behind how Blackness, as an identity and a construct, has been complicated by bad agents engaging in cultural appropriation and deception.
12 min. Input: Context; Lived Experiences; Current Events	10	#BLM in Berlin	Provide examples of social movements in the United States with a broader resonance, including in Germany. Resource(s) via Chat: Links to online news outlet articles, covering the protests in the target language, from linguistically accessible sources ranging from the novice to intermediate-high language competency levels. (Walsh; "Black Lives Matter"-Demonstration"; "Black Lives Matter").	Students will be able to explain some of the international resonance of the Black Lives Matter movement through the specific examples of a German context.

3 min. Resource: Institutional Document	11	Antiracism at Our Institution	Share the official anti-racism statement of our institution. Resource(s) via Chat: Link to antiracism statement on university webpage. <i>Note: The antiracism statement for the institution is no longer available.</i>	Students will be able to quote or paraphrase fundamental commitments to antiracism as communicated by their institution.
3 min. Resource: Social Media; Reflection; Wrap-up	12	Social Media Tied to the #ScholarStrike	Provide students with resources for continued education. Share the <i>YouTube</i> channel dedicated to recorded teach-ins by other academics. Words of appreciation for attending Day 1 of the teach-ins. - Offer to stay on the call in the event students wish to have continued conversation. Resource(s) via Chat: Links to <i>YouTube</i> channels and videos (Scholar Strike).	Should students watch the other teach-ins available via the <i>YouTube</i> channel; they will continue being presented with opportunities for critical reflection.

#ScholarStrike Teach-In—Day 2: Checking-in and Deep-Dive: Policing in Germany and USA

It is unlikely that all interested students are available for both voluntary sessions. Some questions are repetitions from Day 1 of the teach-in, but the material does not require attendance on Day 1 to participate and learn from the teach-in on Day 2. Some slides from Day 1 serve as review on Day 2. Students were offered the opportunity to demonstrate the knowledge they retained from attending the first day of the teach-in for the students who were not in attendance. This allowed for students to more actively participate in the conversation and demonstrate their knowledge to their peers.

Table 2. Overview of Teach-In Session Structure, Activities, and Learning Goals for Day 2 of #ScholarStrike in 2020.

Time allocation & section type	Slide #	Slide Subject	Discussion/Activity	Goal
2 min. Warm-Up Activity	1	Title Slide	Words of welcome and appreciation for coming to the teach-in conversation. Reminder: Intention of session is to provide students with a safe, respectful space to engage in communal reflection and discussion about current events as they pertain to the overlap in resonance and relevance in the context of German studies.	Foster connection and acknowledgment of presence.
3 min. Input: Context	2	Review: #ScholarStrike Context and Background: Facilitators	From Day 1: Introduction to the #ScholarStrike and its originating facilitators. Acknowledge and provide context to the individuals who launched the Scholar Strike on social media. Definitions: Institutional racism (Carmichael and Hamilton; Taylor). Resource(s) via Chat: Links from news outlets on the subject of the #ScholarStrike and its context (Flaherty, "ScholarStrike"; Mitchell; Butler and Gannon; Gavazzi; Taylor).	Students will be able to describe the main motivators and professionals behind the scholar strike.
Student Check-in (Poll Everywhere)—Block				
Prompts for Reflection; Poll/Crowd-Sourcing Activities; Sharing Results	3-4	Student Check-In	Check-in on student emotions. Resource(s) via Chat: Poll Everywhere (PE) link Voluntary involvement Anonymized results	Students will be able to summarize and discuss the emotional resonances of their peers tied to the questions posed.
Q3 PE Response: 5 min. Slide 4: 4 min. discussion			Q3. Invite students to provide a short-form, anonymous text detailing their emotional, physical, and psychological states.	
Q4 PE Response: 4 min. Slide 6: 5 min. discussion			Q4. Invite students to share their own associations tied to American policing via word cloud.	
Q5 PE Response: 5 min. Slide 8: 5 min. discussion			Q5. Invite students to share their emotional resonances when seeing examples of law enforcement failing to live up to their expectations of the role.	

5 min. Input: Context; Lived Experiences; Current Events	9 (Slide 10 from Day 1 of teach-in)	#BLM in Berlin	Provide students with an opportunity to take a closer look at some of the content in one of the articles (in the target language) shared on Day 1. Resource(s) via Chat: Links to online news outlet articles, covering the protests in the target language, from linguistically accessible sources ranging from the novice to intermediate-high language competency levels (Walsh; "Black Lives Matter"-Demonstration"; "Black Lives Matter")	Students will be able to explain some of the international resonance of the Black Lives Matter movement through specific examples from a German context.
5–7 min. Prompts for Reflection; Poll/Crowd-Sourc- ing Activities	10	Discussion: The Many Roles of Police Officers	Q6. Check-in with students to pool one- to two-word associations of the many roles police officers are expected to play while on the job. (Example provided: "law enforcement") <i>Note: Due to time constraints, students shared out their thoughts.</i>	Students reflect and explain their associations of the many roles police officers perform while on the job.
3 min. Sharing Results	11	Poll Everywhere Results	Project live, anonymous student responses <i>Note: We skipped this slide due to time constraints, having prioritized student reflection and live sharing during the check-ins #Q4–#Q6.</i>	Students discuss their associations of the many roles police officers perform while on the job.
4 min. Input and Resource: Cultural Analysis; Data Analysis and Reflection; Group Discussion	12	<i>Deutsche Welle:</i> Not Only Amer- ican Police Are Stretched Thin	Discuss the <i>Deutsche Welle</i> table depicting the total number of citizens killed at the hands of police from 2009 to 2017. The table shows the number of individuals who suffered from mental illness in comparison to the total number of deaths at the hands of German police. We collaboratively brainstormed the ways in which policing could be restructured to avoid the over-burdening of professionals whose skills do not reflect the situations they face while on the job. - Discuss the data presented in the infographic. Resource(s) via Chat: <i>Deutsche Welle</i> link for infographic (Gagnon)	Students engage in analysis and evaluation of infographic. Student demonstration of collaborative and critical thinking.
5 min. Input and Resource: Cultural Analysis; Data Analysis and Reflection	13	Looking at the Numbers: Prison Police Initiative	Discuss infographic: Look at practices of policing across national contexts, including Germany. Resource(s) via Chat: Prison Policy Network link for infographic (Jones and Sawyer; Sawyer)	Students analyze an infographic for critical reflection of transnational trends in policing.
5 min. Input and Resource: Cultural Analysis; Data Analysis and Reflection; Group Discussion	14	Looking at the Numbers	Provide students with a closer look at statistical data of deadly police engagement with civilians annually.	Students analyze an infographic for critical reflection of transnational trends in policing.

5 min. Group Discussion; Data Analysis	15	Incarceration in the United States	Discuss infographic from Prison Policy Network: Discuss incarceration data in the United States in comparison to other countries. Resource(s) via Chat: Prison Policy Network link for info- graphic (Sawyer and Wagner)	Students analyze an infographic for critical reflection of transna- tional trends in incarceration.
Student Check-in (Poll Everywhere)				
10 min. Prompts for Reflection; Poll/Crowd-Sour- cing Activities; Sharing Results	16	Student Check- In: What Are Your Thoughts on This Info- graphic?	Q7. Open question reflecting on the incarceration infographics Voluntary involvement Anonymized results Encourage reflection on infographics from slides 13, 14, and 15. Resource(s) via Chat: Poll Everywhere link - Verbally communicate and summarize some of the anonymous responses. - Offer an opportunity for students to share more about their critical reflections and interpretations of the infographics. - Synthesize key points from the teach-in, as a light form of discussion conclusion. Resource(s) via Chat: Poll Everywhere link	Students demonstrate critical reflection of transnational trends in policing and incarceration.
5 min. Resource: Institutional Doc- ument	17	Antiracism at Our Institution	Read aloud the antiracism statement published by the institution. Resource(s) via Chat: Shared the link to the antiracism statement. <i>Note: The antiracism statement for the institution is no longer available.</i>	Students will be able to quote or paraphrase fundamental commit- ments to antiracism as communi- cated by their institution.
5 min. Resource: Social Media; Reflec- tion; Wrap-Up	18	Closing Words of appreciation	Reiterate the context of the #Schol- arStrike, social media handles of key organizers, and link to other teach-ins. - Express appreciation for students' vulnerability and their commitment to civic engagement. - Encourage students to further circulate the resources shared over the course of the teach-ins with their peers. Resource(s) via Chat: Share links to social media accounts; YouTube channel with further teach-ins (Scholar Strike; "Dear Professor")	Should students watch the other teach-ins available via the <i>YouTube</i> channel, they will continue being presented with opportunities for critical reflection. Students leave the teach-ins with a sense of acknowledgement for the time, energy, and vulnerability they invested in the conversation and relationship with their instructor and peers.

Notes

1. Loom was particularly attractive as a screen-recording app because of the feature of showing your face while presenting. This helped ensure a degree of recognition and continuity with the distance learners, despite the limited synchronized meetings each week.
2. Wendy Hui Kyong Chun, author of *Updating to Remain the Same*, provides a succinct formula (Habit + Crisis = Update) to reflect contemporary approaches to communing in light of the scroll- and update-based forms of community engagement, which are commonly done in isolation. Chun writes, “Habit + Crisis = Update also makes clear the ways in which networks do not produce an imagined and anonymous ‘we’ (they are not, to use Benedict Anderson’s term, ‘imagined communities’) but rather, a relentlessly pointed yet empty, singular yet plural YOU. Instead of depending on mass communal activities, such as reading the morning newspaper, to create national citizens, networks rely on asynchronous yet pressing actions to create interconnected users” (3).
3. Enriching the conversation with my students was information focused on some of the other trends intersecting with American methods and patterns of policing, such as the statistics of Americans who are incarcerated and placing those numbers in respect to the broader population of the planet (Wagner and Bertram; Sawyer and Wagner).
4. I have chosen to capitalize both White and Black when referring to demographics of racialized identity to reflect the culturally constructed dynamics of power, in/visibility, and agency in respect to these groups in the broader structure of American hegemony.
5. Another useful definition comes from Robin DiAngelo’s book *White Fragility*, where she states, “When a racial group’s collective prejudice is backed by the power of legal authority and institutional control, it is transformed into racism, a far-reaching system that functions independently from the intentions or self-images of individual actors” (20).
6. Beverly Daniel Tatum reflects on the emotional resonances experienced by some of the audience members attending her talks: “Many of the White people in my audiences either have not given much thought

to the meaning of their racial group membership and so don't feel anything, or they have thought about it and feel uncomfortable. The nature of the discomfort can vary and is often linked to their socioeconomic position. . . . This psychological discomfort is part of the hidden cost of racism for Whites" (187).

7. Take, for example, "In April of 2021, CDC declared racism a serious public health threat that directly affects the well-being of millions of Americans and, as a result, affects the health of our entire nation. CDC has long recognized that racism is the root cause of many health disparities" (CDC). It is important to note that, during the publication process of this article, the initial website communicating this research was removed by the current government administration and is only now accessible thanks to volunteer activists who have recreated some of the previous version of the CDC site as RestoredCDC.gov. The new site "provides the same public health data, information and user experience as the agency's own website did on Jan. 20" (Volunteers Revive Pre-Trump CDC Website). Robin DiAngelo speaks to this subject directly and succinctly: "White comfort maintains the racial status quo, so discomfort is necessary and important" (143).

8. Defining critical pedagogy, with the support of pedagogical approaches and stances held by bell hooks, Terry Osborn, Henry Giroux, and Paulo Friere, Senel states, "Critical pedagogy is a teaching philosophy and practice that aims at confronting all forms of social oppression by raising critical awareness of social injustices and systemic domination and by challenging the status quo. It is based on the premise that education should not only focus on students' intellectual development, but also include students' individual stories and an analysis of larger systems in which these experiences are situated. In other words, education should embrace both the intellectual development and emancipatory potential of students" (67).

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Deep Solidarity Forever: Graduate Student Labor in Higher Education

Mari E. Ramler

Let's face it. We're undone by each other.
And if we're not, we're missing something.
—Judith Butler, *Precarious Life*

The Clemson Five

First, the bananas appeared. Someone had hung actual bananas on a pole supporting a sign that honors African Americans at Fort Hill, the plantation home-turned-museum that was owned by John C. Calhoun and later came into the possession of Thomas Green Clemson, the founder of Clemson University. Suddenly, the university had made national news—and not for a Division I Football National Championship. Although university president Jim Clements called the action “hurtful, disrespectful, unacceptable” in a campus-wide email and later released a three-page memo on improving inclusion, students demanded more (Vasilogambros). A campus activist group called “See the Stripes” founded and led by a PhD graduate student in Clemson’s Rhetorics, Communication, and Information Design (RCID) program at the time, A.D. Carson, released a statement that same week with seven grievances and seven demands for the university. These included a new multicultural center and changing the names of buildings named after controversial figures, such as Benjamin Tillman, the white supremacist and former South Carolina senator.

Then, Clemson University had its own students arrested. Writing for *The Atlantic*, Matt Vasilogambros recounts the bizarre tale of the “Clemson Five”—five students, graduate and undergraduate, at the

university who were arrested for peacefully protesting on Thursday night, April 14, 2016. Clemson students had protested the racism on their campus by participating in several sit-ins. When the student protesters refused to leave one campus building before it closed at 5:30 p.m., they were arrested for trespassing.

The Double Bind of Graduate Student Labor

Much has been written about the double identity of student athletes as it regards universities' exploitation of their labor, and scholarship has addressed the double identity—and double bind—that graduate students are expected to navigate during their employ at a university. In "Graduate Student Employee Unionization in the Second Gilded Age," William A. Herbert and Joseph van der Naald argue that legal rights have been a predominant factor in graduate student unionization, with graduate assistants confronting and frequently overcoming their misclassification as nonemployees. The authors position graduate student organizing within broader debates about precarious labor and the gig economy. The authors demonstrate that between 2012 and 2019, graduate student employees voted overwhelmingly for representation, with growth occurring most significantly at private institutions. In "The Rhetoric of Excellence and the Erasure of Graduate Labor," Allison Laubach Wright argues that the construction of the University of Houston as "excellent" through Tier One branding based on the Carnegie Foundation's Very High Research Activity designation functions to erase the work of graduate student workers, marking them as disposable in pursuit of a larger capitalist goal. I especially appreciated Wright's attention to graduate students teaching first-year writing and the outmoded and inaccurate metaphor of their labor as a so-called apprenticeship. In *Rhetoric and Resistance in the Corporate Academy*, Christopher Carter outlines a labor theory of agency that involves collaboration among tenure-line faculty, part-time and nontenure-track teachers. William Vaughn charts out the graduate student worker double bind as far back as 2003 in "Are You Now or Have You Ever Been an Employee?" Vaughn notes several significant court cases affirmed (NYU in 2000, Columbia in 2016) and denied (Brown in 2004) the status of graduate students as workers in private universities (154). Scott Henkel examines this legality in detail in "Working Conditions and Learning Conditions

after the National Labor Relations Board's Brown University Decision." Erin Hatton's *Coerced* includes both student athletes and graduate students, alongside prisoner laborers and welfare workers, as a growing workforce of coerced laborers. Hatton makes explicit how the definition of employment shifts rhetorically when it is used by employers for their own benefit and control.

Much like the debate surrounding how student athletes should be regarded and treated—are they employees or students of the university—the paradoxical role that graduate students are expected to maintain during their time at an institution of higher learning is equally fraught. The case should be clearer for graduate students because many of them have been contractually hired to teach, conduct research, or fill lesser assistant administrative roles at the university (e.g., assistant director of first year writing, assistant director of the writing center). However, the way graduate students are treated sometimes as students and sometimes as university employees seems to be determined by how much the university can get away with regarding its investment. By leaving the graduate student role ambiguous, universities exploit and hold power over graduate student workers. As an institution, a public university is uniquely designed to offer stability, security, and continuity over long periods of time. However, when this stability comes from exploitation of labor, the inequity must be addressed and corrected. Moreover, graduate students (whether they realize it or not) have a double identity. And when they select to act in one role over the other, they are often—as the Clemson Five experienced—capriciously punished.

This article approaches graduate student composition instructors of record as vulnerable university labor. Many of us have developed statements and toolboxes to fight inequity and injustice in the academy and yet still feel helpless when our own graduate students who are instructors of record face overwhelming adversity in basic survival while getting their education. How can tenure-track and tenured faculty best advocate for graduate students within a system that depends upon their exploitation? The graduate student double bind is a conceptual problem. I therefore advocate for a conceptual shift to a new frame, deep solidarity, to guide us from an unprecedented present into an increasingly uncertain future. Specifically, academia must, from the bottom up,

reimagine conditions of labor that are not only equitable to all, but that address the abuse of power that creates these inequitable conditions in the first place. To do so, I posit that tenure-track and tenured faculty must pursue deep solidarity that works across the differences of rank and position. “Deep solidarity recognizes that the system works for the few rather than for the many and that nothing will change unless more of the many come together” (Rieger and Henkel-Rieger 54). In this moment of uncertainty—governmental defunding of social programs, AI, and job market shifts—tenurable and tenured faculty must realign our loyalties.

I use two case studies, the Clemson Five protest in April 2016 and the University of California, Santa Cruz wildcat strike in March 2020, to illustrate how public universities exploit graduate students within a punitive model of justice. With this exploitation in view, I argue that tenurable and tenured faculty must adopt a deep solidarity framework to support graduate students in their holistic education. First, I make explicit the hypocrisy of faculty who teach their graduate students to resist systems of abusive power and yet do nothing to support their graduate students when they experience these abuses during their education. Second, I offer deep solidarity as a conceptual framework for considering labor in higher education. Rather than employing other uses of solidarity, I use two theologians’ frame of deep solidarity to see labor as explicitly ethical or unethical as opposed to efficient or pragmatic.

To be transparent about my positionality regarding this topic: I do not pretend to take a neutral stance regarding vulnerable labor, nor do I take my privilege as a tenured associate professor for granted. I am a queer, Mexican woman teaching in an English department at an R2 university in the Upper Cumberland region of Middle Tennessee. I am not a writing program administrator (WPA), nor do I oversee a writing center. My work with English graduate students mostly entails teaching them in seminars and chairing their research theses and digital portfolios. I have recently acted as a teaching mentor to several graduate students. I come to this labor conversation as the daughter of a Teamster steward (Local 705). Neither of my parents graduated high school, due to generational poverty. My father drove a truck in Chicago. His activism, advocacy, and organizing provided the onto-epistemological grounds for how I think about labor within higher education. My

Mexican mother cleaned houses to help make ends meet. Although my mother was born here in the United States, she taught me that there are no illegal people. In short, I spent my youth trying to educate myself firmly into the middle-class world of ideas that I naively believed would be a more equitable place for vulnerable labor, only to be disabused of this notion when I entered graduate school.

The History of Consciousness

Vulnerable labor in higher education has been widely researched, particularly in *FORUM*. But lately, I have been returning to two specific essays, Marc Bousquet's "Composition as Management Science" and especially Michael Bernard-Donols's "Solidarity Forever." Both articles have implications for graduate student labor as illustrated in my case studies. Bousquet claims that real institutional change is only possible through collective action, and Bernard-Donols argues that graduate student unions improve writing programs. These foundational articles are worth remembering because their central claims can still guide rhetoric and composition as we navigate a worsening labor crisis in higher education. In short, new applications of these two truths together is urgently necessary.

Bousquet uses historical examples of labor movements and organizing among adjuncts and graduate students to insist that collective labor—as opposed to individuals such as lower management WPAs—can enact transformative change within the academy. Bousquet claims that a "real class consciousness in composition" is grounded in "movement unionism" that unites faculty (517). Bousquet believes that the discipline of rhetoric and composition should refuse nontenure-track instructor positions for composition labor as a first step toward labor equity. A second significant step is the university without a WPA. He argues that the WPA might want less control rather than more over graduate student instructors; that is, a shedding of "the desire for control" and an embrace of "the reality of collective agency" (518). Collective agency, for Bousquet, means that a WPA refuse the role of lower management and become a "colleague among colleagues" (518). He reasons, "[C]omposition's best chance to contribute to a better world and to achieve disciplinary status depend [sic] on learning to write as colleagues among colleagues—a condition predicated on working

toward a university without a WPA" (518). Transformational change in higher education begins with institutional labor practices. Rejecting pragmatic assimilation and rhetorical rebranding, Bousquet unapologetically addresses the elephant in the room: vulnerable labor in the discipline. He forces the question: how can we say we support our graduate students if our very discipline's success in the corporatized university depends upon their exploitation?

I was recently reminded of Bousquet's claims regarding graduate student labor as I followed the graduate student wildcat strike at the University of California, Santa Cruz (UCSC). Just before the first quarter of the fall 2020 semester began, UCSC reinstated forty-two graduate student workers after firing them in March 2020 during a wildcat strike (a strike not endorsed by the union that represents the students). The UC system has a current labor contract with the United Auto Workers (UAW) that covers all campuses. The UAW had urged the university to reopen their contract to bargain for a cost-of-living adjustment (COLA). And in March, it authorized a systemwide strike vote for April on the grounds that the university had committed unfair labor practices. The university filed a similar claim against graduate workers (Flaherty, #COLA4ALL Shuts Down UC Santa Cruz).

Knowing this backstory, the rehiring of these graduate students surprised me. In fact, this news item caught my eye because I had been following this David and Goliath story of the unionized graduate students versus UCSC as it played out over nearly six months. The drama began in December 2019 when 233 graduate student teaching assistants and instructors declined to turn in fall grades for their students. Although not authorized at the time by the UAW, the wildcat strike expanded to other campuses in the UC system and, in some cases, became a teaching and research strike. The UCSC graduate students, overburdened by rent due to a lack of affordable housing in California, demanded an increased stipend or a cost-of-living adjustment. Writing for the *Los Angeles Times*, Nina Agrawal and Sonali Kohli report that the graduate student workers refused to teach, hold office hours, conduct research, or post grades, demanding an increase in pay of \$1,412 per month to cover their rent and to have something left over for food and utilities. Agrawal and Kohli write that "[t]he average teaching assistant's monthly salary is \$2,400 [pretax per month for nine months out of the year]. The average

rent for a one-bedroom apartment in Santa Cruz is \$2,600 a month, according to RentCafe.” The graduate students went on a grade strike, then a full labor strike. UCSC gave strikers an ultimatum: they could turn in their fall grades or be fired from their teaching assignments. On Thursday, March 5, 2020, graduate students shut down the UCSC campus, blocking all the entrances before dawn and forcing the university to cancel classes, except those offered online. Many faculty and undergraduate supporters joined the picket lines on that campus and across the UC system; all other system campuses saw their own one-day protests. Colleen Flaherty reporting for *Inside Higher Ed*, writes that:

The system said in a statement that it “values all our graduate students, including academic student employees (ASEs) who are essential to UC’s teaching mission, supporting the university as teaching assistants, readers and tutors. However, that mission is in jeopardy when ASEs refuse to fulfill their teaching obligations.” The system noted that these assistants are striking in violation of their union contract, negotiated in 2018, and said it’s “unfortunate that the UAW has resorted to announcing a strike authorization vote as the university continues pursuing opportunities to engage productively with graduate students on housing affordability and other issues.”

Then the university fired more than 80 graduate students who had not turned in grades. (#COLA4ALL Shuts Down UC Santa Cruz)

As I mentioned, I was surprised when forty-two of these graduate student workers were reinstated at the eleventh hour—I should not have been. A cursory knowledge of labor exploitation in higher education suggests that there was no other way. While it may have seemed impossible to those of us anxiously following this story that UCSC would reverse its decision, a Marxist reading of the story reveals that, although forty-two graduate students are back in the classroom, no real reversal took place. For while there has been outward action by the university (e.g., firing and rehiring), there has been no ideological change of heart and certainly no change in how the university administration views and treats its most vulnerable labor force.

UCSC's renowned History of Consciousness Department operates at the intersection of established and emergent disciplines and fields. This department offers a PhD degree, stipulating that "intellectual projects are problem based and draw upon diverse theoretical approaches," according to its website ("About HISC"). Therefore, it should come as no surprise that Jackie Davis, the strike organizer of the roughly 350 graduate students and 200 teaching assistants, was a second-year graduate student in the department (Agrawal and Kohli). According to Davis, campus police and nearby San Francisco and Alameda police faced off against strikers. It was a week of protest. On Monday, helmeted officers carrying batons and tear gas struck one student, who suffered a concussion. On Wednesday, another student sustained a concussion, and several others had bruises (Agrawal and Kohli). Seventeen people were arrested, one person while trying to deliver water to the protestors.

Over its more than forty-year development, the History of Consciousness department has had graduate students produce projects on power and inequity in many creative ways. These projects are categorized by race and ethnicity and gender and sexuality; philosophy and theory (including Marxism and human rights); political economy and social movements (including financialization, history of movements of the left and right); and media, aesthetics, poetics. The department's Statement of Values on their website reads as follows:

We, the faculty of History of Consciousness, express our strong commitment to the core values of mutual respect, equality, and openness in our relations with one another and with our students. We are dedicated to fostering and maintaining a free and inclusive community that is distinguished by intellectual and cultural pluralism and experimentation. We view our commitments to racial, ethnic, sexual, gender and faith-based equity as central to the vitality of this community. We look forward to thinking together, learning from one another, teaching, writing, and conducting research together as members of an interdisciplinary department with a unique and influential legacy in the greater humanities.

Reading this, I cannot help but wonder if the living together—that is, sharing space in the material world—is assumed to be a prerequisite

to learning. If so, the trouble is that not everybody, including their own graduate students, can afford the precondition for learning together. Another point of concern is that, while the faculty support this sort of exploration in the classroom, their support was harder to spot as the months-long strike solidified into a real moment of UC system resistance.

Even more troubling, emails show that UCSC police used military surveillance to suppress the wildcat graduate student strike. Reporting for *Salon*, Nicole Karlis writes that UCSC police “used ‘friendly force trackers’ and FBI tech to surveil grad student strikers protesting for a living wage.” The emails reveal that the UCSC Police Department requested mutual aid from the Alameda County Sheriff’s Office to police the protests as early as December 31. Notably, UCSC is in Santa Cruz County, not Alameda County, which is about forty miles north. In other words, UCSC realized as early as December 31 that it would need police backup from a nearby county. Will Parrish, another PhD student in the History of Consciousness Department, said, “It’s disturbing to be part of a labor action like this and to see the militarized nature of the university’s response” (Karlis). The dissonance of learning about power and its abuses through history and then experiencing the abuse of power at the hands of one’s own university resonated throughout California as more and more graduate students stopped teaching and began striking.

The recent mobilizing efforts to create graduate student unions along with UCSC’s militarized response to squashing this movement are irrational, economically and educationally. UCSC’s firing and rehiring exemplifies “the irrationality of the rationalized” that theologians Ulrich Duchrow and Franz Hinkelammert introduce in their book *Transcending Greedy Money*. The authors argue that “efficiency and rationalization” have become society’s “highest values.” They explain how these values are often counterintuitive:

Freedom and self-determination may only be pursued insofar as they encourage competitiveness. If emancipation destroys or inhibits competitiveness, then it has to stop. Competitiveness dominates to the extent that it does not even allow for the removal of the destructive effects for which it is responsible. It even makes it impossible to register the fact of the destruction in the first place.

This is what we call the irrationality of the rationalized, which is at the same time the inefficiency of efficiency. (120)

Duchrow and Hinkelammert's phrase "the irrationality of the rationalized" aptly describes USCS's treatment of graduate students in the wildcat strike. The hypocrisy and violence in exploiting, while being dependent upon, graduate student labor without providing adequate pay and benefits to support that labor and then firing those graduate students upon whose labor a successful academic quarter depended can only be seen as irrational. By firing its own essential labor force, UCSC cut off its nose to spite its face. Further, in rehiring these same graduate students directly before the fall 2020 first quarter began, UCSC confirmed what the striking graduate students knew all along: they are the backbone of university labor. Without them, the university lacks a foundational labor force upon which the rest of its academic structure of teaching and learning depends.

When I reflect on the idea of progress, the UCSC case study is also instructive. Duchrow and Hinkelammert write, "We can no longer speak of progress if the results of progress are retrograde, if progress loses its meaning" (120). A university that prides itself on a world-renowned program such as the History of Consciousness allowed its own police force to request mutual aid, including deputies, trucks, and vans (in the case of arrests from the Alameda County Sheriff's Office) to police graduate student protests. Karlis informs us that "[a]ll expenses, including food and lodging, were paid for by UCSC police for at least 65 [Alameda] officers." As a reminder, the graduate students began the strike because, under the current pay structure, they could not afford to live in the same town in which they taught and studied. Taught to identify the abuses of power throughout human history, graduate students applied these lessons to their own material situation and were treated with force by their own university. UCSC's treatment of graduate students is not only irrational from an economic standpoint (they fired their essential workers), but it is also irrational from an educational perspective (they essentially expelled their graduate students for mastering the material).

Reading this story through the lens of deep solidarity suggests that if graduate students are suffering from unlivable working conditions

at UCSC and elsewhere, other vulnerable populations in higher education are also experiencing unjust working and living conditions. By addressing the hierarchical abuse of power in higher education as we consider the UCSC case study, we may also begin to address the root causes of violence toward others. Certainly, graduate students were harmed by UCSC, but other actors in that system are also survivors of institutional exploitation of labor. Priya Rai, the community solutions coordinator at API Chaya, explains, “We live in a world where it’s kind of you’ve either caused harm or you’re a survivor. And we don’t really let anyone live in the complicated space in between. And the reality is that oppression is the root of harm” (“Centering the Needs of Survivors” 00:01:13–00:01:25). Rai cites Mariame Kaba, a prison abolition advocate, who once famously said that no one enters violence for the first time by causing it. I connect these thoughts on who gets to be a survivor to the violence performed upon the UCSC graduate students in our case study by arguing that higher education is a system of oppression in which almost all its labor is exploited to various degrees. In short, exploitation of power is the norm in higher education.

Cheap Labor

A cursory glance at the hierarchical power structure of higher education reveals a long list of vulnerable labor: adjuncts, instructors, lecturers, visiting assistant professors, assistant professors of teaching, and professors of practice, to name a few. With all these precarious positions, the university-as-employer benefits from cheap labor, short-term contracts, and a limited benefits package if one is offered at all. The university uses these vulnerable instructors as cheap labor to teach four to five courses, thus freeing up tenured faculty to focus on research, which further benefits the research categorization of the university (R1, R2, etc.). In the field of rhetoric and composition, for example, it is not uncommon for graduate students to teach the basic 1000- or 2000-level courses as instructors of record; that is, as fully autonomous instructors. Precarious faculty teach these courses and higher-level courses that tenured and tenure-track faculty often do not teach. Because precarious faculty members teach so many sections with higher student caps, they often teach many more students than tenured and tenure-track faculty. Thus, they are asked to write letters of recommendation, provide office hours

and writing conferences (in shared or communal offices), and serve on thesis committees, undergraduate and graduate, often without remuneration. Many of these hires must also conduct research to stay competitive in a crumbling job market. And, as the years roll along, their PhD degree ages. They are often perceived as stale PhDs because they have “failed” to secure a tenure-track job in a supposedly reasonable amount of time since graduation.

But, considering the state of the academic job market, particularly in the humanities, what constitutes a reasonable amount of time to secure a tenure-track job remains unclear. A statistic I recently read in Christopher Caterine’s book *Leaving Academia* suggests that the question itself may be misguided.

Today in the United States, only about 1.2 percent of people who enter a doctoral program in the arts and humanities earn a tenure-track position at a leading institution. The situation isn’t much better if you remove that final qualifier. People in *any* tenure-track job represent just 2–7 percent of those who start a PhD. To state the case inversely, **more than nine out of ten academics don’t achieve the career most of us hoped for** when we set down the path to an advanced degree. (7)

Using Caterine’s statistic of tenure-track (un)employment in academia, a place that many of us view as more of a meritocracy than a life-gambling venture, I see academia as a place where people decidedly do not have power over their own lives. Academics routinely leave support networks of friends and family, delay having children, and move to locations they do not want to live to train for and secure a tenure-track job. The myth of pulling oneself up by the bootstraps underscores this type of survivalist mentality on the academic job market. Given Caterine’s statistics, an applicant may not feel they even have a choice to turn down a tenure-track offer. Graduate students are starting to mobilize to gain better working conditions. And, in some regions of the United States, there are faculty unions that hold bargaining power in higher education. But even in academia, which prides itself on purportedly prioritizing the life of the mind, we see severe and unjust working conditions with pressure to keep those conditions in place. This system of exploitation

cannot lead to flourishing. Rather, it is a contemporary example of the irrationality of the rationalized. What could be more inefficient than an education that prepares its students for a job market that does not realistically exist?

It did not have to be this way. In an article for the *New York Times*, Kevin Carey traces higher education's complicated history and points to two critical moments when academia could have chosen to protect and not exploit labor. Carey writes about this first moment below:

The percentage of professors on the tenure track had been slowly declining since the 1970s. In the late 1990s came a demographic event that would ultimately throw the university labor market into a tailspin: the first college years of the so-called millennials, those born from the early 1980s to the mid-1990s.

Colleges swelled with students over the next decade and a half, with undergraduate enrollment increasing from 12.2 million in 1995 to a peak of 18.1 million in 2011. Colleges needed to hire hundreds of thousands of additional professors.

Administrators had options. They could have kept the ratio of tenured to nontenured about the same, using new tuition revenue to create more tenure-track positions.

But that's not what happened. Instead, the number of contingent faculty more than doubled, to 1.1 million. The number of tenured and tenure-track faculty, by contrast, increased by only 9.6 percent, to 436,000.

Rather than invest in teaching with this surplus of tuition funds, administration chose instead to keep creating and filling contingent faculty and adjunct positions. Preferred by university administration as a cheap labor option, 1.1 million contingent faculty shouldered the burden of millennial education. This was fiscally advantageous for universities.

The halls of academe are known to be hospitable to people with radical views on power relationships between capital and labor, but colleges themselves are often merciless actors in the labor market. Many adjuncts earn only a few thousand dollars per course, with no health insurance or retirement benefits. Twenty-five percent of part-time faculty receive some form of public assistance. (Carey)

I will return to the hypocrisy of hospitality toward the poor “somewhere out there” but not academia’s own. But first, I want to look at the second historical moment that Carey highlights:

The 2008 economic downturn hammered state budgets, resulting in major cuts to public university funding that persisted well into the 2010s. At the same time, the millennial demographic wave crested. Undergraduate enrollment dropped by 1.2 million between 2011 and today. Universities needed fewer professors, and they had less money to pay them.

The timing of the recession surprised many experts. But universities knew that the business cycle still existed. They knew when the demographic tide would recede, it being a function of the number of births that had occurred 18 years earlier. (The total number of undergraduates declined significantly even after a huge increase in the number of international students from China and elsewhere.) And they understood the academic labor market, since they created and controlled its conditions.

Yet at no point did universities seem to consider slowing the flow of students into the Ph.D. pipeline. The opposite happened. In 1988, the number of doctorates in the humanities conferred was estimated to be 3,570, and it increased to 5,145 in 2018.

Here again, universities had lead time to plan an alternate course of action. But rather than take a responsible, protective stance toward their own graduate students, schools instead viewed them as exploitable labor. It is much cheaper to pay a teaching assistant to teach a beginner course than tenured or even tenure-track faculty. In both historic moments, universities had options. They could have invested in and protected their most vulnerable workers. Instead, they chose, and continue to choose, to exploit labor, all the while professing that education is a public good. These decisions along with the pandemic have decimated the rhetoric and composition job market (Fig.1).

If a PhD graduate somehow—through enormous effort and luck—manages to secure a tenure-track job, they and tenured faculty are not necessarily the ones benefiting from higher education’s exploitation, although they might seem to fare better at first glance. In fact,

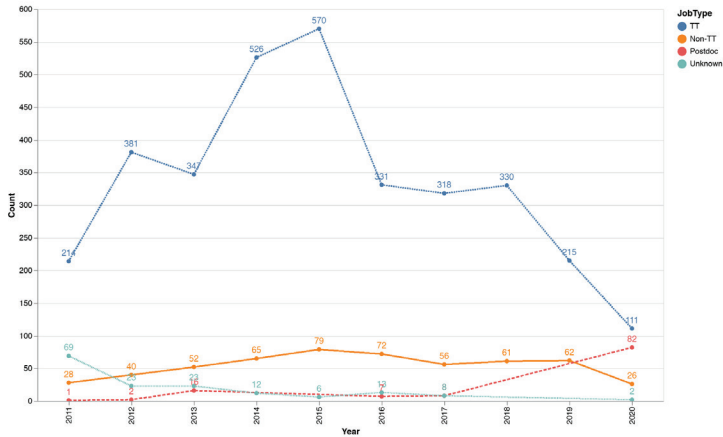


Figure 1. Rhetoric-composition job market projection graph for academic year 2020–2021 by Chris Lindgren.

tenure-track and tenured faculty, being more closely allied with their teaching colleagues than with university administration, are uniquely poised to offer deep solidarity to graduate students and other contingent faculty seeking more humane working conditions. This leads us to a two-fold conclusion. First, we cannot work toward meaningful change with any institution invested in preserving power inequity (in this case the institution of higher education). Second, if there is any change to be realized, it must be built not from the top down but from the bottom up. Deep solidarity across difference and toward the unified goal of equitable pay for living and working conditions for all is a rational, efficient, and humane response.

Deep Solidarity

While much has been written on solidarity in higher education—critical relational solidarity (Sandler), thick solidarity (Liu and Shange; Abad; Bowman, et al.), decolonial perspectives on solidarity (Gaztambide-Fernández), and teacher solidarity (Pham; Philip et al.; Kahn; Kaltefleiter)—I choose to read cheap labor through the lens of Rieger and Henkel-Rieger's concept of deep solidarity because its most compelling characteristic is that it does not suggest comprehensive similarity

over difference. This has resonance with Gaztambide-Fernández's decolonial view of solidarity: "Most relevant to projects of decolonialization, yet more rare and complicated to theorize, is a conception of *solidarity* that hinges on radical differences and that insists on relationships of incommensurable interdependency" (46; emphasis added). The reason I am not simply adding to a decolonial perspective of solidarity is that I see deep solidarity implicitly at work in all these applications of solidarity, including the decolonial view. I am also interested in viewing this through a religious frame because I have often seen religions, especially white Christian nationalist supremacy, remain silent on this topic. Theologians Joerg Rieger and Rosemarie Henkel-Rieger define deep solidarity as follows:

Deep solidarity recognizes that the system works for the few rather than for the many, and that nothing will change unless more of the many come together. Deep solidarity does not mean that we are all alike or that our differences do not matter anymore, just the opposite: deep solidarity allows us to deal with our differences more constructively and put them to work for a common cause. (54)

In other words, deep solidarity allows flexibility in solidarity's emphasis and application, even as it stresses interdependence toward a common goal.

I was recently reminded of the Clemson Five when former Clemson professor, poet, and activist Jillian Weise unofficially proposed that Clemson University pay restitution to the five students Clemson arrested in 2016. "Something to cover the lawyers' fees, the trauma of being jailed by one's own university, the fall-out of having an arrest record, and a boost for the students' artistic and activist practice," Weise suggested on a Clemson-affiliated *Facebook* page. She then proposed Individual Artist and Activist Grants in the amount of \$250,000 per student "to show them that Clemson knows what it did was wrong. And to show them that Clemson knows it is now building off their labor and the risks they took for which Clemson arrested them." Indeed, Weise's proposal comes not long after Clemson University's Board of Trustees asked the South Carolina General

Assembly to amend a twenty-year-old law so that the school could rename a campus building named after a slave owner and a white segregationist and supremacist. Remember the campus activist group See the Stripes' list of seven grievances and seven demands for Clemson University? One of the demands was that the university change the names of buildings named after controversial figures, such as Benjamin Tillman, the white supremacist former senator.

While the Board of Trustees apparently could not hear the cries of their own students and graduate students, their ears were more sympathetic to pressure applied from Cleveland Browns quarterback Deshaun Watson, a Clemson alumnus who led the Clemson Tigers to a College Football Playoff (CFP) championship game appearance in 2015 and a national championship win in 2016. Former Clemson players Watson and DeAndre Hopkins, wide receiver for the Baltimore Ravens, petitioned the university to remove the name of John C. Calhoun from the school's honors college, with Hopkins noting that the slave owner's influence is the reason he does not mention Clemson University's name when he is introduced before NFL games. "I felt this oppressive figure during my time at Clemson and purposely do not mention the University's name before NFL games because of it," Hopkins wrote on *Instagram*. "I am joining the voices of the students and faculty who have restarted this petition to rename the Calhoun Honors College. I urge all Clemson students, football players, and alumni to join us, so the next generation of young Black leaders can be proud of the institution they graduate from. Now is the time for change" (Barshop). Hopkins's voice had transformative power: the Clemson Board of Trustees removed the name of John C. Calhoun from the honors college and renamed it Clemson University Honors College the same day that they requested the South Carolina General Assembly amend the twenty-year-old law so that they could also rename Tillman Hall.

I do not wish merely to contrast the punitive response that the Clemson Five, with their list of grievances and demands, experienced with the swift and decisive action that the NFL and former Clemson Tigers' football players, with their petition, enjoyed. Rather, I constellate these two actions with Weise's proposal for payment to illustrate a larger point. I can understand why a university would readily respond to its former football players who publicly call for action. It does not

require much imagination to realize that a university's incentive for selective listening and treatment is capitalistically driven. The corporatization of higher education has produced financial dividends for higher administration and more precarity with less pay for faculty. The deeper level of analysis in this constellation lies with the role reversal of Clemson University potentially paying its graduate students \$250,000 for the trauma of being jailed by their own university for peaceful protest. While this gesture of repayment if carried out might initially signal restorative justice, it requires Clemson University to consider the unjust conditions that caused its undergraduate and graduate students to protest in the first place. Further, the NFL players' petition for the university to change the name of a historical building named after a racist figure caused Clemson University to request the South Carolina General Assembly to amend a law. This strikes me as a surprising solidarity that is constraining Clemson University—not to mention the South Carolina General Assembly—to look at the unjust conditions on campus that allowed for the racist bananas and student arrests.

The Clemson Five arrests illustrate punitive justice and the UCSC rehiring approximates restorative justice, but what Weise and the NFL players have proposed would be best characterized as deep solidarity because the university must look not only at the harm they caused but also at the original conditions that allowed the harm to happen. If I take a step back, I also witness another surprise: the deep solidarity across differences that created transformative change. While the Clemson Five, the NFL players, and Weise all have Clemson University in common, they couldn't be more different in their approaches to the problem of racism persisting at Clemson University. The Clemson Five resisted the university administration, risking and realizing arrest in order to do so; the NFL players publicly petitioned the university to change the names of the Calhoun Honors College and Tillman Hall, using their celebrity status along with social media to garner widespread support for the initiative; and Weise unofficially proposed payment for former students who had been harmed by their institution. I recognize this unity across difference as deep solidarity.

Applied to our present example of the Tillman Hall name change as a unified initiative, I see deep solidarity at work, albeit in a loose, unplanned way. Each actor did their part to contribute to sustained

pressure on the university to change. Imagine the focus and breadth if all three of these resistances had acted as a unified front. Recalling our UCSC case study, we witnessed the power of united graduate students and precarious faculty on the UCSC campus, but those efforts spread to the other UC campuses. In fact, graduate students at the Berkeley campus declared a full teaching strike, following their peers at Santa Cruz and Santa Barbara. Graduate assistants at San Diego also declared a grading strike, following a similar move at Davis. The university system responded with a statement claiming that the graduate students were jeopardizing the university's mission of education. This statement underscores the power of building from below: the university formally recognized reliance upon graduate students—the most vulnerable precarious faculty of all—as a crucial backbone of labor. The UC response (or lack thereof) aside, this rippling effect illustrates the organic potential that deep solidarity engenders. Rieger and Henkel-Rieger underscore the power of deep solidarity to create a new community, and the recent UC system strikes suggest that this new community can actualize and flourish by rallying around the same unjust working conditions, even as it might manifest in different ways.

A key difference between Clemson University's willingness to change and the UC system's refusal to change was two football players with money, power, and celebrity status. Clemson University changed because of capitalistic pressure to do so. And this capitalistic pressure entails more than money. A bit of class analysis reveals that when Clemson football players are students, they are treated as workers at best and commodities at worst. College football programs generate revenue in a variety of ways, including ticket purchases, corporate sponsorships, endorsements, licensing fees, television contracts, alumni donations, capital campaigns, student athletic fees and, for the elite few, bowl game fees or playoff/championship revenue. Alumni who have gone pro also serve as symbolic and social capital for the university. *New York Times* reporter Mike McIntire has gone so far to say, "Critics of big-time college sports like to say the system is broken. I look at it and actually conclude the system is working just as intended. This really is a giant multibillion dollar commercial entertainment platform functioning under the guise of a tax-exempt educational pursuit" (Illing). *Forbes'* Chris Smith reports that the Clemson Tigers' average annual football revenue

is seventy-seven million dollars. Critiquing a university's treatment of its student athletes considering how much revenue they bring to their school is beyond the scope of this article. However, the point I wish to make here is not about money per se as much as it is about labor. Clemson student athletes, like graduate students, precarious faculty, and even tenured professors, are exploited by the university for their labor. In Marxist terms, the university uses its asymmetric power to extract valuable labor from these workers without assigning value to the worker. While adjunct instructors and tenured professors might balk at being similarly categorized, I maintain that both are, to various degrees, seen as expendable, extractable labor by their employers. In this way, they are more similar than dissimilar. This understanding is foundational for deep solidarity and the potential for unity across ranks.

Recalling precarious faculty and the dwindling job market for university tenure-track professors, we witness another opportunity for deep solidarity. Rieger and Henkel-Rieger write, "[T]he middle class finds itself closer to the working class and the poor than ever before" (62). By intentionally joining forces with graduate students in their strike for better living and working conditions, tenured faculty at universities could engage in deep solidarity across job titles and ranks. Graduate students and tenured faculty hold precariousness and powerlessness in common. In fact, as constituents of a dwindling middle class of professors in higher education, tenured faculty have more in common with graduate students and other precarious faculty than they might initially think. Given higher education's current state, tenure is more precarious than ever.

Considering a recent global pandemic and the uncertainty of AI in automating labor, including teaching and assessing labor, the limited stability that these instructors have relied upon is more threatened than it was before March 2020, when so many academic institutions were forced to suddenly pivot to online education. From community colleges to R1s, higher education in all its divergent forms lost money due to the universal, emergency turn from the material to the digital. The recent attacks on tenure, the Great Resignation, and the Great Restructuring predict diminishing security in higher education. Whether some institutions can recover remains to be seen. As the difference between the middle class and the working class becomes more blurred, an obvious

opportunity emerges. Although we may still be reeling from unanticipated change, we have the chance to practice deep solidarity in a more intentional way with those who live and work among us. Perhaps now, more than ever before, graduate students need support, in material and immaterial ways, as they shoulder the burden of online, hybrid, and face-to-face education and as they confront a future that, at best, holds bleak job prospects.

This Is Your Fight

"My goal used to be landing a tenure-track job. Now, it's unionizing adjuncts," writes Maggie Levantovskaya, a lecturer at Santa Clara University, in her *Medium* article "This Fight Is Your Fight." She describes her reluctance, and fear, to become actively involved in the Service Employees International Union (SEIU). But becoming a union organizer on campus made Levantovskaya, who describes her academic labor conditions as precarious, become invested. She wrote the following list of principles to harness solidarity in academia:

If you're a student, this is your fight. "Faculty working conditions are student learning conditions."

If you're tenure-stream or tenured, this is your fight. Adjunctification compromises academic freedom and shared governance. Greater reliance on precarious labor means fewer tenure-track jobs, fewer research collaborators, more tension within departments and universities.

If you're academic staff, this is your fight. Unionizing adjuncts makes it easier to unionize staff. The constant turnover of adjuncts also means more labor for staff.

If you're contingent faculty, this is your fight. No promises from the university to listen and solve the underlying problems "without third party meddling" will ever amount to a seat at the table. Without a mutually negotiated contract, the university can only implement top-down changes that are reversible at any moment.

If you care about the fate of all workers who are unionized, who are struggling to unionize . . . this is your fight. Unions have been weakened across the US. Making a union stronger by increasing membership helps all workers and builds political power.

Reading this list, I am struck by the interdependence of roles: I hear the call for deep solidarity. It is a call I remember from Michael Bernard-Donals's 2009 article "Solidarity Forever." In it, Bernard-Donals untangles the double bind of graduate student labor. That is, that graduate students are not only workers nor are they only students:

The university may admit graduate students into its programs without employing them as instructors; and the university may hire instructors to teach its classes without requiring those teachers to enroll in its degree programs. The university's combination of these two strands of work is borne of financial exigency—undergraduate students generate revenue in the form of tuition, but not enough revenue to support the salaries of the tenure-track faculty required to teach them—and it's incumbent upon universities not to punish its graduate student teachers for this fact. (W443)

Bernard-Donals insists that universities should not punish graduate students—nor, it goes without saying, fire them—because its labor model depends upon their cheap labor. Further, Bernard-Donals argues that graduate student unionization makes a WPA's job easier in that a labor contract stipulates "details of these facets of graduate student work, pay, and benefits" (W443). Graduate student unionization

actually improved my working relationship with graduate students. . . . [I]t allowed me to see, in startlingly clear ways, the employment pressures under which [graduate students] worked, and it provided me with terms and a vocabulary with which to engage in productive conversations with them about that work, the best practices encouraged by our field, and how to fit the two together. (W449)

Policymaking was made easier because he saw "where the line between good pedagogy and difficult working conditions might be drawn" (W449).

Pragmatically, tenured faculty can support graduate students by refusing to cross the picket line (even virtually) to force recognition of

the vulnerable labor that graduate students provide. They can share official statements of solidarity and support, organize departmental backing of a strike, and refuse to retaliate against any striking workers (Taylor). These are pragmatic suggestions that are often ignored, even if tenured faculty deeply sympathize with their graduate students. This is why deep solidarity as a conceptual shift is key as a precedent for behavioral change.

I have suggested deep solidarity as a lens through which we might imagine more just responses to trauma. But I know that the institution of higher education is so deeply invested in the punitive model of justice with its emphasis on punishment and removal that I cannot expect change to occur there voluntarily. Therefore, it is even more urgent that we turn to one another to create transformation. A conceptual shift to deep solidarity, as Rieger and Henkel-Rieger define it, is one such way. With deep solidarity in place, we must pragmatically support graduate student unions with our money, time, and refusal to give in to institutional pressure. If one among us is hungry or homeless, we are all hungry and homeless. This recognition is the trauma of consciousness and our very best hope.

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Glocalized Political Agency and Interstitial Solidarity in France's 2015 March for Dignity and against Racism: From a Universalist to an Intersectional Anti-Racist Framework

Eric Wistrom

On October 31, 2015, the March for Dignity and against Racism took place in Paris, France. Born of Amal Bentounsi's collective "Urgence, notre police assassine" and organized by the decolonial feminist collective MAFED (Marche des Femmes pour la dignité), the demonstration was originally conceived as protesting police brutality, yet soon came to embody a far broader anti-racist agenda. This was due in part to the March's unique form of political organization that—while having a considerable local grassroots contingent—was heavily mobilized through an active social media campaign on *Twitter* and *Facebook*. The March consequently represented a "glocalized" form of activism on two interrelated fronts: on the one hand, a solidary, translocal social consciousness was maintained on the Internet through a broad appeal to commonly shared interests outlined in the March's manifesto—in this case, those of police brutality and an intersectional anti-racist ideology—while political action was rooted in local causes of concern (e.g., individual instances of police brutality); on the other hand, activism was defined by a complicated interplay of overlapping online and offline social networks that sought to instrumentalize social media as a means of delocalized, grassroots mobilization.

As I will argue, the March's shifting optics from protesting police brutality to adopting a broader anti-racist agenda encouraged a new

form of interstitial solidarity that was not defined on the basis of discrete social identifiers or a single political cause, but rather on a far more nebulous political ideal that was articulated in the shared spaces between political and social identities. This was in many ways correlated with the manifesto's intersectional framing, which rejected the universalist approaches to political action traditionally adopted by French anti-racist organizations and instead centered its political action on the pluralistic nature of the marchers' individual lived experiences. The marchers in turn emphasized the interrelationship of various forms of social oppression in their critique of state racism. Concomitant with the glocalized form of political agency adopted by MAFED, this framing had an unexpected consequence: while it certainly held the potential to increase the number of individuals who might identify with the manifesto's call and thus mobilize on the day of the March—for example, by uniting those who primarily identified with the question of anti-Black racism, Islamophobia, or sexism under a shared anti-racist banner—it also inadvertently weakened solidarity among participants by conflating and ignoring intragroup differences, given the historical primacy of color-evasive Republicanism within French anti-racism. This was exemplified by the rising tensions between proponents of intersectional/decolonial and universalist approaches to political action, which ultimately contributed to the striking absence of any of the major historical French anti-racist organizations (e.g., SOS Racisme, MRAP, LICRA¹) as either signatories of the March's manifesto or participants in the October 31 procession.

To understand the complexities of this social process as it unfolded in the 2015 March for Dignity, analysis will be divided into three parts. After first discussing MAFED's founding ethos and situating the March's manifesto within France's recent history of anti-racist activism, I will examine how intersectional identity politics and social media were leveraged to create an emergent social identity through which political action could be articulated and maintained. I will subsequently demonstrate how this glocalized form of political agency encouraged a unique form of interstitial solidarity among participants that—all the while seeking an ideological convergence of political struggles—was characterized by increasing political tribalism and the breakdown of solidary association. I will close with a discussion of the primary criticisms of the

March by those who chose not to participate, which I argue points to a broader ideological divide in French political activism that is related to the ideological anchoring of intersectional/decolonial and universalist anti-racist organizations.

Given my current institutional affiliation and the promulgation of recent executive orders that have significantly curtailed my research agenda into minority populations in France, I have adopted a far more descriptive, rather than prescriptive, analysis of the 2015 March for Dignity and have chosen to publish this article without explicit mention of my employer. Cognizant of the limitations of my work within the military-industrial complex as a current assistant professor at an unnamed federal service academy and as a former member of the American intelligence community—an identity that would at least superficially appear to place me at odds with the stated objectives of the March’s organizers—I have attempted to retain an objective perspective as to why intersectional approaches to political action have increasingly gained traction in France from the early 2000s onward, as well as why traditional French anti-racist organizations grounded in color-evasive Republicanism have largely rejected this development as divisive and controversial.

From Protesting Police Brutality to an Intersectional Anti-Racist Initiative

As mentioned in the introduction, the March for Dignity was organized by a collective of sixty-seven women known as MAFED (Bentounsi, “Marche de la Dignité: Appel”). As is indicated by the collective’s full name, the *Marche des Femmes pour la dignité* (Women’s March for Dignity), MAFED was not formed as a long-term collective declared with the prefecture, such as SOS Racisme (i.e., as an *association déclarée*), but rather as an ad-hoc organizational committee for a specific event. While self-descriptions of the collective portray its members as “an autonomous collective made up exclusively of women experiencing state racism” and “com[ing] from postcolonial immigration (Arabs, Blacks, Muslims . . .), Roma, and/or working-class neighborhoods” (MAFED, “Meeting”),² their personal motivations varied greatly: whereas founder Amal Bentounsi’s participation can be traced to the death of her younger brother who was shot in the back by a police officer in 2012, Sihame Assbague

sought to curb arbitrary identity checks of racial minorities, Hanane Karimi's work focused on gendered relations and inequality within an Islamic religious context, and Anina Ciuci was primarily concerned with issues related to Romani populations in France (MAFED, "Meeting"). Despite these apparent differences, the collective found a unifying factor in their intersectional approach to identity politics, which sought to establish a solidary ideal through their common appeal to individual experiences of discrimination and marginalization.

As we will soon see, this solidary ideal was not rooted in any one political cause, but rather in an interstitial form of social identification with various components of a broadly articulated and largely intersectional anti-racist initiative. This in turn influenced the March's rhetorical framing, which drew on France's recent history of anti-racist activism to establish a coherent social narrative of institutional state racism. While this framing was certainly related to structural and institutional forms of racism, I should underline that MAFED's understanding of state racism was meant to emphasize the role of the state as both an actor in and enabler of discriminatory practices—namely through law enforcement, immigration controls, and socioeconomic policies. For the organizers, state racism was not an abstract sociological concept; it was a lived reality embedded in the French Republic's historical mechanisms of power and governance.

It was within this context that the organizers made a concerted effort to situate the March for Dignity as the spiritual successor to two prior social movements: the 1983 March for Equality and against Racism and the 2005 riots in the French *banlieues* (suburbs). If these events were chosen for their immense cultural capital—the March of 1983 in particular, which was the first national anti-racist demonstration of its kind in France—their juxtaposition is nonetheless somewhat puzzling. While both events were spurred by urban unrest—the March of 1983 by a series of racially motivated murders, the rise of anti-immigrant sentiment, and violent confrontations between the police and urban youth in the quarter of the Minguettes in Vénissieux, and the 2005 riots by the deaths of Zyed Benna and Bouna Traoré in an electrical substation of Clichy-sous-Bois, as well as by the worsening socioeconomic and infrastructural marginalization of the French *banlieues* throughout the 1990s—the March of 1983 and the 2005 riots emerged from markedly

different historical contexts and were driven by distinct demographics and political aspirations. Whereas the marchers of 1983 were primarily composed of the second generation of Algerian immigrants born in France, the demographics of 2005 were far more heterogeneous and were not limited to any one ethnic group (Beaud and Masclat 812). With this increasing diversity came a gradual shift in social identity, from one that was primarily grounded in a sociocultural affiliation to one that was far more correlated with a socioeconomic solidarity rooted in the marginalized spaces of the French *banlieues*. To this first distinction one can add a difference in political intent: whereas the 1983 marchers sought a recognition and validation of their racialized difference from French society that could provide a path forward from the social and political invisibility of their parents, the rioters of 2005 held a far more ambiguous—and arguably less explicitly political—intent that did not align with any single, explicitly stated objective (Beaud and Masclat 827–28). These differences not only situated the two events in distinct sociopolitical histories, but also resulted in a differential reception in the French cultural imaginary: the March of 1983 holds a clear lineage with later mobilizations advocating for equality, against racism, and against violence in the *banlieues* (e.g., SOS Racisme, Ni putes ni soumissions) and is positively regarded as having played an instrumental role in opening a path to citizenship for the “Beur” generation; by contrast, the 2005 riots are more properly understood as the culmination of a long series of urban unrest (e.g., the 1979 riots in Vaulx-en-Velin, the 1981 riots in Vénissieux, the proliferation of urban riots throughout the 1990s) that has received widespread condemnation and contributed to the codification of the notion of “quartiers en difficulté” in the public imaginary (Beaud and Masclat 810).

Given this context, MAFED’s decision to position their March as the spiritual successor to both the 1983 March for Equality and the 2005 riots offers revealing insight into their political aspirations: while MAFED sought social change and recognition through their collective mobilization much like the marchers of 1983, the March for Dignity’s demographics and glocalized mode of online organization mirrored the heterogeneous and delocalized character of the riots of 2005. The March’s ideological basis similarly falls somewhere between that of 1983 and 2005, given the intimate association between systemic racism

and police brutality in its public manifesto, which, as we will see, came to embody a much broader anti-racist initiative than was arguably intended at the movement's genesis.

One cannot help but have the impression that this selective appropriation of elements from various historical movements to establish a coherent social narrative was part of a larger rhetorical strategy on the part of MAFED, whose glocalized form of grassroots mobilization operated through what might be considered a Hegelian social consciousness that moved from the particularity of subjective experience to attain a universal³ solidary ideal. This dynamic is nowhere clearer than in the words of activist, author, and MAFED member Nargesse Bibimoune, who only months prior to the March and in the immediate aftermath of the January 2015 *Charlie Hebdo* shooting attempted to leverage her online platform to draw attention to the victims of police brutality that had passed largely unnoticed by national manifestations—a reality that stood in stark contrast to the massive public support for *Charlie Hebdo* in the hours following the attack, visible in the rapidly growing #JeSuisCharlie (#IAmCharlie) movement and the ensuing Republican Marches. After stating that she was not Charlie due to the satirical publication's irreverent, sacrilegious and often vulgar approach to political commentary—while also explicitly condemning the terrorist attack—she included a list of eighteen names that she was (e.g., “Je suis Zayed Benna et Bouna Traoré, je suis Rémi [Fraise], je suis Wissam [El-Yamni] . . .”; *Dans la peau*; see post on 7 January 2015). While full exploration of these names is beyond the limited scope of the present article, I want to point out two interrelated points that are particularly relevant to my argument: first, the strikingly transnational nature of Bibimoune's post, which was not limited to metropolitan France and included victims in Canada and Mauritius; second, the post's pluralistic framing, which encompassed a range of ages, ethnicities, and genders.

While this might seem like an unnecessary digression from the main point of my article, I would argue that this early publication is intimately associated with the March's political genesis—both for the general context in which its open manifesto was formulated and more specifically for MAFED's persistent use of individual cases of police brutality as evidence of the broader and more endemic issue of state racism. The March's official *Twitter* activity provides a case in point: its

official account, formed only months later in May 2015, made numerous references to the *same* victims mentioned by Bibimoune, with the earliest tweet appearing on October 3, 2015. This was followed by two October 6 retweets of a photo collage of twenty-nine victims of police brutality, which was later adapted as a banner at the March's October 9 organizational meeting in Saint-Denis (Marche). An expanded collage of thirty-three photos was similarly carried at the front of the October 31 procession.

As this social media presence affirms, the March's origins cannot be exclusively linked to any one specific event but should instead be understood as a signifier of a broader social malaise among racialized minorities of the French *banlieue*—a dynamic similar to the March of 1983, which did not have any one identifiable trigger, unlike the riots of 2005. The March for Dignity nonetheless found a rallying cry in the May 18, 2015, acquittal (*relaxe définitive*) of the two officers accused of failing to help Zyed Benna and Bouna Traoré in 2005, despite the officers knowing that their lives were in imminent danger upon their entry into the electric substation of Clichy-sous-Bois (“Zyed et Bouna”). It was through this local event, taken as a symbol of the broader issue of police brutality and subsequent impunity from accountability, that the organizers established an explicit spatio-temporal link between the March for Dignity and the 2005 riots, such as they signaled in their promotional material: “2005–2015 Ten Years of Unrest in the Working-Class Neighborhoods” (Bentounsi “Marche de la dignité: The Dignity March”; see image). This rhetorical framing was further communicated in the March's manifesto, which situated political action in a transgenerational context that moved reverse chronologically from 2015 to 1983:

Today, as was the case thirty years ago, and as was the case ten years ago, far from having renounced its past behavior, the French State has only strengthened its surveillance and repression tactics. This is in addition to the continued deplorable social conditions, harassment of neighborhood populations, and humiliation that comprise daily reality for Blacks, Arabs, Roma, and Whites in these neighborhoods. In this devastating landscape, police crime is never accidental. It is the culmination of all

the logic of a State that has nothing but disinterest and contempt for us. . . . Therefore, just as it was thirty years ago, as it was ten years ago, against the daily humiliation, against contempt, against Islamophobia, Negrophobia, and Romaphobia, we will march against police crimes. We are calling for a new march: the March of Dignity. Our powerful, organized, and confident reaction is the only way to curb our collective oppression. (Bentounsi "Marche de la dignité: The Dignity March")

It is here that we see the most significant divergence from the framing of the 1983 March for Equality, which, as we previously mentioned, was largely composed of Algerian immigrants and their descendants and consequently directed its attention toward the preoccupations of that specific community: rather than focusing on any one specific cause (e.g., police brutality, state racism, the panopticon of the security state) or any one group in particular (e.g., Blacks, Arabs, the Romani), the 2015 manifesto instead foregrounds the racialized minorities of working-class neighborhoods as a distinct social entity. Like any social group, the cohesion of this affiliation was dependent on the identification of a communal field of shared experiences, which in this case was inherited from the 1990s and defined by a series of social fractures that were as much economic and infrastructural (e.g., a long-term exclusion from the labor market or relegation to its margins through subsidized employment, a lack of adequate public transport from the *banlieues* to metropolitan economic centers) as they were political (e.g., a persistent lack of political representation leading to a high electoral abstention). To this one can add the perceived systematization of social inequalities between majority French society and the *banlieues*, which had become institutionalized within societal structures through the enactment of laws that disproportionately targeted racialized minorities in the name of maintaining national security and identity.⁴ Within such a perspective, police violence was not considered a root cause of social inequality, but rather a signifier of a deeper, more endemic societal issue that could only be confronted through a solidary, collective mobilization of all racialized minorities.

When combined with MAFED's instrumentalization of social media as a glocalized mechanism of communication and mobilization,

this desire to cast an inclusive net resulted in a significant broadening of participation beyond what might be expected at a march originally dedicated to protesting police brutality. This expansion was not only documented in the signatory organizations of the March's manifesto but also in mentions and photos published on MAFED's official *Twitter* account. In addition to local organizations and movements explicitly dedicated to protesting police brutality (e.g., Ferguson in Paris, #Justice4LamineDieng, #Justice4AmadouKoumé), there was an active presence of transnational movements (e.g., BLM, #RiseUpOctober), anti-racist organizations protesting systemic inequalities (e.g., Bruxelles Panthères, BAN, CRAN), intersectional and decolonial feminist organizations (e.g., Collectif Afro-Fem, Femmes plurielles, Mwasi Collectif), and organizations advancing broader anti-apartheid initiatives (e.g., BDS, PYM).

It is here that we arrive at the crux of the present article: while undeniably rooted in protesting police brutality, the rhetorical framing of the March's manifesto encouraged a new form of interstitial solidarity that, all the while organized under the banner of a shared anti-racist initiative, was nonetheless grounded in the lived experiences of individual participants. While this appeal to intersectional identity politics opened participation to a much larger audience than was arguably possible with the targeted cause of police brutality, the elision of intragroup difference inherent to this convergence of political struggles contributed to rising intergroup tensions, due to the historical primacy of universalist Republicanism on French political action. To understand this phenomenon, the following section will focus on the utility of intersectional identity politics and social media in the creation of an emergent social identity through which the March's political action was articulated and maintained.

The Creation of an Emergent Social Identity

As I emphasized in the previous section, the organizers of the 2015 March for Dignity placed great importance on establishing their event as the spiritual inheritor of the 1983 March for Equality. Given this careful rhetorical framing, there are two lines in the 2015 manifesto that shock the attentive reader: "Twenty years ago in 1983, existing police violence pushed the youth of post-colonial immigration to organize and

sustain, throughout France, *the March of 1984*—the famous March for Equality” (Bentounsi “Marche de la dignité / The Dignity March”; my emphasis). As the reader now knows, the March for Equality was in 1983, not 1984. In 1984, a separate event known as the Convergence 84 was organized, which—though conceived by a small contingent of 1983 marchers led by Farida Belghoul—was far more heterogeneous in its composition and had a different rhetorical framing: whereas the March for Equality was regarded as a critical anti-racist movement led principally by youth of Algerian origin, the more universally oriented Convergence 84 emphasized the importance of affirmative Republican ideals (Robine 137–38). The Convergence 84 consequently benefited from broad coalitional support and institutional backing from its inception, compared to the grassroots origins of the March for Equality, and saw a far greater diversity of participants, who came from a variety of national and cultural backgrounds.

Although the reference to 1984 in the 2015 manifesto may have been an oversight, given that none of the 2015 organizers were old enough to remember the March of 1983 or its 1984 successor,⁵ I would instead suggest that this was a Freudian (if not deliberate) rhetorical choice. Despite having adopted the critical anti-racist agenda of 1983, the 2015 March for Dignity was, by its very nature, far more diverse, given that its ideology was not tied to any one specific ethnic or cultural affiliation; much like the Convergence 84, it was articulated around the shared ideals of dignity and equality. Another point of similarity lies in their appeal to the convergence of political struggles through coalitional activism, albeit through fundamentally different mechanisms: whereas the Convergence 84 privileged a multicultural framework that adopted many tenets of French Republicanism (Robine 137–38), the March for Dignity adopted an intersectional approach to identity politics that can be considered a distinctly twenty-first-century phenomenon. This ideological broadening toward a larger, more inclusive anti-racist initiative characteristic of the 1984 Convergence was not only evident in the March for Dignity’s public manifesto (as developed in the previous section), but also in the poster used to support the movement, whose four superimposed faces collectively represent the three communities referenced in MAFED’s explicit denunciation of Islamophobia, Negrophobia, and Romaphobia (Bentounsi “Marche de la dignité: The

Dignity March”; see image). Of particular importance is the inclusion of both male and female members of the Arabo-Islamic community, the only community to have multiple genders represented, which highlights the intersectional nature of racism and sexism in the lived experiences of certain demographics (e.g., law 2004–228 banning conspicuous religious symbols in schools, the “circulaire Chatel” of 2012, the “Affaire de la crèche Baby Loup” of 2010–2014). This shift in rhetoric from a single, identifiable cause of social marginalization to a broader and more ambiguous solidary ideal was further reflected by MAFED’s evolving social media presence: whereas the second tweet from their official *Twitter* account, from September 1, 2015, described the March as being “organized by a collective of women *who are particularly concerned with the issue of police violence*” (Marche; my emphasis), later publications described MAFED as “coordinat[ing] action with a historic panel of grassroots associations (police violence, migrants, undocumented people, housing, right to health, culture, employment . . .), intellectuals, collectives, public figures, and artists from immigrant backgrounds. *Anti-Racism is the common thread of our struggles*” (“Urban Shoot”; see description of video; my emphasis).

This ideological broadening can be considered the result of three convergent processes. First and foremost, we have the increasingly heterogeneous makeup of the *banlieues* from the 1960s onward, due in large part to the evolving demographics of non-European immigration to France that was no longer primarily limited to Algeria but instead saw increasing migration from Morocco and Tunisia. To this one can add the growing presence of the West African, sub-Saharan African, Middle Eastern, and West and Central Asian diasporas—the latter three in particular having seen rapid growth in the 2010s amid geopolitical instability and the proliferation of conflicts in those regions. As mentioned in the previous section, these changing demographics and the ongoing infrastructural marginalization of the 1990s encouraged a new form of social solidarity that was no longer defined by a shared ethnic or sociocultural identity but rather articulated around a new socioeconomic commonality rooted in the marginalized spaces of the French *banlieues*.

Secondly, we have MAFED’s origins as a decolonial feminist collective. As many critics have demonstrated, decolonial feminism often

serves as a gateway to further anti-racist activism, given its political praxis and epistemic stance that recognizes that race, class, and coloniality are themselves constitutive of gender (e.g., Angela Davis, bell hooks, Françoise Vergès, Houria Bouteldja, María Lugones).

Lastly, we have the glocalized mechanism of political organization used by MAFED, which leveraged an active social media presence as a means of delocalized grassroots mobilization. The earliest calls for action on *Twitter* are a case in point: a tweet from August 20, 2015, identified the March as “highlighting the struggles of immigration and working-class neighborhoods” (Marche), which not only self-selected for organizations identifying with an intersectional—rather than universalist—anti-racist framework but also contributed to a gradual shift in in-group demands from accountability for police brutality to more generalized calls for social justice and equity.

Taken together, these three phenomena encouraged an associated shift in the dynamics of personal identification and collective association. In comparison to traditional grassroots mobilization that has historically been championed by local organizers and has consequently coalesced around a community of place or circumstance, the March’s coalitional solidarity was instead articulated around a community of interest. While there were undoubtedly signatory organizations that were bound by local socioeconomic and geopolitical factors (e.g., Collectif Femmes des quartiers populaires 94, Femmes en lutte 93), the March for Dignity’s instrumentalization of social networking appealed to a community of interest that was not exclusively inspired by direct lived experiences with racism and police brutality, but rather by a sympathetic identification with the broad cause of anti-racism. It is here that the involvement of the political left (e.g., MJCF, EELV, NPA) and organizations embodying a broader anti-apartheid struggle (e.g., BDS) can be understood.

While multiple theories exist to explain the underlying mechanisms of this glocalized phenomenon—such as those that prioritize individual connective action (e.g., interpersonal digital connections, personal motivations), rather than shared psychological processes (e.g., a shared social identity, a belief in collective efficacy)—a 2021 meta-analysis of forty-six studies examining digitally mediated collective action between January 2011 and January 2020 found a strong positive correlation

between social identification and collective action (Akfirat et al.). This means that rather than being defined by the interpersonal interactions of a disparate network of individual actors driven primarily by personal motivations, collective political action in the digital age remains highly correlated with shared social psychological traits favoring group dynamics. As discussed by the study's authors, this phenomenon can originate in one of two organizational processes: on the one hand, the interactive modality of social media facilitates the free sharing of ideas in a digital public square, which leads to disparate actors seeing themselves as a coherent social group pursuant to commonly held ideas; alternatively, the emergent group identity could be rooted in a shared aspiration for social change among participants, which lays the basis for a new in-group rooted in a common appraisal of injustice and group efficacy beliefs. This may, however, be a distinction without a difference as far as our study of the March for Dignity is concerned, given that both organizational processes showed a far stronger association between collective action and social identification with emergent identities tied to a specific action context—in the case of the 2015 March, the interstitial solidary ideal conveyed in its public manifesto—than with preexisting group identities (e.g., prior involvement in local associations or political parties). One can thus conclude that while the interpersonal nature of online participative culture is essential for understanding the propagation of events on social media, and indeed for understanding the unique combination of goals and motives that led each individual actor to engage with the online platform, connective action is not the primary mechanism of social cohesion for digitally mediated collective action, which is instead defined by the convergence of shared social psychological processes around a specific action context.

This may seem somewhat contradictory with my previous argument regarding the March for Dignity's glocalized form of activism, for if this theory held true, one would expect an ideological convergence toward a common solidary ideal, rather than the introduction of competing interests and guiding ideologies that ultimately occurred throughout October 2015. This apparent discrepancy can be reconciled when one understands that the creation of an emergent social identity does not necessarily entail a transformation or suppression of one's preexisting group affiliation but rather a provisional and ephemeral identification

with the emergent identity over prior affiliations, due to the former's immediate affective and contextual salience. We can extrapolate that while preexisting group affiliation is a weaker predictor of political action than one's affinity with an emergent social identity (Akfirat et al.), the former is not completely independent of political action, as individual actors who come to identify with the emergent social identity inevitably introduce their prior convictions, motivations, and affiliations into their activism. Given the participative and multimodal nature of digitally mediated collective action, this in turn allows for the introduction of competing—or in certain cases even conflicting—ideologies into the action context's agenda. This was exemplified both by the introduction of causes having little to do with the March's original intent to protest police brutality and by the coexistence of global and local organizations that adopted fundamentally different approaches to political action—the former placing greater emphasis on structural, historical, and institutional concerns, and the latter emphasizing specific, material, and everyday injustices and consequently prioritizing direct and immediate demands within the local community.

This is an important nuance, given that there were in fact two stages of political action in the March for Dignity's glocalized activism: first, the massive mobilization of social media and the Internet during the March's conceptualization and initial organization, which facilitated the creation of a translocal social consciousness crossing preexisting ethnic, social, and national frontiers in favor of an emergent social identity rooted in intersectional identity politics and an inclusively—but not universally—defined anti-racist initiative; second, the physical mobilization of participants in the October 31 procession from Barbès to the Bastille. I argue that it was the formative period of this first socio-informatic stage that paradoxically allowed for the progressive introduction of competing interests into the March's agenda throughout the month of October, rather than the convergent process of solidary association that might have been expected on the day of mobilization. To this one can add the historical conflict between intersectional and universalist anti-racist organizations in France, whose fundamentally different approaches to conceiving political action served as a primary cause of ideological infighting and in turn precluded the full realization of coalitional solidarity.

In order to develop this position, the following section will focus on the two stages of political involvement inherent to the organization of the 2015 March for Dignity: first, the leveraging of an active social media presence to support local grassroots mobilization; second, the divergent reception of the March's manifesto in the final days of October and the breakdown of solidary association during the October 31 procession.

Glocalized Mechanisms of Political Action and the Breakdown of Interstitial Solidarity

Let us begin by focusing on the first socio-informatic stage of the March's glocalized mechanism of political action. While the March did in fact benefit from limited coverage in major news outlets such as *Le Monde* and *Libération* in the days preceding the event, the vast majority of its organization and early publicity was conducted by individual actors across social networking pages, blogs, forums, websites dedicated to participatory journalism, and online video platforms. While this decentralized means of organization certainly held a connective aspect, I want to underline that the primary motor of cohesion and collective action was the articulation of a shared social identity, which was itself dually rooted in a concern for social injustice and a strong belief in the group efficacy of the March's anti-racist initiative.

This was exemplified by the rhizomic interplay between the March's official social media accounts and those of individual actors. I refer to this as rhizomic because the March adopted a non-hierarchical, decentralized, and horizontally networked mode of thinking and acting, which was largely driven by delocalized coalitional support whose participants formed temporary alliances to coordinate action while retaining a high degree of individual autonomy. This interplay can be seen in the online presence of Nargesse Bibimoune. Starting with her personal *Twitter* account (Nargesse [@quepasamecton]), we see multiple tweets through September and October 2015 with the hashtag #PourMoiLaDigniteCest (#ForMeDignityIs) and #MeetingDeLaDignité (#DignityRally)—the latter in reference to the previously mentioned October 9 meeting in Saint-Denis where members of MAFED and representatives from signatory organizations explained their political motivations behind their involvement. This event was important not only for

its provisional unification of a heterogeneous mixture of organizations under the shared banner of intersectional anti-racism (e.g., MAFED, PIR, BDS, BAN), but also for illustrating the March's glocal organization, which operated via overlapping online and offline social networks. As previously mentioned, these networks appealed to commonly held beliefs and ideals that were in turn substantiated by localized instances of police brutality. This dynamic was exemplified by the two banners prominently displayed behind the speaker's podium, which were subsequently carried at the head of the October 31 procession: the first emblazoned with the name of the March over a photo collage of thirty-three victims of police brutality; the second simply reading "Dignity, Justice, Reparations" (Marche; see multiple tweets on October 9, 2015).

Continuing to Bibimoune's *Facebook* page (Dans la peau), we see multiple explicit endorsements of the March during the same period: on September 18, 2015, she shared a news article from France 3 Régions that described the March for Dignity as the spiritual inheritor of the 1983 March for Equality; four days later, on September 22, she published the first set of visuals used to promote the March, featuring tigers; on October 7, she changed her cover photo to a second set of visuals that were used as the event's main promotional material, which featured four superimposed faces that represented Muslim, Black, and Romani populations; on October 23, she shared a video from MAFED's official *YouTube* channel that offered a behind-the-scenes look at the cypher (a gathering of rappers who come together and freestyle over an instrumental beat) organized by MAFED member Bams and Urban Shoot. The video, which runs over ten-minutes, features eight rappers voicing their support for the March for Dignity. This last collaboration not only illustrates the decentralized and multiplatform engagement of the community that maintained an active presence across multiple social media platforms throughout the March's lifespan, but also points to an important aspect of the event's organization that I have not yet addressed: the prominent role of French rappers, who not only lent their influence as signatories of the online manifesto but also took an active part in the October 31 procession by offering a free concert upon the marchers' arrival at the Bastille (Zappi).

Even more important than this cross-platform involvement is the way in which each platform was used by Bibimoune, which not only

privileged a different form of content but also targeted a different audience: whereas Bibimouné's *Twitter* was largely dedicated to her overt political activism, her *Facebook* was originally used to publish a serial narrative known as a *chronique* between 2011 and 2012, which she later edited and published as a novel in 2013. From that date onward, her page gradually evolved from a site of literary production to one of community engagement and political activism, which was oriented toward political representation as she encouraged her readers to revise and publish their own *chroniques* as a means of asserting their voices within French cultural discourse (*Dans la peau*; see the videos published between May 10 and 13, 2015). It is within this specific context that her later 2015 activity in support of the March should be understood: her *Twitter* served primarily as a platform for communication, networking, and organization among various actors and signatory organizations, while her *Facebook* functioned as a public forum through which a collective social identity was established and sustained.

The decentralized and multimodal nature of this new form of political activism points to what may be considered a gradual shift in digitally mediated collective action from relying on a primarily local grassroots mobilization to glocalized mechanisms of coalitional agency. At least in the initial stages of the March's organization, this contributed to an ideological convergence around the intersectional anti-racist initiative outlined in the March's open manifesto. This in turn drew immense public support that saw the active collaboration or signatory support of 117 different associations in France and another 38 abroad (Bentounsi "Marche de la Dignité: Appel"). While it is impossible to clearly delineate between their individual causes given the intersectional nature of certain organizations, their vast diversity is striking: in addition to the organizations that one might expect given the March's origins in protesting police brutality (e.g., Ferguson in Paris, Collectif Stop le contrôle au faciès, Urgence Notre Police Assassine) and its broadly defined anti-racist agenda (e.g., BAN, La Voix des Roms), the March drew active support from organizations advocating for a free Palestinian state (e.g., BDS, PYM) and espousing antifascist (e.g., Action Antifasciste Paris/Banlieue, Ripose antifasciste) and decolonial (e.g., Labo Décolonial, Sortir du colonialisme) ideologies. Not only were many of these organizations far removed from the March's original stated purpose of

protesting police brutality; they also included signatory organizations from over twelve foreign countries that extended as far as Slovenia (Democratic Socialism), Turkey (People's Democratic Congress), and Kashmir (Free Kashmiri Political Prisoners). The March's individual signatories similarly represented an ideologically and geographically diverse group that counted socially engaged rappers (e.g., Kery James, Médine, Youssoupha), novelists (e.g., Maryse Condé, Raphaël Confiant, Virginie Despentes), filmmakers (e.g., Jean Asselmeyer, Mattieu Kassovitz), historians (e.g., Gilles Manceron, Claude Ribbe), economics and sociologists (e.g., Saïd Bouamama, Cédric Durand, Ramón Grosfoguel), and philosophers (e.g., Frédéric Lordon, Nelson Maldonado-Torres), in addition to individuals primarily known for their political activism (e.g., Rachid Amghar, Daniel Blanchard, Angela Davis, Ali Rahni).

While undoubtedly united in a common anti-racist initiative, these individual actors nonetheless held vastly different political aspirations for how that anti-racist agenda should be achieved. When combined with the fact that many of the individual signatories primarily identified with a specific and limited aspect of the March's intersectional anti-racist framework (e.g., with a racialized experience, with a gendered experience, with a general belief in the inherent dignity of human life)—rather than with the totality of the call, as might have been achieved through either a more targeted or more universally framed appeal (e.g., a march in support of an individual victim of police brutality, one dedicated to a particular form of racism, or one grounded in color-evasive Republican values)—the potential for experiential and affective solidarity among individual actors was diminished. It was within this context that the March for Dignity's public engagement followed a trajectory inverse to that of the 1983 March for Equality, which began with seventeen marchers in Marseille amid relative media indifference and grew to over 100,000 participants upon its arrival in Paris on December 3, 1983. By contrast, the March for Dignity drew only 10,000 participants (or 3,500, according to official police figures) to its October 31 procession, despite an immense initial show of public support reflected in over two hundred signatories to its public manifesto ("*Marche de la dignité: des milliers*").

Before continuing, I want to emphasize that this observation is by no means a criticism of the March for Dignity, whose ability to garner such widespread public attention via noncanonical media channels in

an increasingly volatile political climate should itself be considered a success. Nonetheless, it is important to acknowledge that the March appeared to lose grassroots momentum toward the end of October as it transitioned from the first to the second stage of glocalized political action. Despite an increasingly active social media presence, the procession was ultimately marked by a series of ideological fractures attributable as much to the intersectional nature of its call to action as to its glocalized mechanism of political organization.

This breakdown in solidarity was exemplified by the complete absence of the four oldest and most prominent anti-racist organizations in France: SOS Racisme, LDH, LICRA, and MRAP—all of which have traditionally adopted a universalist, rather than an intersectional, approach to political action. While there are several plausible explanations for their decision not to participate, many harken back to disagreements over the initial framing of the March's manifesto. Given MAFED's desire to cast an inclusive net through their appeal to intersectional identity politics, the decision to omit any mention of Antisemitism alongside the explicit condemnation of Islamophobia, Negrophobia, and Romaphobia, despite an eighty-four percent increase in Antisemitic acts in the first five months of 2015 versus the same period in 2014 ("Hausse"), was publicly questioned by scholars such as Bernard Maro and Emmanuel Debono (Debono; Maro). This decision also broke with the 2015 collaborative initiative of LDH, LICRA, MRAP, and SOS Racisme—titled *#DeboutContreLeRacisme* (*#StandingAgainstRacism*)—that was specifically framed as being organized against "racism *and* Antisemitism" (2015 21–22; my emphasis). To this one can add the participation of controversial figures and organizations, such as Tariq Ramadan and BDS France advocating for the boycott of Israel, which resulted in several left-leaning political parties electing to not sign the public manifesto, despite their members being physically present on the day of the March (e.g., EELV, PCF, PG).

I want to underline that this breakdown in solidarity on the political left was not necessarily due to a failed negotiation of individual participants' different stakes in the issues at hand, but rather due to the ideological framing of these issues, which accentuated preexisting tensions between intersectional and universalist anti-racist organizations. This can be better understood through MAFED's October 21, 2015,

retweet of the critical comment “As long as you don’t make the effort to understand that 75% of what is claimed to be anti-Zionist is actually anti-Semitic, I will not March,” which was accompanied by the caption

As long as you don’t make the effort to stop your conflation and your fake controversies, we will move forward without you.

As long as you don’t make the effort to stop telling us with whom and how we should work, we will move forward without you. (Marche)

While it might be tempting to read this exchange within the context of contemporary debates on the conflation of Antisemitism and Anti-Zionism, I would instead argue that it is emblematic of a far deeper disconnect in French politics between intersectional/decolonial and universalist approaches to political action. More specifically, the manifesto’s desire to cast an inclusive net through the particularity of individual lived experience was not well understood by organizations having a universalist framing, whose approach to solidarity was reliant on the Republican elision or effacement of individual difference. While this latter perspective was meant to protect and include all by appealing to the universalist and humanist tradition of the French Republic, this paradoxically contributed to viewing political activism as a zero-sum game: in a context where the mention of any particular of racial or ethnic difference should include all particulars in the interest of solidarity and allyship, MAFED’s “failure” to list Antisemitism alongside its condemnation of Islamophobia, Negrophobia, and Romaphobia was seen as exclusionary and unnecessarily divisive.

This perspective starkly contrasted with MAFED’s vision of political agency that privileged the lived experiences of individual participants as their own political agents (i.e., not simply as allies) and whose call to action consequently centered on the immediate needs of their specific community. The fact remains that while France did see a dramatic increase in Antisemitic violence from 2012 to 2015, this violence constituted a phenomenon distinct from the issues of police brutality and state racism that were identified in the March’s open manifesto. From MAFED’s perspective, not listing Antisemitism was not an exclusion; it was a natural consequence of the March’s focus on the intersection of

various forms of oppression that were unique to racialized minorities of the French *banlieues*.

This ideological disconnect speaks to a larger fracture between universalist and intersectional/decolonial framings of political activism in French society, as exemplified by MAFED's founding ethos, which—all the while valorizing a convergence of political struggles—nonetheless centered the singular experience of racialized sexism in its social critique. If this offered a pathway toward more radical forms of decolonial and anti-fascist activism that saw the massive involvement of intersectional feminist organizations (e.g., Collectif Afro-Fem, Femmes plurielles, Mwasi Collectif), it also, paradoxically, discouraged the participation of potential allies that did not share the particular form of decolonial feminist critique advocated in the manifesto's framing; this included not only the universalist anti-racist organizations previously mentioned but also mainstream feminist coalitions such as Chiennes de garde, FEMEN, and Ni putes ni soumises—none of which signed the manifesto or were present in the March's procession. Rather than operating through the convergence of political struggles long championed in French political action since May 68, MAFED's appeal to intersectional identity politics encouraged a unique coalitional mindset that—all the while offering a mechanism of provisional interstitial solidarity—exacerbated existing intergroup tensions inherited from the historical primacy of color-evasive Republicanism within French anti-racism, which privileged the elision—rather than the recognition and valorization—of intragroup difference. To be clear, the primary issue here was not related to coalitional activism itself, but rather the specific framing and negotiation of coalitional solidarity.

It was within this context that a fundamental criticism of the March's ideology soon emerged on the political left: the March's radical form of intersectional anti-racism was simply a derivative of anti-white racism, which was itself reliant upon the exclusion and scapegoating of the white capitalist patriarchy as the figure of the oppressor (Debono; Maro). If this accusation was due in part to the participation of controversial figures and organizations such as the PIR who spoke in terms of “white privilege” and castigated those who “collaborate[d] with white power” (Debono),⁶ so too was it related to the almost Manichean view of society adopted by the March's organizers that broadly

divided the world into racist oppressors and racialized victims. This was in many ways concomitant with the manifesto's amorphous definition of racialized minorities, which—despite adamant denials of racial essentialization—nonetheless relied on a somewhat reductive definition of persons of color in opposition to institutionalized white, capitalist, and patriarchal oppression. While this accusation might seem shocking in American or British anti-racist contexts, where discussions of white privilege had already entered into mainstream political discourse by 2015, this criticism must be understood from within France's historical position of color-evasive Republicanism, which has traditionally discouraged the use of racial identifiers and instead favored universalist language emphasizing assimilation, integration, and the Republican values of freedom, equality, and fraternity. These accusations of racial prejudice—again, from the political left—were further fueled by the increasingly divisive language used by certain organizers, who mocked “white tears” and decried the “blantiarchat”—a portmanteau of *blanc* (white) and *patriarchat* (patriarchy) meant to evoke the intersectional nature of white, capitalist, and patriarchal oppression (Nargesse; tweets on September 22 and October 6, 2015). Again, I want to contextualize this criticism for readers of the *JMMLA*: while the term white tears is in relatively common use in anglophone contexts, its sociological dimension was not as widely understood in France in 2015, where it remained controversial and was perceived as divisive and polarizing.

The ideological rupture was further exacerbated by the marching order of the October 31 procession, which privileged organizations more closely related to the manifesto's intersectional call to action and saw the few isolated political parties from the left relegated to the very back of the cortege. If certain intersectional and decolonial-minded activists saw this as a necessary condition for the eventual emancipation of racialized minorities given the left's supporting role as allies, rather than as the event's primary organizers (“Des milliers”), others saw this as an implicit form of racially motivated exclusion (Debono; Maro). I want to underline that this disconnect was not only due to the previously noted differences in ideological framing—whether decolonial/intersectional or universalist—but also due to fundamentally different conceptions of allyship and solidarity association. This latter point was

exemplified by an October 3, 2015, tweet at SOS Racisme in which MAFED stated

SOS you're screwed,
Those who are concerned/implicated (*les concernés*) have hit the
streets.
(Poke @SOS_Racisme) (Marche)

I want to highlight that MAFED's reference to "*les concernés*," which emphasizes the central importance placed on the active participation of individual actors having a personal stake in the issues at hand, sharply contrasted with SOS Racisme's universalist framework of allyship that was founded upon Republican fraternity—itself exemplified by their long-standing slogan "*Touche pas à mon pote*" ("Don't touch my buddy") and more recently by their appropriation of Lamartine that "I am of the color of those who are persecuted" (2015 22). While these two visions of political agency are not inherently incompatible, the *non-dit* of MAFED's tweet—that representatives of universalist organizations were "non-concernés" or "*détachés*"—exacerbated preexisting ideological tensions among intersectional/decolonial and universalist factions. More specifically, the placement of the few isolated parties from the political left toward the back of the cortege carried an unintended political resonance: instead of prioritizing the voices of "*les concernés*" as was arguably intended by the March's organizers, there was a perception among certain universalist organizations—particularly those whose mission was not primarily dedicated to local causes of concern specific to the *banlieues* and who were unaccustomed to intersectional framings of political agency—that they were being treated as members of the structural system that the March was meant to critique and eventually deconstruct.

It is within this context that we arrive at what might be considered the greatest critique of the March by those who chose not to participate, who highlighted what they saw as a fundamental inconsistency in its rhetorical framing: if we acquiesce to the organizers' position that their use of the expression "racialized minorities" is not to be taken as an act of essentialization, but rather as a conscious assumption of racial distinction and discrimination, assumed in a combative posture, the ideological

framing of MAFED's anti-racist critique nonetheless implies a certain decolonial racialization of existing social structures as organs of white supremacy (Debono)—a rhetorical positioning that was, paradoxically, noted by Bernard Maro as bearing certain hallmarks of the increasingly racialized discourse of the Far Right. I want to once again underline that this critique was not a reactionary response to the calling out of white privilege, but rather a fundamental disconnect in the framing of political agency: given the historical importance of universalist Republicanism to French anti-racist organizations, the common appeal to the particulars of individual racialized experience—rather than to a color-evasive and universalist solidary fraternity—was perceived as an almost Girardian scapegoating of a racialized oppressor class as a means of social cohesion and political organization. Within this perspective, MAFED's rhetorical framing implicitly divided society into oppressors and victims, which in turn preconditioned the possibilities of reconciliation through the establishment of a moral hierarchy that was itself rooted, at least in part, in the personal identity of individual participants.

If we continue along this train of thought, this ideological framing runs the risk of encountering an even more fundamental problem: while guided by a vitally important questioning of institutionalized forms of racism that have tangible impacts on today's socioeconomic landscape, the more radical forms of this decolonial critique—such as those commonly associated with the PIR—deprive individual actors of their personal agency by situating their immediate social reality within an inherited, racialized context. Deprived of their capacity for individual action apart from a collective mobilization seeking to dismantle broader social structures—as stated in the March's manifesto that “our powerful, organized, and confident reaction *is the only way* to curb our collective oppression” (Bentounsi “Marche de la dignité / The Dignity March”; my emphasis)—individual actors turn to a unique form of essentialized activism against white-capitalist-patriarchal society, whose reductive framing bears certain hallmarks of what might be considered a form of “anti-racist racism” (Sartre xiv).

I deliberately chose to borrow these words from Sartre's analysis of Negritude to close the present article by saying that this is perhaps an unfair and somewhat disingenuous criticism of MAFED's initiative. Much like the early Negritude poets, whose conscious assumption of

racial difference was a necessary condition in the creation of a Black cultural identity that had been confiscated by the Second Colonial Empire's assimilationist approach to national identity, MAFED's understanding of racialization was intimately shaped by the French Republic's official policy of color-evasive universalism and the post-2002 return to a politics of migratory assimilation—this after nearly two decades of integrationist perspectives dominating public discourse (Chemin). To this one can add the growing discrepancies in domestic policy resulting from the inability to quantify certain dimensions of social inequality, due not only to Article 1 of the French Constitution's lack of distinction between race and religion among its citizens, but also to the Republic's explicit prohibition of the collection of racial and ethnic statistics. In addition to the fundamental problem that simply ignoring race does not make racism or structural inequalities disappear, this policy contributed to the eventual confiscation of minority cultural identity insofar as it was meant to be subsumed into an increasingly originary and universalist conception of national identity, which was itself enshrined in a common appeal to the shared Republican values of Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity—values that per MAFED's public manifesto were not equally applied to all citizens.

Within such a critical perspective, accusations of racialized reductionism ring somewhat hollow, given that MAFED's use of the term racialization was not intended as a communitarian⁷ act of cultural or racial essentialization, but rather as a conscious assumption of racialized discrimination as a necessary condition in the creation of a repressed social and cultural identity, which might itself serve as the basis for future political action. The marchers' prioritization of racialized experience as a means of political agency must consequently be understood within France's history of color-evasive universalism: when an identity has been purposefully suppressed and instrumentalized as a factor of social exclusion, the active appropriation of that identity as a means of empowerment and solidary association should not be understood as a reactionary communitarian gesture; it is an act of deliberate political agency meant to transcend difference through the appeal to the particulars of subjective experience.

In a similar vein, the breakdown of solidarity in the March for Dignity must also be understood within this historical context: the

manifesto's seeking a convergence of political struggles through a common appeal to the experience of racialization inadvertently weakened the interstitial bonds of solidarity between participants, given the historical primacy of color-evasive Republicanism in French anti-racist organizations. As I have attempted to demonstrate, this was not necessarily due to a failure to transcend difference among individual stakeholders but rather related to the fundamentally different ways of conceiving political action among intersectional and universalist anti-racist—and dare I also say feminist—organizations in France.

Taken more broadly, this disconnect speaks to the evolving nature of contemporary political and social movements—particularly those that are digitally mediated—whose appeal to broadly articulated social ideals and intersectional identity politics encourages a form of political tribalism that—while intended to increase engagement through the convergence of various social movements—risks limiting the involvement of organizations that might otherwise be considered potential allies in the absence of effective coalition-building. This in turn highlights the importance of understanding local histories and contexts when using glocalized forms of political mobilization, where ideas and ideologies can take on unintended political dimensions upon their traveling across geographic boundaries. I argue that this was in fact the case with the manifesto's intersectional call, which historical anti-racist organizations in France regarded as exclusionary and divisive despite its inclusive framing, due in large part to the hegemonic influence of color-evasive universalism within French political action.

Despite this critique, I want to close by highlighting what I see as the greatest achievement of the 2015 March: its self-organization by those who were directly affected by state racism—an intersectional form of structural and institutional oppression conveniently obscured by color-evasive Republicanism—united the intertwined struggles against racism and imperialism into a cohesive political strategy. Given how deeply these oppressions shape the daily lives of millions worldwide, this intersectional framework holds the potential of fostering transnational coalitional solidarity at a moment marked by rising repression and polarization—assuming of course that coalitional agency can be effectively negotiated to maximize grassroots participation without diluting political intent. In France, the future success of such glocalized

mechanisms of political action depends on the effective reframing of universalist approaches to anti-racism by demonstrating that the particularities of individual lived experiences are not obstacles to the universal; they are viable pathways to it. This intersectional lens does more than simply contest essentialized perspectives that treat activism as a zero-sum game; it illuminates the shortcomings of French Republican policy, which still refuses to confront the entangled colonial, racialized, gendered, classed, and epistemic forces that shape infrastructural and socioeconomic inequalities. In recognizing these interconnections, the March for Dignity offers both a critique and a powerful vision for future political action—a blueprint for translocal solidarity, justice, and collective imagination that points toward transformative political possibility.

Appendix: List of Abbreviations

- BAN. Brigade anti-négrophobie (Anti-Negrophobia Brigade)
 BDS. Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions
 BLM. Black Lives Matter
 CRAN. Conseil Représentatif des associations noires (Representative Council of Black Associations)
 EELV. Europe Écologie les Verts (Europe Ecology The Greens)
 LDH. Ligue des droits de l'homme (Human Rights League)
 LICRA. Ligue internationale contre le racisme et l'antisémitisme (International League against Racism and Anti-Semitism)
 MAFED. Marche des Femmes pour la dignité (Women's March for Dignity)
 MJCF. Mouvement jeunes communistes de France (Young Communists)
 MRAP. Mouvement contre le racisme et pour l'amitié entre les peuples (Movement against Racism and for Friendship between Peoples)
 NPA. Nouveau Parti anticapitaliste (New Anticapitalism Party)
 PCF. Parti communiste français (French Communist Party)
 PG. Parti de gauche (Left Party)
 PIR. Parti des indigènes de la République (Indigenous of the Republic Party)
 PYM. Palestinian Youth Movement

Notes

1. See Appendix for a list of abbreviations for the various organizations.
2. Throughout, all translations my own unless otherwise noted.
3. My use of the term universal here pertains to MAFED's attempt to create a pluralistic social identity through their appeal to intersectional identity politics. I should underline that my use of universal is distinct from that of universalist as understood by traditional anti-racist organizations such as SOS Racisme, whose ideology is grounded in French Republicanism.
4. Such as law 2004–228 of March 15, 2004, which banned conspicuous religious symbols in public schools; the forced deportation of Romani migrants to Romania and Bulgaria in 2009 and 2010; law 2010–1192 of October 11, 2011, which prohibited the concealment of one's face in public space; and law 2015–912 of July 24, 2015, concerning intelligence justifying extrajudicial surveillance.
5. And that while 1984 is listed in the version distributed to the associations who helped organize the event (e.g., Association des Travailleurs Maghrébins de France, Fondation Frantz Fanon), a corrected version reading “la Marche de 1983, la fameuse Marche pour l'égalité” was published to Wordpress on October 26, 2015 (Bentounsi “Marche de al Dignité: Appel”; my emphasis).
6. This situation was also discussed by the PIR itself on the one-year anniversary of the March (“Marche de la Dignité 2015”).
7. In the sense of ongoing French debates regarding the threat of *communautarisme*, namely that specific communities' prioritization of their own values, practices, and group interests can lead to social fragmentation by undermining the Republican principles that support social cohesion and national unity.

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*Power and Society in Terry Pratchett's
Discworld: Building a Fantasy
Civilization.* Edited by Justine Breton.
Bloomsbury Academic, 2025.
240 pp.

In a library one will likely find a shelf of Terry Pratchett's Discworld books classified under fantasy, science fiction, or the umbrella term "speculative fiction." One can certainly find some escapism in Pratchett's books, but that is not the sole purpose of Discworld. *Power and Society in Terry Pratchett's Discworld: Building a Fantasy Civilization* explains how Pratchett uses parody and satire to point to real elements of our world to explore them thoroughly. This volume, which expands on existing Pratchett scholarship by Anne Hiebert Alton and William C. Spruiell and on the biography by Rob Wilkins, analyzes the Discworld books in terms of the major theme "civilization." As Breton says, "Pratchett does not only portray a fantasy world but also a fantasy civilization, where spatial and temporal elements intertwine seamlessly with sentient beings, breathing life into the very fabric of society" (4). Through an interdisciplinary approach, the contributors of the twelve essays in this collection argue that Pratchett's book series is a valuable source for understanding major societal dynamics and principles that shape our civilization.

The four chapters that comprise part 1 of this collection address "Social Power Dynamics." Bettina Juszak asserts in "Collective Strength, Collective Weakness: Crowds and Their Uses on the Discworld" that crowds in Pratchett's novels represent a paradoxical force. Juszak links crowd behavior to social power—showing how collective bodies shape

events, embody community tensions, and reveal the limits of unified action. Jon Dean's "Where the Streets Are Paved with Glod: The Role of Civil Society in Ankh-Morpork Community and Civic Life" contends that Pratchett's portrayal of civic life shows civil society as vibrant and multifaceted but also often limited or satirical, revealing insights about both fantasy and real-world civil society. In "Freedom! Truth! And Justice! In the Big Wahoonie: Ankh-Morpork's Neo-Victorian Urbanity," Helena Esser's argument fits into a broader scholarly trend of treating Discworld as a way to see how justice and urban life operate in layered, contradictory worlds. Her chapter's focus on freedom, truth, and justice aligns with key themes in several Discworld novels where institutions like the City Watch or the press grapple with those ideals in absurd but revealing ways. Jann Kraus maintains in "(Imaginary) Genealogies of Power as Utopian Incitement: Reading Pratchett with Graeber (and Vice Versa)" that the Discworld novels, when read through the lens of David Graeber's ideas about utopian imagination and the social construction of power, function as utopian provocations that challenge readers to reimagine how power could be structured in our own world. Conversely, Pratchett's imaginative worlds enrich Graeber's theoretical concepts by providing vivid narrative exemplars of how alternative forms of power and social organization might be conceived.

In part 2 of this collection, "Tools for Building, Tools for Destroying," the four chapters explore the devices Pratchett uses in social and political worldbuilding. Chris Lynch Becherer's "Maps of the Future: Spatial Revolution in Terry Pratchett's *Discworld*" points out that the novels undergo a significant spatial and technological transformation over the course of the series—a transformation that can be traced and better understood through maps and spatial representations in the later novels. In "A 'Vetinarian' World Order: Diplomacy, Great Powers and Morals in Terry Pratchett's *Discworld* Series," Guilhem Jean argues that the novels offer a sophisticated, morally reflective model of international relations and diplomacy, where great powers interact via complex negotiation and pragmatic moral choices and where characters such as Vetinari embody a particular diplomatic ethic. In the next chapter, Ruchira Mandal contends that the books are a space where political idealism is methodically explored through narrative, character, and governance—showing that idealistic values such as justice, accountability, and

individual moral responsibility are worked in complex, pragmatic ways rather than in utopian absolutes. In “King Carrot and Fantasy Tropes: Refusing Power to Build a Better Society,” Justine Breton asserts that Pratchett critiques the fantasy genre itself by refusing the comforting fantasy that a heroic ruler can simply solve societal problems through power and by pointing instead to alternative ways of building and maintaining better societies—including collective action, civic engagement, and more democratic social structures.

Part 3, “The Power of Language,” analyzes Pratchett’s exploration of language as a source and vehicle of power. Jean-Christophe Piot’s “Greatness and Small Miseries: Journalism in the *Discworld* Novels” maintains that Pratchett uses the figure of the journalist and the institution of the newspaper in *Discworld* to explore the complex role of media in society, highlighting both the aspirational (greatness) aims of reporting truth and the quotidian frustrations and failures (miseries) that accompany it. Anne Hiebert Alton argues that in *The Amazing Maurice and His Educated Rodents*, language is central to empowerment and identity for the novel’s characters, especially the rats; and their capacity for language underpins their ability to redefine themselves and negotiate power dynamics with humans. Using Pratchett’s playful engagement with identity and narrative to comment on how language actively produces and transforms reality, Sarah Richardson points out that in *Wyrd Sisters*, magic doesn’t just cause effects in the plot but conjures or reveals deeper truths about characters and their roles. Yevheniia Orestivna Kanchura and Jane Suzanne Carroll show us that in Pratchett’s *Witches* books, language (especially narrative language) as an aesthetic device doesn’t just describe the world but constructs it. The chapter highlights how story structures and linguistic patterns function as forms of power that shape belief, character action, and social dynamics within the text, and by extension, influence how readers and cultures interpret and use language.

Across these three sets of essays, complex and compelling sub-arguments are at times rooted in the work of literary theorists, including Michel Foucault, Fredric Jameson, Terry Eagleton, and Robert Dale Parker; but they also pull from social power theorists such as Max Weber and Karl Marx. The contributors use a wide array of methodologies to form their arguments, including close readings, case studies,

contextual readings, and theoretical readings. By using established theoretical frameworks, the scholars make it obvious that the works of Terry Pratchett, while entertaining and “fun,” are undeniably worthy of academic pursuit. Breton says, “All of these chapters propose to study the fantasy world created by Terry Pratchett as a complete social structure, with its history, politics, shortcomings and inner struggles” (6). Any researcher who views narratives as a method to study the world, whether holistically or as a sum of small parts, will find something relevant in this book. Scholars of legal studies, political studies, and power in rhetorics and society would all benefit from reading this collection and thinking about ways to apply its principles in their own work. More broadly, any scholars who are trying to defend their studies of fantasy, science fiction, and other speculative genres will find this book valuable for that purpose. Fantasy can be a part of classical literature; and while certain works such as *The Lord of the Rings* and *Frankenstein* are already recognized, the work of Pratchett deserves to be included in that list because it makes many important observations about our world. As perhaps the best scholarship does, this collection inspired me to revisit Pratchett’s Discworld.

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Time and Terrain in British Romantic Writing. By Alan Vardy. Cambridge University Press, 2025. 294 pp.

Scholarship on Romanticism, subjectivity, emotion, and form gains a remarkable contribution in Alan Vardy's *Time and Terrain in British Romantic Writing*. Following the example of *Romanticism and the Emotions* (2014), edited by Joel Faflak and Richard C. Sha, this monograph offers a range of explanations for the complexity of emotions in Romantic writing. *Time and Terrain* sets out to isolate specific affective experiences as Thomas Pfau does in *Romantic Moods: Paranoia, Trauma, and Melancholy, 1790–1840* (2005). But unlike Pfau, Vardy does not offer a definitive account of affect. Rather, Vardy identifies and respects the limits of our ability to analyze “somatic events,” those bodily, hard-to-pin-down reactions that occur “outside language” (1). While Vardy identifies a debt to Raymond Williams’s “structures of feeling” from *Marxism and Literature* (1977), *Time and Terrain*’s domain is smaller in scale (9). The book focuses on the intricacies within personal experience and within interpersonal interactions. Vardy walks through events as they unfold to reflect on the gaps between sensory experience and articulation, the “manifold feelings of experience” (9). Romantic writing is thus framed as always necessarily fugitive, always subject to the mediating forces of time, memory, space, and emotion. Judgments—including aesthetic judgments, Vardy argues—are not themselves teleological destinations of the experiences they come from. Rather, judgments are

conditional. Judgments reflect the complex eddies and shifting grounds of everyday life.

Vardy takes walking as both model and method in this book. Walking models how the event of writing is conditioned by time, place, and the body. Vardy's main chapters are on Joseph Cottle, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, Thomas De Quincey, and John Clare, but Vardy also weaves in analytical interludes that range from the lesser known to the hypercanonical, featuring writing by Elizabeth Smith, Thomas Wilkinson, Dorothy Wordsworth, and William Wordsworth. Each chapter is grounded in walks and walking sites that are united by, paradoxically, a certain slipperiness. Vardy presents Romantic writing about encounters with terrain as emerging from a physical, emotional, and intellectual cocktail that can become aesthetic and even religious in retrospect: Coleridge's near-death experience while climbing a mountain in Eskdale being, perhaps, Vardy's clearest example of how mediated the prose and poetry inspired by a specific event really are (75). Walking as model and method is supplemented by archival research. Drawing on ephemera, incomplete letters, and personal journals as well as poetry and prose, Vardy's references range from famous poems—including Coleridge's "Effusion XXXV," also known as "The Eolian Harp"—to lines from private letters that detail "small quotidian events" (124) such as Elizabeth Smith's epistles. Throughout the monograph, close reading carefully delineates argument from speculation: Vardy presents a strong case for the formal slipperiness of Romantic writing through attention to prolepsis, paradox, "lyric events" (6), and the elusiveness of recollection itself.

This monograph skillfully narrates the distance between the real-life events that inspire Romantic writing and the actual event of writing. Vardy convincingly outlines how Romantic writing is shaped by fellowship, conviviality, and community. Yet Vardy also presents Romantic writing as often speaking for and through another, despite the impossibility of accurately articulating another person's experience of an event. This is best illustrated by Vardy's account of William Wordsworth's depiction of Elizabeth Smith. Wordsworth's Smith, Vardy maintains, perpetuates an image—created by her editor H. M. Bowdler and Hannah More—of Smith as a paragon of virtue, a "beautiful dying female body" (123). Vardy offers an alternative Smith: a strategy that, while still narrativizing Smith, allows excerpts of Smith's own writing to come

to the fore. Additionally, by presenting writing on Smith by Thomas Wilkinson, the image of Smith that Bowdler and More create and that Wordsworth perpetuates is shown to be one of many. The Smith Vardy presents is, at the very least, more complex. The example of Elizabeth Smith also showcases the sympathy toward these writers that Vardy displays throughout *Time and Terrain*. In one of the book's many codas, Vardy dissects the "De Quinceyan filter" (135) of Smith in De Quincey's 1840 "Society of the Lakes" in *Tait's Edinburgh Magazine*. Vardy's dissection—while revelatory—does not condemn De Quincey's self-identification with Smith as straightforwardly narcissistic. Instead, Vardy explains that the Gothic dimension of De Quincey's account arises from De Quincey's own psyche and his grief over his wife's death: "Smith's experience affected him [De Quincey] so powerfully that he translated it into his own terrors" (135). As in this case, sympathy is Vardy's stepping stone to deeper analysis.

The final chapter on John Clare is in some ways a departure from the rest of the book. The Lake School circle, approached from different angles through Cottle, Coleridge, and De Quincey, fades into the background. Initially, the shift was jarring. Yet the shift echoes the chapter's focus on dislocation. Just as Clare's writing in Northborough is a departure from writing done in his native Helpston, the reader of *Time and Terrain* is prompted to inhabit a wholly different landscape in the final chapter. The change is itself instructive: "Dislocation becomes relocation" (216) is Vardy's interpretation of Clare's writing on Glington Spire, a spire viewable from both Helpston and Northborough; but this phrase holds true for the monograph as well. Ending with Clare widens the scope of *Time and Terrain* and anticipates the potential objection that the book is concerned only with the Lake School and its adjacent writers. Clare's Northborough writings are well-chosen examples for supporting a claim that *Time and Terrain* builds toward: namely, that aesthetic terms such as the sublime, the picturesque, and the beautiful are not sufficient to account for the complexities within writing and the complexities of the events—somatic and otherwise—that influence writing.

Time and Terrain in British Romantic Writing will be, most immediately, of interest to scholars of British Romanticism. Vardy's nuanced work on walking, subjectivity, and Romanticism joins contributions such as Ingrid Horrocks's *Women Wanderers and the Writing of Mobility*,

1784–1814 (2017), Kerri Andrews’s *Wanderers: A History of Women Walking* (2020), and Simon Bainbridge’s *Mountaineering and British Romanticism: The Literary Cultures of Climbing, 1770–1836* (2020). Given recent scholarship on the link between writing and women as well as the surge of interest in Ann Radcliffe—by Michael Gamer, among others—an example I wish Vardy had addressed is Radcliffe’s travel writing about walking around the Lake District. After *Time and Terrain*’s interlude on Wordsworth’s *Guide to the Lakes*, showing how Radcliffe goes over similar terrain differently would have been illuminating. Relatedly, since Vardy relays his own experiences of walking the same terrain covered by these Romantic writers, *Time and Terrain* resonates with the subfield of geographical and ecocritical scholarship that takes up the notion of walking-as-method. Practitioners include John Wylie in “A Single Day’s Walking: Narrating Self and Landscape on the South West Coast Path” (2005) and Tobias Menely in “Rewilding with Romanticism” (2023). By acknowledging that some aspects of human experience elude articulation, Vardy bypasses that particular unclimbable mountain and traverses the vast terrain still available for literary analysis. What is discovered and shared by such a journey is how Romantic writing is conditioned by the often unplotable events of human experience.

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Early Modern Literature and the Bodies of a Reformed Eucharist. By Julianne Sandberg. Bloomsbury Academic, 2025. 184 pp.

As Sandberg notes in her introduction, previous scholarship exploring the relationship between literature and the Eucharist—including the work of Robert Whalen, Regina Schwartz, Frances Cruickshank, Ryan Netzley, Sophie Read, Kimberly Johnson, Jay Zysk, and Shaun Ross—provides a foundation for her study. She extends their work by tracing the influence of Reformed sacramental theology on early modern literary representations of the body. Sandberg thoroughly explains that central to the Eucharist debate were the contradictory interpretations of Christ's words "hoc est corpus meum" ("This is my body"). Protestant Reformers in England took issue with the Roman Catholic Church's understanding of this phrase. They argued that to accept "est" as indicative of the literal presence of Christ's body in the host denied his shared experience of humanity as well as the empirical evidence offered by sight, taste, and touch. As such, the study foregrounds questions about this religious conflict since it challenged how the Bible was to be read and how corporeality was to be interpreted. In turn, these contradictions challenged how bodies should be understood and, Sandberg argues, how they should be portrayed in literature.

Because of the sweeping impact of eucharistic theology, this study inserts itself into two conversations at once: both the influence of the Reformed Eucharist on literature and the broader influence of the

Reformation on how to view the body. The significance of this argument lies in its efforts to uncover the influence of eucharistic ideology in a range of literary genres to better understand early modern discourses on the body—efforts that offer a fresh reconceptualization of embodied experience. In developing this claim, the book illuminates the distinct features of Reformed sacramental theology across varying samples of early modern English drama and poetry. Sandberg thus reveals diverse early modern interpretations of the meaning and experience of corporeality as represented by William Shakespeare, Edmund Spenser, Æmilia Lanyer, and John Donne. Such a comprehensive approach offers a holistic overview of one intersection between religion and literature, and it prompts a reconsideration of literary representations of embodiment.

To convey the significance of the Reformed Eucharist, both the introduction and chapter 1 explain the impact of the religious debate surrounding the issue of transubstantiation. In building this foundation, these sections draw on the theological writings of predominant figures of the Reformation such as Thomas Cranmer, John Calvin, Ulrich Zwingli, Richard Hooker, and others to situate its pervasiveness in early modern culture. Sandberg suggests eucharistic theology became fertile ground for the literary imagination because of its many points of convergence in “interpretive practices, the epistemology of reading, the hermeneutics of Bible-reading, and the powers and limits of figurative language” (4). From this perspective, examining literary representations of embodiment can expose a more detailed view of Reformed sacramental practice and its resonance. Additionally, to set up the literary analysis that ensues, the first chapter specifically identifies the relevance of figural interpretation, incarnational theology, and sacramental reading that serve as the “theological matrix” with which early modern poets and playwrights engaged to illustrate eucharistic doctrine (18). As Sandberg notes, these factors are important to consider when seeking to understand how and why these writers “are not only deeply committed to the value of reading and the virtues of figuration but . . . also render these enterprises as closely tied to the body” (43).

The remaining sections support Sandberg’s argument through an examination of the specific writing genres and literary goals of these writers. The second chapter analyzes the anonymous comedy *Jack Juggler* alongside Shakespeare’s *Comedy of Errors* to demonstrate how

both plays enact “distinctly embodied features,” but they have disparate motives that disclose varied responses to eucharistic understandings of the body (47). While the writer of *Juggler* employs the Eucharist as its primary focus to deliberately question its interpretation, the chapter also argues that Shakespeare “appropriates eucharistic language not to pose a theological argument but to propel the comedic and thematic strains of his play” (70). Consequently, these plays take on theological echoes of sacramental practice for different purposes, which conveys how the literary imagination interprets, utilizes, and redefines the terms of this religious debate.

The third chapter examines the character False Florimell in book 3 of Spenser’s *The Faerie Queene* as a signifier mistaken for her signified, indicating the necessity of reading allegory correctly. Through witnessing the fallout of the characters’ failure to recognize False Florimell, Spenser’s reader is essentially taught the ramifications of mistaking the signifier for the signified, thereby exemplifying the dangers of misunderstanding metaphor in a theological framework. Next, the fourth chapter identifies the imagery of female readers feasting at a table in Æmelia Lanyer’s *Salve Deus Rex Judaeorum* as a Reformed paradigm. This paradigm anchors Lanyer’s writing in figural interpretation as “the object of sacramental consumption” (125). Similarly to Spenser, Lanyer invites readers to engage in symbolic reading didactically, but she frames it as a method for emphasizing the unifying communal experience of the Eucharist. She accomplishes this process by offering her readers “a textual Jesus” laid on the metaphorical table represented by her text, where readers convene as partakers (118).

Finally, the fifth chapter develops the argument that John Donne forms his understanding of his own bodily suffering through reading “his body as an allegorical text via the imagery and theology of a Reformed eucharist” (130). In particular, for Sandberg, Donne’s portrayals of embodiment in *Devotions upon Emergent Occasions* are fueled by the physical progression of his illness and “the spiritual implications he derives from it” (128). Donne’s reliance on the figural interpretation and sacramental reading of his own body illuminates the chapter’s argument that literary depictions of eucharistic theology often rested on the writer’s experience of embodiment. This understanding emphasizes how sacramental practice permeated and shaped textual bodies.

Overall, the argument effectively convinces readers of the significant sway that eucharistic theology held over early modern understandings of the body “in different literary hands and for different literary ends” (9). However, the structure reveals a tension between the book’s careful theoretical framing in the opening chapters and its comparatively brief conclusion, which somewhat limits the synthesis of the argument. Additionally, the prose occasionally overuses certain key terms, such as “embodied veracity” and “vitality,” without fully clarifying their meaning in this context, and some paragraphs end with quotations without explication, requiring the reader to infer their significance. These stylistic choices can occasionally reduce the precision and persuasiveness of the study’s otherwise compelling claims. Yet, the overall tone achieves a level of accessibility that broadens the book’s reach beyond a strictly specialist audience, meaning that this text can benefit literary scholars, historians, and early modernists alike. Ultimately, the reader can expect a thorough contextual exposition of the religious climate in the early modern period and a rich analysis of the diverse literary responses to fluctuating understandings of corporeality influenced by the Reformed Eucharist.

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The Literature of Extreme Poverty in the Great Depression. By Robert Dale Parker. Oxford University Press, 2025. 260 pp.

In a scathing review of Edward Anderson's *Hungry Men* (1935), Tom Kromer sarcastically declares that "if you have read all the Horatio Alger books and would like to get the same story with a depression slant" ("Very Sad Blurb" 239), then Anderson's book is for you. He lambastes the novel for failing accurately to represent the Great Depression's impoverished masses, suggesting the appropriate action is to shove "*Hungry Men* down the privy" (239–40). For Kromer, Anderson soft-pedals the Depression's atrocities, producing a novel "without objective" (238). When Robert Dale Parker takes up Kromer's *Waiting for Nothing* as an exemplar of the period's literature focused on extreme poverty, he expresses similar, if implicit, disdain for Alger's and Anderson's bootstrap ideology: the texts Parker studies leave little room for this sort of optimism. In its place, Parker finds what he calls "the poetics of the stiff": an aesthetic form borne from and adapted to the era's material conditions.

By combining a formalist impulse with a remarkably well-constructed archive, *The Literature of Extreme Poverty in the Great Depression* offers an overdue examination of an understudied body of literature that supplements work by scholars like Barbara Foley, Alan Wald, Paula Rabinowitz, and Cary Nelson. More impressively, it provides a methodological masterclass filled with stunning close readings of

individual texts—from the obscure likes of Kromer and his ilk to the solidly canonical Langston Hughes; from poems to fiction; from photographs to political cartoons—that present a timely exploration in the interstices of art and poverty. In short, while readers familiar with proletarian literature will find a treasure trove of analytical nuggets, a broader audience will appreciate the text's emphasis on the inherent entwining of literature with the conditions of its production and the concomitantly political aesthetics that emerge.

Parker has published extensively on critical theory and has previously undertaken in-depth recovery efforts, as seen in his books on pre-1930 American Indian poetry and the work of Jane Johnston Schoolcraft. These dual scholarly strengths are on full display in *The Literature of Extreme Poverty*. In his first chapter, Parker, in passing, claims “this book proceeds a little like an anthology” (13), an understatement in which we find the first of the book's significant contributions. It builds an archive of texts that invite further study by future scholars: one can turn to this book as a starting point for plumbing the depths of Depression literature. Parker's “anthology,” however, is richer than most in its framing of the work it explores. The individual objects of study appear not merely as an assemblage but as a body necessary to apprehend the unique amalgam of literary form and extreme poverty. Ultimately, through his analysis of the assembled texts, Parker offers a compelling argument about aesthetics itself.

The book opens with a substantive introduction detailing the central poetics of the stiff, which Parker refers to as “an alternative aesthetics of frozen time . . . a form for the hopelessness that it represents” (10). Here, we see two crucial constituent elements of the stiff's poetics: a sort of timelessness coded as being stuck (out of time) and a subsequent natural lack of hope. The text then proceeds through a series of chapters on the various facets of this aesthetic modality, examining, among other topics, breadlines, queerness, and Hughes's engagement with Depression-specific poetics. Returning consistently we find Kromer's sole published novel, *Waiting for Nothing*, which—more than any of the numerous poems, short stories, cartoons, and the like—functions for Parker as a touchstone. At first blush, such sustained attention to a forgotten novel by an unknown writer might signal Parker's project as solely one of recovery. *The Literature of Extreme Poverty*, though, warrants this

attention by demonstrating the extent to which Kromer's novel distills the essence of the poetics of the stiff. Put bluntly, if one wishes to understand this aesthetic, one must grapple with *Waiting for Nothing*.

On the margins of this primary focus, there appear a multitude of minor texts that elucidate the poetics exemplified by *Waiting for Nothing*. For instance, chapter 4—which constructs what Parker calls a “collage” of images from breadlines and the related phenomenon of hungry stiff's staring into restaurant windows—spends several paragraphs reading Reginald Marsh's “Breadline—No One Has Starved” (1932). By analyzing this (relatively) famous image alongside a raft of lesser-known political cartoons, woodcuts, photographs, and, of course, *Waiting for Nothing*, Parker both deepens and broadens his theorization of the stiff's poetics, indicating a measure of ubiquity that solidifies his argument: the “aesthetics of frozen time” and the overwhelming sense of hopelessness imbue a wide range of “texts” from this period.

Pursuing a similar end, the book's chapter on Hughes is of particular note, partly because it contains the volume's most sustained attention to a writer who might be described as canonical. While readers will be familiar with Dorothy West, Dorothea Lange, and some of the other artists and authors Parker addresses alongside the litany of more obscure figures, Hughes stands out as a writer not typically associated with the Great Depression, proletarian literature, or extreme poverty (despite producing a large volume of work during the 1930s). If anything, attention to this era has focused on marginal writers largely forgotten by all but those who study Marxist or proletarian literature directly. Reading Hughes, then, demonstrates the full measure of the period's aesthetic rendering of extreme poverty. In his analysis of Hughes's early poetry, Parker finds a complexly racialized iteration of the poetics of the stiff. For Hughes, “The Black Depression . . . is not the same as the white Depression.” Instead, Americans found themselves amidst “overlapping [crises]” that called them to remember “how so many African Americans have been hungry for a long time” (178). Refusing to obscure the racial specificity, Parker argues nevertheless that Hughes's poetry evinces an identifiably similar form.

Ultimately, *The Literature of Extreme Poverty in the Great Depression* is a revelation in several respects. Firstly, it can operate as an anthology of sorts: an introduction to a corpus of literature that previously has

been neglected. Secondly, what Parker does with this material is striking. Taken individually, each of the countless close readings is excellent; any scholar interested in the Great Depression likely will find value in the text's analysis. In fact, this book could be useful as an exemplar for analyzing literature and related ephemera, so teachers would be well served to assign it for its method alone. Collectively, Parker's deep attention to his archive offers its central argument: there emerged during the Great Depression a unique aesthetic form we should not ignore, for in it we find a key for understanding the period's suffering and the literature it inspires. Alongside these other accomplishments, this text also, however, proffers an invitation to think about new ways of conceptualizing form. Parker hasn't merely identified the poetics of the stiff; he has shed an invigorating light on the methods—archiving, juxtaposing, analyzing—through which we comprehend literary culture.

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Posthumanism and India: A Critical Cartography. Edited by Debashish Banerji, Md. Monirul Islam, and Samrat Sengupta. Bloomsbury Publishing India, 2024. 288 pp.

Posthumanism is a pervasive phenomenon in the Indian society. From Purulia's indigenous festival *Jawa-Karam Parab*, which links the germination power of seeds to female fertility, to the teardrop-shaped eyes of the peacock inspiring the parametric, coffered roof of the Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaja International Airport Terminal 2 in Mumbai, which connects the country's financial hub to the world, posthumanism seems to be everywhere. The human *qua* human rarely manifests in India; there is always already a nonhuman mediation. Yet, as the editors of the volume under review aptly point out in the introduction, when one thinks of posthumanism, one almost exclusively fantasizes "about robot subjectivities, android takeovers and diabolic eugenics" (2), none of which appear as a near-possibility in a non-Western developing nation. The conjunctive "and" in the title *Posthumanism and India* is, therefore, not indicative of a seamless epistemic grafting of Western abstractions onto Indian embodied praxis; rather, the juxtaposition is a move toward recognizing and advancing the myriad posthumanist sensibilities that have structured Indian lifeworlds from premodern times to the present.

Posthumanism's urgent call to decenter the human is a response to "dystopian anomalies" (2) unravelling across the contemporary Anthropocene and threatening the global future we share. The editors trace the origins of this malaise to anthropocentric and androcentric ideas consolidated in seventeenth-century European Humanism: a formation

bypassing the question of what being human is. Addressing this lacuna, posthumanism suggests that the term *human* resists definition as a discrete entity precisely because it exists only relationally vis-à-vis nonhuman others. The volume's primary intervention lies in its insistence that posthumanism in India is inseparable from postcolonial critique, given how the supposed ahistorical and universalized notion of humanism aided colonial dominance. That the fifteen-chapter volume doesn't dedicate a separate section to postcolonialism thus reflects not its absence but its hypersaturation. In this light, the claim to "Critical Cartography" in the volume's subtitle deliberately invokes the expansionist impulse of the colonial explorer's gaze, only to invert it—offering a decolonizing critique of the Humanist categories the West mapped onto India. Not only does such a critique interrogate colonial inheritances, but it also problematizes India's internal hierarchies.

The convergence of Western legacies and national fragmentations is taken up in Sayan Dey's chapter that, extending Marco Armiero's Wastocene framework, attends to the function of garbage within post-truth visibility. Dey argues that while the uneven distribution of waste along caste lines is the reason that some lives are more polluted than others, globally circulating photos frame Varanasi's waste dumps as homogenized indexes of stunted development and thereby justifications for neocolonial domination. The persistence of national divisions is further addressed under the section "Internal Selves and Others," which focuses on subjectivity. Małgorzata Kowalcze's chapter on Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children* advances magic realism as a New Materialist mode revealing the interconnectedness of individuals within the eponymous hybrid community even as British India is cleaved into the twin nations of India and Pakistan. Discussing this Partition in the context of West Bengal, Samrat Sengupta's chapter highlights how the Bengali Dalit communities' precarious, forced migration led them to identify with the Heideggerian nonhuman *worldlessness*, creating life narratives that redeem their excised history through both metaphoric and metonymic grounding in zoomorphism. In its focus on caste, Sengupta's chapter intersects meaningfully with two chapters from the section "Bodies and Their Discards": the aforementioned chapter by Dey and one by Soumili Das. Das situates Gandhi's failure in removing caste hierarchies within the Wastocene crisis, arguing that the dirty/pure dichotomy not only continues to marginalize Dalits but also enables

upper-caste communities to ignore unsustainable patterns of waste accumulation simply by fancifully projecting the dirt onto Dalit bodies.

Within the subjectivity section, the issue of othered genders is explored by Ritu Sen Chaudhuri. In opposition to the oft-rehearsed pale of ecofeminism that maintains the male/female binary, Chaudhuri argues for feminist posthumanist possibilities immanent in the third-world context—a context that is “not about a politics of inclusion of the non/human other . . . [but] a call for changing it” (21) toward forming immanent connections. Though categorized under a different section, Jaya Sarkar’s chapter on Indian female para-athletes, who “incorporate prosthesis . . . [as] a part of their bodies” (139) and thereby challenge the human/technology divide as well as normative femininity, complements Chaudhuri’s theorization.

The section “Becoming Cosmos” reclaims spirituality—the once-upon-a-time colonial marker of Oriental identity—through posthumanist frameworks and is among the more cohesive of the volume’s five sections. Debashish Banerji’s chapter on various pre-modern Indian spiritual sects assumes an encyclopedic breadth in relating how, under the influence of colonial monoculturalism and monotheism, modern movements like the Bengal Renaissance failed to retain the essence of “radical pluralism” (221) (inherent in Indian spirituality) that resonates with the posthuman goal of interconnectedness. The Indian spiritual lineage comes together with modern political thinking in Subham Dutta’s chapter on Sri Aurobindo. Dutta suggests that incarceration under anticolonial charges brought Aurobindo face to face with the fragility of casteist and classist divisions, in turn informing his principles of interconnected politico-spiritual self-constitution. Asijit Datta’s chapter on the Goddess Kālī, justifiably categorized under the “Bodies and Their Discards” section, also focuses on the living body and its immanent orientation toward death and disintegration. Datta thus offers an ethical reimagination of Necropolitics, as opposed to the seemingly more life-oriented Biopolitics: “It is not just the right to live that makes us all equal in the eyes of the law; it is also the inevitability of death that should facilitate the right to exist with dignity” (191). This section also accommodates contributions in nontraditional forms by the practicing musician-scholar Jonathan Kay and the practicing poet-scholar Francesca Ferrando, both of whom abandon “the lens of a disinterested outsider” and adopt an “immanent hermeneutic” (227).

The sections titled “Technology, Normativity and Ethics” and “Human and Animal” address contemporary concerns like Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Animal Studies. Their scientific orientation balances the volume’s numerous contributions on spirituality. Susan Haris’s discussion on the deleterious effects of the techno-capitalist White Revolution on Indian bulls and Anindya Sinha and Maan Barua’s co-written chapter on the mutually affecting relationships shared by humans and urban macaque populations remind us of the vulnerability of the human/nonhuman interconnectedness in a globalized neoliberal world order. It is in the context of such a global dispensation, when the specter of human replacement with AI is on the rise, that Md. Monirul Islam emphasizes the critical need to rethink the ethics and agency associated with AI, while Debashish Banerji warns that if thinking is what allows “the human becoming ‘outside of itself’” (108), then AI’s greatest threats are not to mere job replacements but rather to the erasure of this thinking that connects humans to the world.

In terms of its overall structuring, the chapters could have—as the editors admit and as my review demonstrates—been categorized differently. Yet, the categories that the editors have identified are extremely generative and invigorate novel ways of thinking about posthumanism. It was especially heartening to see that divisions were not made along the lines of Caste and Gender—a choice consistent with the volume’s aim to dissolve these boundaries. That said, the frequent invocation of Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari’s concepts of *becoming* and *nomadic processes* across chapters suggests that the volume could have benefited from integrating and foregrounding these ideas in its broader framework.

It is noteworthy that posthumanism’s academic ascendancy coincided with postcolonialism’s decline—both trajectories arguably shaped by global capitalism. This volume resists the seeming non-compatibility between the two aforementioned fields by bringing them into dialogue. Besides revitalizing Postcolonial Studies, which has been repeatedly declared dead over the past two decades, this collection also models how postcolonial nations other than India might pursue similar integrative scholarship.

Sragdharamalini Das
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On Edge: Gender and Genre in the Work of Shirley Jackson, Patricia Highsmith, and Leigh Brackett. By Ashley Lawson. The Ohio State University Press, 2024. 226 pp.

Lawson's *On Edge* (2024) is comprised of seven chapters that underscore the careers and literary works of three women who contributed to post–World War II American literature. The authors of focus, Shirley Jackson, Patricia Highsmith, and Leigh Brackett, all demonstrate, in Lawson's words, "a fluid and creative approach to genre writing" that critics should recognize as significant for studies of midcentury sociopolitical contexts (2). As Lawson explains, since these authors traversed and blended genres, they don't easily fit into prominent categories for postwar literary criticism and, as a result, haven't received as much discussion as they warrant.

One way Lawson brings attention to the social, historical, and political import of these writers is by showing how their work employs genres known for depicting their period-specific contexts in indirect yet salient ways (such as speculative, dystopian, gothic, and crime fiction). For example, scholars of gothic literature recognize the genre's mode of depicting realistic and historically rooted social issues via grotesque imagery, macabre plots, metaphors, and disturbing allegorical situations. Rather than allotting one chapter or section to each author, as many comparative studies do, Lawson's analyses combine information about these authors across chapters focused on literary techniques, issues of postwar America, and genre. Though certainly not the only

import of Lawson's book, through the progression of this text it becomes increasingly clear how androcentric literary studies has been and still is: we need to talk more about women authors. As Lawson teaches us, for instance, Ray Bradbury's mentor was Leigh Brackett, a writer treated as marginal in comparison to Bradbury (3).

Accordingly, chapter 1 destabilizes assumptions and norms concerning both gender and genre by providing Jackson's, Highsmith's, and Brackett's own views on these categories. In this way, Lawson pushes aside the 'death of the author' theoretical construct, and instead, works to tie each author's life with the afterlives of their work. This approach emphasizes the production of texts and situates publications by these women as constituting a historically and politically significant cluster of literature.

In chapters 2, 3, and 4, crime fiction and speculative fiction are Lawson's focus. In chapter 2, the only chapter devoted to a single author, Lawson explains that Brackett began in science fiction and then moved into crime fiction. This chapter will appeal to Brackett fans and mid-century scholars because Lawson goes into detail about the kinds of crime fiction Brackett wrote in the 1940s (hard-boiled) compared to her 1950s crime writing, which was infused with a nuanced treatment of a trending sentimentality (44). Lawson also includes a number of biographical details about Brackett herself. From there, chapter 3 places work by Jackson and Highsmith within the same genre. The chapter narrates Jackson's fascination with crime fiction, which "began during her teens," and acknowledges that Highsmith is "now one of the most popular crime writers of the twentieth century" (59). In both chapter 2 and chapter 3, Lawson offers a critical analysis of how all three authors utilized and conceptualized male characters within this androcentric period. In one instance, while Lawson is discussing Jackson's novels, she asserts that Jackson posits the "detective figure" in her crime writing as the emblem of problematic "patriarchal authority" (66).

Lawson's fourth chapter, "The Alien Among Us," aims to expand the genres of science fiction and speculative fiction through an analysis of otherworldly "postwar shifts" in work by all three authors (97, 98–101). This section of the book also closely analyzes issues of gender in Brackett's space operas and describes her contributions to science fiction in phases across her career (87, 89–95). However, after this chapter,

readers may wonder why Brackett was the only one of the three to garner recognition for science fiction (83).

In “Gothic Subjectivity in Jackson and Highsmith,” chapter 5, Lawson shifts her attention to how Jackson and Highsmith use the postwar gothic genre in their best-known works to represent “the anxieties of [their] historical period” (109). In this section, she compares Jackson’s *Haunting of Hill House* (1959) and Highsmith’s *The Talented Mr. Ripley* (1955) to explain how representations of fear in these works relate to the period’s rhetoric of safety in America and the pressure to differentiate personal from political.

“Dystopian Visions of Community” and “Housebound: Domestic Realism and Women’s Magazines,” chapters 6 and 7 respectively, analyze works by Jackson and Brackett to show how propaganda about the security of domestic spaces (and the women in them) was used in the US to “mitigate” fears of nuclear war (147) and how issues of female oppression were reflected in plot scenarios of entrapment and doubling (172–73). Specifically, chapter 6 presents a close reading of both Jackson’s *The Sundial* (1958) and Brackett’s *Tomorrow* (1955) while analyzing the genre of dystopian literature and these novels’ refraction of 1950s American culture. In Lawson’s words, “both authors employ apocalyptic frameworks to address three key themes that feature prominently throughout their larger bodies of work: history and time, the individual within community, and gender roles” (136). In chapter 7, which focuses on short fiction, *On Edge* provides context about women’s magazines of the 1950s and how both editors and authors positioned literary works within the social norms surrounding their publications. To illustrate, Lawson writes about an issue of “*Women’s Home Companion* in which Jackson’s ‘So Late On Sunday Morning’ appeared” with “a reader poll asking, ‘Who should teach your child about God?’” (160). This analysis of social context is juxtaposed to an account of Highsmith’s and Jackson’s own critiques of magazine publication for women during this era, especially the gender-based limitations at stake for their publication opportunities (164–65).

It was not until the book’s final page that I was left wanting a more thorough explanation. While explaining how works of genre fiction get sidelined in literary analysis, Lawson mentions a few famous texts that we treat as exceptions, including *Fahrenheit 451* and *The Handmaid’s*

Tale—great examples! However, in the same breath, she also lists *Beloved* (181). Is Toni Morrison's *Beloved* overtly categorizable as genre fiction? I think some readers will pause there; as a fleeting comment, it isn't clear how Lawson aims to posit Morrison's work alongside these other texts. Still, her point is clear, given the other two examples, and perhaps she will elaborate on this in a future publication.

Overall, *On Edge* not only effectively underscores midcentury literature written by women but also the lives and careers of women in this period of American history. Throughout this thoroughly researched book, Lawson analyzes period-specific circumstances that produced genre trends, while maintaining the unique contributions of each author. Most notably, after reading *On Edge*, you may revise your prior interpretations of post–World War II American literature and ask, “Who else was there?” The historicizing practiced in this book is valuable for anyone working in the fields of American studies, gender and women's studies, post–World War II American literature, genre studies, or twentieth-century American literature broadly construed.

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John Cowper Powys and the Afterlife of Romanticism: Re-imagining William Wordsworth and John Keats. By Kim Wheatley. Bloomsbury Academic, 2025. 256 pp.

Readers expecting a thorough examination of John Cowper Powys's prose works in Kim Wheatley's *John Cowper Powys and the Afterlife of Romanticism* will be pleasantly surprised to find that and more: the consistently impressive critical analyses in this study provide a dazzling exploration of Romanticism's persistence in the twentieth century. Wheatley's text will undoubtedly appeal to those who, familiar with Powys's novels, "have long appreciated the proto-ecological force of his writing" (4), but Wheatley's true brilliance lies in how she depicts Powys's deep engagement with Romanticism, specifically the underlying drive to recognize, in myriad ways, the relevance of the nonhuman to the human: a cornerstone to Powys's grand ecological vision.

Wheatley contends that Powys does not receive, repackaged, and redeploy broad Romantic tropes—transmitting Romanticism to the twentieth century—but instead revisits and recontextualizes the same questions with which many Romantic writers wrestled: How does human reason process the inanimate in nature? What are the limits of sensory power? What roles do awe, sympathy, and suffering play in life and in art? To encapsulate the breadth of Powys's responses to these questions and to allow ample space for the development of a broad, multifaceted ecocriticism, Wheatley takes varied critical approaches, remaining attentive to the complex interrelations of the human and the

nonhuman. She combines a “‘green’ attention to human sensation”—understood as the split between nonhuman *nature* and human *culture* as epistemological and ontological grounding for Romantic materialism in Lisa Ottum and Seth Reno’s edited work—with Onno Oerlemans’s and Paul Fry’s thing-oriented ontological leveling of all natural objects, which Wheatley refers to as a “‘gray’ analysis of continuities between sentient and insentient things” (22). Wheatley follows her “green” and “gray” readings with a “red” turn, addressing the Earth’s “flesh-and-blood inhabitants” and invoking critics like Nancy Yousef and Emily Stanback to interrogate “ethical responsiveness to human deprivation and disability” in Powys and Wordsworth (23, 22).

Wheatley traces the reverberations of Romantic echoes in the twentieth century—the unique role of transcendence in the Wordsworthian sublime, the power of restorative memories, the blurred borders between grounded rationality and the supernatural (*vis-à-vis* Keats)—in five chapters, each titled after a phrase Powys commonly quoted in his writing and each (quite appropriately) addressing one facet of Powys’s engagement with Romanticism and its critical reception. Across these five chapters, Wheatley analyzes and compares Powys’s autobiographical writings, prose essays, and major novels to Wordsworth’s lyric and epic poetry, from *Lyrical Ballads* (1798, 1800) to *The Prelude* (1850), and also to Keats’s poetry, most notably, his fragmentary epic, *Hyperion* (1820). Wheatley is strikingly efficient in identifying, pruning, and artfully selecting lines of thought from Powys’s myriad prose writings to interrogate the complex interrelations between nature, the human, and the nonhuman. Like Powys, Wheatley operates within cycles of defamiliarization and re-recognition, particularly in terms of her chapter structure, parsing out varying components of the Romantic ethos and tying them to Powys’s own negotiations of sensation (chapter 1), minerality (chapter 2), sympathy (chapter 3), transcendence (chapter 4), and the supernatural (chapter 5), while addressing the complexities of Romantic ecocriticism.

Wheatley’s first chapter considers Powys’s views on affective connection with nature in his novel *Wolf Solent* (1929), casting it as a direct engagement with Wordsworth’s “Ode on Intimations of Immortality” (1807) before comparing perspectives on sensation in Powys’s *Autobiography* (1934) and Wordsworth’s *The Prelude* (1850). Chapter 2

extends the discussion of *The Prelude* into a further comparison with Powys's later historical novel *Porius* (1951), doing so after taking a more object-oriented approach to the nonhuman in Powys's *A Glastonbury Romance* (1932), *Weymouth Sands* (1934), and Wordsworth's "A Slumber Did My Spirit Seal" (1800). Wheatley's third chapter is a brilliantly formulated exploration of Romantic ethics as Powys understood (and revised) them, focusing on decentering the human in the traditionally anthropocentric context of moral responsibility, particularly in situations where Powys takes on Wordsworth's depictions of physical or mental disability, which Wheatley captures beautifully in her comparison of Powys's novel *The Inmates* (1951) and Wordsworth's "The Idiot Boy" (1798).

Wheatley often briefly casts Romantic themes, such as humanity's affective connection to nature or imaginative fascination with suffering, as familiar, only to immediately juxtapose them with Powys's work (in an enchanting moment of encounter, as Jane Bennett might say) and thereby disrupt their familiarity so as to make them new, strange, and capable of inciting further speculation. This defamiliarizing mode becomes more apparent in the book's fourth chapter, which charts the point where Powys—while still holding fast to Wordsworth—begins grasping at an ecological sublimity tied to a unique, far-reaching temporality Wheatley calls the "generational sublime": "a quasi-transcendental idealization of the 'long romance of human life upon earth' . . . registered by the 'intimation of immortal race-memories'" (168). Wheatley invokes Wordsworth's pantheism but focuses less on poetic reference and more on what Powys addresses in *A Glastonbury Romance*, *Weymouth Sands*, and *Maiden Castle* (1936), showing where Powys departs from Wordsworth enough to form his own version of a timeless sublimity.

In chapter 5, Wheatley's opening analysis of Powys's *Lucifer: A Poem* (1956) and Keats's *Hyperion* (1820) shows how *Lucifer: A Poem* was fashioned "to expand [Powys's] ecological vision beyond the parameters of the Wordsworthian imagination" into the realm of the supernatural. Here Wheatley relies on the Romantic preference for sensuous understandings of nature and the necessity of human sympathy, but only to reinforce how Powys's revision of Keats's poem carries environmental relevance (181). Wheatley weaves references to Powys's biography and his compositional tendencies with the crucial components that

give *Hyperion* its meaning, such as the importance of Milton's *Paradise Lost* (1667) and the contentious struggle between religion and science on display in works by Keats's contemporaries, namely Wordsworth's famous Preface to *Lyrical Ballads* (1800) and Percy Bysshe Shelley's "A Defence of Poetry" (1840).

The opening argument in chapter 5 is one of many examples throughout the book of Wheatley's rigorous research and structural precision acting as stout supports for a practiced methodology that affords the text a well-earned place in the twenty-first-century critical dialogue surrounding John Cowper Powys and Romantic reception studies. While Wheatley does not focus on the commoditization of things, her structural anchoring to overarching thematic points is reminiscent of Matthew Rowney's *In Common Things: Commerce, Culture, and Ecology in British Romantic Literature* (U of Toronto P: 2022), while her varied theoretical approaches mirror Evan Gottlieb's undertaking in *Romantic Realities: Speculative Realism and British Romanticism* (Edinburgh UP: 2016). Such organization makes navigating a body of work as vast and thematically varied as Powys's a much less daunting task.

Wheatley's approach nevertheless makes the text somewhat difficult to categorize, potentially limiting its usefulness outside the field of Romantic reception studies. Powys's writing exudes a stark sense of inexplicability, which is one of the author's central ties to Modernism, but Wheatley exerts little effort in arguing for an explicit reconsideration of Powys's place among his twentieth-century contemporaries. While many Romantic scholars will find value in Wheatley's work, readers of T. S. Eliot, Ezra Pound, Marianne Moore, and others—who perhaps view Powys as a Modernist outlier—may be unlikely to reconsider their positions, especially given Wheatley's subtle sidestepping of Powys's place in the movement. Of course, defining Powys's place in Modernism was not Wheatley's primary goal; she seeks to explore "a long and variegated episode in the afterlife of Romanticism" as depicted in "[t]he phenomenon that is Powys," and in this, she succeeds brilliantly (8).

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Writing and Health Care: Creative and Critical Approaches. By Janelle Adsit.
Bloomsbury Academic, 2025.
296 pp.

Janelle Adsit's *Writing and Health Care: Creative and Critical Approaches* refuses to treat art as supplementary to health, instead positioning creative writing as both a method of inquiry and a practice of care. The book insists that creative writing is not only expressive but also analytic: the craft of creative writing can help individuals narrate illness and healing while they effectively critique the health systems, policies, and cultural assumptions that shape those narratives. In this way, Adsit frames the "creative" approach as writing that fosters reflection, empathy, and community. She frames the "critical" approach as stories that resist essentialist narratives, challenge the presumed neutrality of health practices and sciences, and advance justice-oriented understandings of health. This dual orientation fits within the health humanities and narrative medicine, where arguments that stories matter to health care are abundant. Adsit extends these fields by showing what creative writing studies uniquely contributes: the ability to "respond, rebuild, and reimagine health care and community wellbeing" (xiii) through artful expression and systemic critique.

The book makes two interrelated claims: first, that the craft skills creative writers use in their work, such as attention to voice, tone, form, and genre, can critique and shape health, wellbeing, and care relationships; and second, that the humanities are uniquely positioned to resist

reductive health models and to foster justice-oriented approaches to care. Adsit intervenes in ongoing conversations about the value of narrative in medicine, the therapeutic functions of creative writing, and the ethical responsibilities of both practitioners and writers in health spaces. She asks readers to consider what stories about health get told, how they circulate, and who has the power to tell them. Further, she challenges the assumed neutrality of medical science and asserts that re-narrating health and health care is as much cultural and political work as it is literary expression.

The book effectively moves the reader from conceptual foundations to practical application. The first three chapters establish the groundwork in three ways: first, by situating creative writing at the intersection of arts and health; then by mapping related fields, including health humanities, narrative medicine, and creative arts therapies; and finally, by introducing core principles such as narrative competence, narrative humility, and health justice. With this foundation in place, chapters 4 and 5 extend the discussion into broader contexts, exploring how various genres, including memoir, graphic medicine, and disability poetics, represent bodyminds in health and healing and how creative writing can serve as a tool for advocacy and social change. The final chapters pivot toward practice, addressing craft elements such as voice, tone, and structure and examining the role of writing groups in both workshop and community settings. This arc, from definition to contextualization to practice, underscores the book's conceptual design: to frame creative writing as a health practice that is at once expressive, critical, and transformative. In short, "the stories we tell matter" (xv).

The text balances critical frameworks, such as narrative humility, ethics, and critique, with pragmatic applications: writing prompts, reflective exercises, and genre explorations. This dual structure, as well as the inclusion of handouts and curated resources in the appendices, makes the book equally a scholarly intervention and a classroom-ready resource for instructors integrating health humanities into creative writing curricula. The continual presence of reflective prompts ("Into Practice" activities) and "To Learn More" sections ensures that readers are not passive consumers but active participants in the book's claims.

Adsit's sustained attention to pedagogy is just one of the work's many strengths. Others include, first, the insistence that "there is no

health without culture" (35). To foreground this cultural diversity, Adsit makes space for multiple epistemologies, particularly those rooted in marginalized communities. Second, Adsit offers sustained discussion of narrative humility as a vital corrective to medical paternalism, which underscores the ethical stakes of both medical and literary practice. Third, Adsit powerfully connects creative writing with resilience and wellbeing, arguing that reflection cultivates adaptability (51) and that art can mitigate burnout by providing space for emotional processing (95). A final strength is the book's style; although Adsit frequently draws on critical theory, her prose remains remarkably clear and accessible. She avoids jargon without oversimplifying, modeling the very balance she advocates: rigorous thought that remains attentive to audience. Her writing embodies the belief that scholarship in health humanities should not only theorize accessibility but also enact it in form.

One limitation, however, may be its breadth. In attempting to survey aesthetic theory, narrative medicine, creative writing pedagogy, and health justice, the book sometimes moves quickly over debates that deserve deeper treatment. For example, while the text acknowledges tensions within "sick lit" and illness narratives, readers may desire more sustained engagement with critiques from disability studies or with the risks of commodifying patient stories. In a similar vein, Adsit moves quickly within a vast interdisciplinary range, sometimes in the span of a few pages, and this density of references may overwhelm readers new to the field. Still, Adsit's choice to privilege accessibility and generativity aligns with her pedagogical commitments, and the book succeeds as both introduction and provocation and situates creative writing firmly within a larger intellectual ecosystem.

Art, Adsit argues, "can disrupt prevailing norms to produce new ways of thinking. . . . [A]rt can intervene" (184). These interventions can take shape on both individual and communal levels. One example she develops is the illness narrative, or "sick lit," which she describes as a genre that can "convey anger and a sense of injustice," "aid in the writer's and reader's processing of the complex experience of illness," "teach, guide, and help others," or "bear witness" to an illness experience, and, subsequently, to health care. Beyond their literary value, such narratives are "utilized in training and professional programs for practitioners, as an opportunity to reflect on their own or another's (such as a patient's)

experience" (153). These descriptions gesture toward the kinds of transformative impact creative writing might have, including allowing space for patients to process illness, helping practitioners cultivate empathy, and helping communities reimagine health systems. The book tends to emphasize the potential of such practices more than offering sustained case studies of their effects, leaving readers to imagine how these interventions might unfold in health-care contexts.

Ultimately, *Writing and Health Care* is less about prescribing specific writing exercises than about shifting how we imagine the relationship between creative writing, care, and health justice. The author asks us to consider this: What happens when creative writing is understood not only as a reflection of health experiences but also as an act that shapes those experiences? What might it mean to approach creative work as a communal practice of listening as well as an individual pursuit of expression? In putting forth these questions, Adsit neither romanticizes creative writing as a cure-all nor dismisses its capacity for healing and promoting health justice. Instead, she holds the tension, showing how creative writing can wound and repair, oppress and liberate. This refusal of simplicity makes the book intellectually honest and ethically urgent. *Writing and Health Care* ultimately insists that art is a "fundamental necessity that shapes our hopes, dreams, and actions. . . . Art is therefore integral to health" (226). By weaving together theory, pedagogy, and practice, Adsit demonstrates that creative writing is not only an artistic expression, but also a mode of cultural critique and social transformation.

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*Colonialism and Literature: An
Affective Narratology.* By Patrick
Colm Hogan. University of
Nebraska Press, 2024. 310 pp.

In a 1987 essay, cognitive psychologist Jerome Bruner supplies the following formulation: “narrative imitates life, life imitates narrative.” Although Hogan does not discuss Bruner’s work directly, it is this premise that underlies Patrick Colm Hogan’s *Literature and Colonialism: An Affective Narratology*. Hogan complicates the formulation by replacing “narrative” with “genre”; he argues it is genre—or story structures—and the emotions that animate those structures (guilt, shame, anger, fear, desire, disgust, indignation) that “express and guide” our understanding and reaction to real-world conditions (53). For Hogan, the set of real-world conditions he wants to explore, as his title suggests, is colonialism: “[t]he primary purpose of this book is to present a clear, plausible account of some key aspects of colonialism” (3). More specifically, Hogan turns to cognitive and affective science to make “empirically plausible, logically consistent, and parsimonious claims” (3) about the psychology of colonialism (for both the colonizers and the colonized). In exploring the psychology of colonialism, Hogan places himself in conversation with foundational postcolonial thinkers such as Gayatri Spivak, Frantz Fanon, Ashis Nandy, Albert Memmi, Edward Said, and others. In contrast to the methods employed by these scholars, Hogan approaches his objects of study via an “affective narratology” (4). Specifically, Hogan explores how postcolonial writers use cross-cultural story

structures to make sense of—and in some cases, even respond to—their colonial conditions.

The first chapter lays the groundwork for this affective narratology. The term *narratology* isn't used lightly here; Hogan means *narratology* in the classical sense, a kind of structuralist approach that is interested in methodological reduction and descriptive typologies. Hogan splits this first chapter into two sections. The first outlines the specific forms that our emotions take under colonial conditions and, using specific parameters, defines subtypes of each emotion ("individual versus collective shame, intrinsic versus status shame, and essence versus failure shame" [16]). He then goes on, in the second section, to discuss these "cross-culturally recurring genres" (4), of which he names seven: the heroic, the sacrificial, the romantic, family separation and reunion, seduction, revenge, and criminal investigation (26). Hogan also notes that these prototypical story structures can be combined or altered in various ways—leading to a "disfigured" or "fractured" version of the genre (9). These story structures are then animated by the aforementioned emotions. For instance, the prototypical heroic story structure is guided by "status shame and failure shame (both collective and individual), indignation, rage, and (the pursuit of) accomplishment pride and essence pride" (26).

The second chapter brings this affective narratological approach to bear on the work of Pádraic Pearse, an Irish poet, playwright, and revolutionary. The chapter begins with a helpful overview of the colonial situation at the time of Pearse's writing, centered around the Easter 1916 uprising against British colonial forces. Pearse had a large part to play in the uprising on Easter Monday, including the planning and drafting of the organization's proclamation. Hogan demonstrates, through Pearse's nonfictional writing, that Pearse and the other revolutionaries were imagining (or "emplotting" [7]) their colonial conditions in terms of the sacrificial genre. Importantly, this led not just to how they understood their condition but to actual anticolonial action (Hogan claims they understood the uprising itself as sacrificial). Hogan then launches into an analysis of three different plays by Pearse, carefully examining how Pearse also uses the sacrificial genre in his fictional writing. In doing so, Hogan shows that Pearse serves as a clear example of the connection between genre and action: "Pearse thereby gives a concrete case of the

continuity between story genre in literature and story genre in political understanding, motivation, and action" (8).

The remaining five chapters follow similar trajectories, usually beginning with an overview of historical and theoretical context before demonstrating how various authors emplot their colonial situation in terms of specific story structures (or iterations of these story structures). The third chapter looks at the work of Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, specifically his 1967 novel *A Grain of Wheat*. Hogan explores how Ngũgĩ employs the sacrificial and romantic genres (among others) to make sense of Kenya's postcolonial future. The fourth chapter examines the film *Early Summer* directed by Japanese filmmaker Yasujiro Ozu during the US military occupation of Japan post-World War II. Hogan argues that Ozu, through his use of the family separation and reunion genre, cultivates a humor that is categorically anticolonial (137). The fifth chapter discusses how J. M. Coetzee, in his novel *Waiting for the Barbarians*, uses "disfigured" or "fractured" iterations of both the heroic and romantic genre to make an anticolonial statement about the distinction between "liberal" and "authoritarian" colonialisms (142). The penultimate chapter treats Margaret Atwood's novel *Surfacing* and her use of the "epilogue of suffering" genre (167). Hogan suggests that Atwood uses a disfigured version which refuses atonement and that, in doing so, she creates an "anticolonial, nonnational allegory" (189). Three minor genres—revenge, criminal investigation, and seduction—are the focus of the final chapter: Hogan examines how these genres are emplotted to make sense of colonial experience in Rabindranath Tagore's short story "Punishment," Abderrahmane Sissako's film *Bamako*, and Dinabandhu Mitra's play *The Indigo Planting Mirror*, respectively. In all the above chapters, Hogan consistently provides illuminating accounts of various characters' affective and psychological experience under these various iterations of the colonial condition.

Colonialism and Literature closes with an afterword that attempts to tackle the chicken-and-egg question of genre and emotion. Do story structures influence our affective experience of the world? Or are they simply representations of how we already felt about it? Hogan claims both: "the relation between story structure on the one hand and understanding, motivational response, and action on the other is not unidirectional and deterministic" (225). Hogan ends with a discussion of

implicit racism, suggesting that our reactions to conditions such as colonialism and racism are a matter of how we emplot our experiences via specific story structures.

In general, *Colonialism and Literature* is at its most insightful when Hogan is engaging in close analysis of the texts themselves; his focus on genre structures—and the emotion systems that power them—is a lucid and stimulating approach to the study of literature. However, it's worth noting that Hogan does not address whether his approach, in its assumptions about the transcultural and transhistorical nature of genre and emotion, might be considered a colonialist mode of analysis. An explicit discussion of this issue would be helpful, but in practice Hogan does well at recognizing the specificity of different colonial situations and their capacity to produce distinct iterations of the same genre. For instance, while both Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o and Pádraic Pearse employ the sacrificial genre, their differing colonial contexts produce distinct versions of it. Hogan's theorization of audience might also benefit from further explanation. For the most part, Hogan seems to focus on character psychology, but he does mention potential reader responses throughout, resulting in a somewhat blurry distinction between the emotions of readers and the emotions of characters. This distinction matters a great deal—just because a character feels shame, it doesn't necessarily follow that the reader will, or is meant to, share in that emotion. Nonetheless, *Colonialism and Literature* remains a thought-provoking addition to the field of postcolonial studies, one that will be especially useful for those interested in narrative theory, genre, and affect studies more broadly.

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Teaching South Asian Anglophone Diasporic Literature. Edited by Nalini Iyer and Pallavi Rastogi. Modern Language Association of America, 2024. 320 pp.

*T*eaching South Asian Anglophone Diasporic Literature should be praised for its meticulous and long-overdue attention to the writing coming out of one of today's largest, most widespread diaspora (at about 45 million people) and for addressing the complex and "great diasporic themes" of "migration, exile, trauma, nostalgia, memory, identity, gender relations, national belonging and unbelonging, racialization, multiculturalism, and double consciousness" (6). The text is coedited by Nalini Iyer, Professor of English at Seattle University, and Pallavi Rastogi, J. F. Taylor Endowed Professor of English at Louisiana State University, both international scholars with six single-authored and edited collections on South Asian and global Anglophone literatures between them. The volume is published by the influential Options for Teaching series of the Modern Language Association, the latest in the MLA's publications to address the "growing demand for decolonizing the curriculum in the Western academy" (12). Conceived of during the Covid pandemic, with its radical attendant shifts in instructional "modality, course design, and pedagogy" according to the editors (xi), the volume is grounded in and, in turn, foregrounds the institutional and public contexts of teaching and pedagogy, along with the personal and political aspects of diaspora and of the historical and material conditions of public culture.

But it is also in the present, 2025 context that Iyer and Rastogi's book takes on an immediacy because of its subject matter and pedagogical

and theoretical interventions, becoming even more valuable, timely, and necessary, not only for US teachers but for those international scholars who teach South Asian diasporic anglophone literature in Canada, the UK, Australia, New Zealand, India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, and elsewhere. In a world where government-mandated or self-imposed censorship has come down hard upon US academia, we must pay heed to the diverse histories and geographies that underwrite modern and contemporary migration and diaspora, and we must understand the very roots and routes of diasporic dispersions. In short, we must adopt a transnational, postcolonial-decolonial, and social justice lens to help make sense of our world. All of these aims, and more, *Teaching South Asian Anglophone Diasporic Literature* accomplishes very well.

Whereas much has been written about the literature of South Asia, Iyer and Rastogi and their twenty-seven contributors masterfully fill in the gaps about the teaching of South Asian diasporic literature in classes ranging from undergraduate survey courses to graduate seminars. The volume includes six parts that introduce readers to the history, contexts, theoretical issues, and pedagogical considerations of teaching South Asian diasporic literature in English. Part 1 is entitled "Introduction: Histories and Contexts." Its first two chapters, written by the editors, serve to familiarize readers with the 150-year history of migration from the subcontinent. Centering on the various histories and cultures of the host countries, the two authors analyze the concept of "double diasporics," as in the case of Uganda, for example (5), and the "domestic racialization" of South Asians in North America (8). In addressing the issues of language and genre in the literature and the reason for focusing on anglophone and primarily fiction writers, Iyer and Rastogi recommend an "intersectional approach" to the reading and pedagogy, by which they "simply" mean "paying attention to the historical and material conditions of cultural production, the institutional contexts of pedagogy, and the subject positions of teaching and students." And they highlight the key theoretical approaches used in the selections, including postcolonial theory, diaspora studies, cultural studies, critical race studies, and feminist and gender studies (12). Parts 2 through 4, respectively titled "East Meets South: Africa and the Caribbean," "East Meets West: Post-World War II Britain," and "East Meets North: The United States and Canada," address the locational

diasporic literature of these three major host lands, focusing on the diasporas of indenture and of colonial and postcolonial histories as they impacted the “cosmopolitan immigrant and the unmoored migrant” alike (17). Parts 5 and 6 attend to the teaching of two defining political moments in the South Asian diaspora. First, “East Meets North: The Sri Lankan Refugee Diaspora” approaches its subject matter through a human rights perspective, and then “East Meets North: The Pakistani American Diaspora” deals with 9/11 and the challenges to stereotypes of Muslim South Asians in North America. Finally, part 7, “The Forms of Diaspora,” examines diasporic nonfiction writing, stand-up comedy, digital writing, and film to convey the double consciousness of contemporary South Asians.

All twenty-eight chapters thus chart the complex story of the South Asian diaspora from various angles, differentiating between older and newer diasporas and between their experiences in different host countries while attending to the “internal diversity” (4) and, in some cases, tension between diasporics, based on different national origins (for example, between Pakistan and India), languages, religions, castes, classes, genders, regions, and immigration status. In a volume that emphasizes the intersectionality of migration and its interpretive and pedagogical approaches—“to teach and read South Asian anglophone diasporic literature is to teach and read intersectionally” (11)—the contributors also extend the term to other forms of identity formation, depending on where such literature is taught. The selections range in topic from teaching M. G. Vassanji, the Kenyan-Canadian writer, in British Columbia (Asma Sayed) to introducing Indo-Caribbean texts in a community college in New York City (Anita Baksh) and from reading the Indian author Amitav Ghosh with upper-level history majors at Western Washington University (Dharitri Bhattacharjee) to studying Goan diasporic writing at William and Mary (R. Benedito Ferrão). While Alpina Sharma discusses her teaching of British-Pakistani writer Mohsin Hamid and British writer Sanjeev Sahota to predominantly white English majors at Wright State University in Ohio, C. S. Bhagya reflects on her instruction of the Indian-born British-American novelist Salman Rushdie and Bangladeshi-English writer Monica Ali in the most international university in the UK, Brunel University. As Esther Daimari has a chapter on teaching Nepalese diasporic literature

at Tezpur University, India, Feroza Jussawalla and Maryse Jayasuriya teach the “cousinship of experience” (113) among South Asian diasporic texts and Chicanx literatures in Hispanic-Serving Institutions, where many students and their families have experienced the vicissitudes of migration, border crossings, immigrant status, and refugeehood. And in all the essays, the writers attend to the subject position of the students, as they live out on the pages their belief that “[t]eaching is a collaborative activity between the teacher and the student” (12).

By addressing topics like historical contexts, theoretical frameworks, pedagogical challenges, and second generations and third spaces, while offering extensive bibliographic references, *Teaching South Asian Anglophone Diasporic Literature* is of particular value to instructors of South Asian diasporic literature in English but also more generally to researchers and teachers of South Asian studies, Postcolonial Cultural studies, Diasporic studies, Gender studies, Immigration and Refugee studies, and Political Sociology.

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*Mothers, Mobility, Narrative:
Maternity in US Literature.* By
Mary Jo Bona. State University of
New York Press, 2025. 250 pp.

Although many scholars have noted the increase in novels about motherhood over the past decade or so, the texts in Mary Jo Bona's *Motherhood, Mobility, and Narrative* demonstrate that, in fact, writers have been discussing the adverse sociopolitical conditions of motherhood for at least the past century and a half. Ultimately, Bona's contribution encourages scholars to consider representations of mothers, mother figures, and offspring, especially daughters, as they are affected by movement that is mostly involuntary or is made under duress.

As many other studies on literary motherhood have done, Bona's interdisciplinary approach incorporates discussions of various genres, especially those that blend fiction with history and memoir, to show how these complex relationships are formally represented in ways that are necessarily genre bending. Bona begins by tracing modern motherhood scholarship as she and other scholars strive to move away from a focus on largely white, middle-class mothers to a focus on mothers of various races, backgrounds, and socioeconomic statuses, arguing that this departure may be seen "as an act of deferral, a resistance by many scholars and artists to centralize maternal representations any *one* way" (11).

Despite the wide range of authors and subject matters over the course of Bona's four chapters, there are several throughlines that connect her analyses, including Patricia Hill Collins's concept of "othermothering" (4). Collins, a sociologist, coined this term to describe a type of mothering that occurs in Black communities, and Bona generalizes it to

cover mothering in various communities that are marginalized for their gender, race, or sexuality, a point to which we will return momentarily. This generalized use of othermothering, along with Bona's continual references to the mother-daughter relationship in the Demeter and Persephone myth—especially as it is analyzed by Adriana Cavarero—reifies Bona's larger focus on mothering under the adverse conditions that precipitate movement, whether that movement be transnational or local. The chapters are further linked by their attention to the genre bending that each text performs, to varying degrees of success.

In chapter 1, Bona traces depictions of enslaved motherhood in Harriet Jacobs's *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* and Willa Cather's *Sapphira and the Slave Girl* to note the way each author "spatialize[s] the struggles of Black characters . . . under plantation domination" (35). Ultimately Bona declares Cather's text a failure that reinforces white supremacy because of Cather's purposeful "erasure of maternity between Black women" and her inability to portray "Black women's subjectivity," particularly in the epilogue of her novel, which takes an autobiographical turn and centers Cather's childhood perspective at a pivotal moment in the Black mother-daughter relationship (23, 25). Jacobs's text, on the other hand, successfully merges the autobiographical and the fictional because she gives readers "a model of maternal womanhood based on a renunciation of slavocracy and an embracing of social equality" (25). Bona's observation here—that a white woman like Cather, born during Reconstruction, is poorly equipped to capture an enslaved Black woman's subjectivity—may seem obvious, but Bona uses this chapter not only to advance discussions of Black maternity in literature but also to set up further discussions of motherhood and othermotherhood, movement, and genre in later chapters not exclusively addressing Black women as authors or subjects.

Chapter 2's focus is on Toni Morrison's *Beloved* and Cristina García's *Dreaming in Cuban*, both of which deal with broken maternal bonds, diasporic time, ghosts, and the ways in which historical events disrupt private lives as "projects of recovery" that deal with "motherhood . . . experienced under extremity" and that "explore the effects of repressive authority . . . through motherhood" (55, 56). Bona says that the maternal ties throughout *Beloved* allow readers to understand the relationship between the private home and the public community, despite the ways

in which trauma disrupts the typical flow of time. *Dreaming in Cuban* also deals with maternal generational trauma, argues Bona, and like *Beloved*, focuses “on the reproduction of violence against women, which begins and ends with the breast” (75). In an echo of the Demeter-Persephone myth, these two novels feature mothers who both abandon and are abandoned; and this type of violence, enabled or even encouraged by the patriarchy’s disparaging view on maternity, resounds in various ways, particularly through mother-daughter relationships that extend beyond borders, throughout the rest of each novel.

The novels in chapter 2, Bona argues, take their cues from texts that “speak truth to power” during historically significant moments, but in chapter 3, Audre Lorde’s *Zami: A New Spelling of My Name* and Kym Ragusa’s *The Skin between Us: A Memoir of Race, Beauty, and Belonging* “choose instead to fashion nontraditional autobiographies in order to centralize hybridic selves in relation to the maternal” to expand our knowledge of “the crucial maternal bond through their exploration of the intersection between the erotic and the diasporic” (85). Both authors are engaged in inventive, semi-autobiographical projects about the lives of their protagonists, especially their experiences with race, movement, and diaspora growing up in Harlem, using this hybrid genre to “claim marginalized genealogies of mother lines” (89). In a shift from previous chapters, the focus here is more on daughterhood than on motherhood, although both protagonists also seek to establish their roles in their maternal lines. As she has done in previous chapters, Bona closely reads each text, but she also examines extratextual elements such as the font size and pictures on the covers and interviews with each author in which Lorde and Ragusa characterize their own work. Demeter is invoked to describe the severed ties between foremothers and daughters; but in both texts, connections between sexuality, gender, and the maternal are forged anew as each protagonist matures in Harlem.

The discussion of sexuality and gender continues in chapter 4 as Bona “focus[es] on how maternal bonds extend beyond affiliative borders to examine how othermothers, lesbian friends and sisters, attend to dying men from their own generation” (119). Carole Maso’s *The Art Lover* and Rebecca Makkai’s *The Great Believers* both depict caretaking relationships between women and gay men dying of AIDS, and both are set entirely or partially in the 1980s. These female caretakers serve “not

merely as surrogates or replacements for family members but as maternal figures whose daughterhood has been transformed by the AIDS pandemic" (121). And, like texts cited in previous chapters, Maso's and Makkai's blur the lines between fiction and memory, although, here, Bona characterizes the texts specifically as historiographic metafiction. Despite the risky decisions each author makes—they both "explicitly risk failure on formal and theoretical grounds" (127)—Bona nevertheless makes an intriguing case about each text's blending of fact and fiction to extend readers' understanding of othermothering, historiographic metafiction, and connections between the Holocaust and the AIDS crisis.

The way in which Bona uses Collins's concept of "othermothering" in her discussion of many of these novels necessarily removes the Black specificity from the original meaning and intention of the term. As Bona notes early in her text, "Collins denaturalizes and thereby destabilizes 'Eurocentric views of white motherhood'" (6); and one could see how perhaps there is an argument to be made for using the term *othermothering* more broadly, especially since feminine caregivers who function as mothers are present in most or all cultures around the world. But given the fact that Collins coined the word specifically to describe experiences within the Black community (a definition to which many subsequent scholars have adhered when discussing othermothering in their own work), Bona's assertion complicates her use of the term to describe experiences within non-Black communities. Bona could profitably have spent more time unpacking those complications if the term is indeed to be generalized to describe both Black and non-Black mother-child relationships. More specific language around various types of movement would also have been beneficial: we read about movement that is characterized as voluntary and involuntary, migration and immigration, travel and escape, without much explicit attention to differentiation between these modes of movement. Yet Bona's readings are sound, novel, and enlightening. This, combined with her extremely comprehensive and informative readings of other scholars of literary motherhood, make this book quite useful to scholars who are engaged with literary motherhood studies.

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CRASH!: Aviation Disasters and the Cultural Debris Fields. By Randy Malamud. Bloomsbury Academic, 2024. 384 pp.

“‘Mais qu’est-ce qui se passe!!?’ (But what’s going on!!?)” (11). First officer Pierre-Cédric Bonin’s last words on Air France flight 447 lie at the heart of Randy Malamud’s *CRASH!: Aviation Disasters and the Cultural Debris Fields*. To find out “what’s going on” in a crash, Malamud assumes the role of a “humanist crash investigator” (34), which is at once nothing new and utterly unique: nothing new, in that crash investigations have virtually always accompanied crashes, starting from Orville Wright’s letter relaying the first fatal plane crash (which he piloted) to his brother Wilbur. Still, such crash investigations as Wright’s letter or National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) accident reports admit only the “raw material of a crash” (82). To investigate not only the physical but also the cultural dimension of debris fields—this is what puts *CRASH!* in a class by itself.

The first two chapters of the book showcase the abundance of cultural debris left behind by crashes. Arjun Appadurai’s notion of “mediascapes,” which refers to “immediate and boundless” environments of news created by communication technologies, is essential here (20). Equally important are “ideoscapes,” or environments of multifarious ideas with “practically infinite potential audiences” (20). Even as the movement of a plane terminates in a crash, the ideoscape of a crash is borne in myriad directions by the mediascape. Hence, there exists a vast

range of reactions to the notion of the crash: on one hand is the “maniacal timbre” of Richard Hugo’s poem, “Where We Crashed” (“sweet / cheese-eating / jesu”) (9); on the other is the “gentle Zen poetry” of kamikaze pilots (10). The same principle applies to early mediascapes of the crash. The reproductions of the “viral” 1785 crash of the French balloonist Jean-François Pilâtre de Rozier “in multiple forms and aesthetics” (57); the Icarus myth “recirculated across the ages” (61); the Italian engineer Giovanni Damiano de Falcucci’s attempt to fly, and his ensuing crash, taking flight in the mediascape of early-sixteenth-century Scotland in the form of a comic poem by William Dunbar (67)—the impulse to make something out of the existential dread of the crash has always been present. Malamud likens this impulse to *kintsugi*, the Japanese art of repairing broken pottery with glue mixed with powdered gold or silver, thereby accentuating the breakage. As countless examples of crash narratives, artworks, and memorials before and after the invention of the airplane prove, debris fields are “palettes of raw materials with which something can be (re)constructed” (33).

The subsequent two chapters offer two dovetailing modes of this (re)construction. Chapter 3’s reconstructions are founded on existential uncertainty of the universe as represented by aviation. Every flight is “Schrödinger’s crash” in that it may or may not crash due to an event that may or may not happen. This uncertainty invites explorations of what Malamud calls “the crash/not-crash” (85). In the 2020 novel *The Anomaly*, Hervé Le Tellier depicts a flight that lands twice with the same passengers, supercharging the uncertainty of the crash/not-crash into total absurdity. Whereas *The Anomaly*’s “surreal enigma” pushes the crash/not-crash outside the bounds of intelligibility (84), W. B. Yeats’s “An Irish Airman Foresees His Death” finds meaning in this binary. Yeats’s poem is “governed by a sense of absurd but inevitable fate” (101): the titular airman, fighting for a cause he does not believe in, faces his imminent death with quiet contemplation. Even as the poem points to the fatal imbalance of a warplane crash, the formal balance of the poem in words and meter reconstructs an “overarching order in the universe” (102).

In chapter 4, music (re)constructs in the form of memorial. In Don McLean’s “American Pie,” the crash that killed Buddy Holly is memorialized as “the day the music died.” McLean remolds the temporal

distance of Holly's "that'll be the day when I die" to the proximity of "this'll be the day that I die" (127). There is no uncertainty in this flight: music is confirmed dead. Even so, music gives life. Woody Guthrie's "Deportee" names the immigrant worker victims of the 1948 Los Gatos crash, whom media coverage had rendered a nameless mass.

After the fifth chapter's exhaustive investigation of art's power to extract aesthetic value from the chaos of the crash, chapter 6 undertakes the task of extracting meaning from art destroyed in crashes. Malamud's reading of the Jamaican sculptor (the only World Trade Center artist-in-residence killed on 9/11) Michael Richards's 1999 work *Tar Baby vs. St. Sebastian*, a figure of the artist as a World War II Tuskegee Airman pierced by several miniature airplanes, is particularly effective to this end. Richards's depiction of a martyred Black pilot is "ineffably harrowing, and ironic, and also amazing" in its anticipation of the artist's "engagement in his own real-life aviation tragedy" (199). "[W]ith his art, his crash, his art of crashes, his art in crashes," Richards completes Malamud's "rubric" of "Crashes in Art"/"Art in Crashes" (199).

The seventh chapter shifts attention from art commemorating the Tuskegee Airmen to the history of the Airmen, who "had to fight their own country in order to help fight the enemy" (243). Malamud's historical documentation of non-white and non-male aviators, their crashes, and the prejudices they are subject to in life and death throws the "default white male profile for pilots" into relief as one of the persistent discontents of aviation (223). The following chapter continues this emphasis on the human. Chapter 8 reads the narratives of those who lived through a crash. To survive is to go through a transformative, existential trauma. Concussed and blind for weeks after his 1940 crash, the Royal Air Force ace Roald Dahl was thrown into total uncertainty. Dahl emerged from this world of darkness a masterful writer, whose works were permeated by "the leitmotif of aviation" and whose understanding of himself was now inextricably connected to flight and survival (272).

The last chapter offers a counterpoint to the (re)constructions of the previous eight: due to the inherent violence of suicide missions, the Zen death poems of kamikaze pilots are failed attempts at transforming violence into beauty. Rather, poems such as that of Corporal Teruo Usami, who makes of himself "a cherry blossom falling in a splendid dive" (316),

are data—sort of like psychic black boxes—“that reveal to investigators what was going on that made the plane crash” (318). Further, some debris fields just make for poor material for any sort of (re)constructive process, like that of the 2023 crash which killed the sadistic Russian warlord Yevgeny Prigozhin. Still, we can at least “feel the satisfaction of pure karma” when we look back at them (320).

CRASH! fulfills its promise that it “will expand and enrich” its unusual subject matter “with the brio of humanism” (82). The humanist crash investigator delivers a tour de force of existential philosophy, media studies, art history, mobility studies, literary criticism, and more. Accordingly, a broad range of humanists will find value in Malamud’s book, not just as a novel exploration of the cultural debris fields of airplane crashes but also as an invitation to make something out of other such uncharted aspects of modern human existence. That, *CRASH!* proves, is one of the duties of the humanist.

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*Translating the Nonhuman: What
Science Fiction Can Teach Us about
Translating.* By Douglas Robinson.
Bloomsbury Academic, 2025.
176 pp.

Has any scholar in recent decades done more to illuminate the ethical and epistemological stakes of translating nonhuman voices than Douglas Robinson? What does it mean to translate nonhuman? And how has science fiction become a proving ground for such translational experiments? Douglas Robinson's *Translating the Nonhuman* takes up the challenge of bridging the vast divide between human and nonhuman modes of expression—under the subtitle *What Science Fiction Can Teach Us about Translating*. In tracing “speculative attempts to cross the yawning chasm between human and nonhuman languages and cultures, and in so doing reflecting back on the human-all-too-human cultural gaps translators and interpreters work to cross here on Earth” (7), his inquiry reframes translation as a place of thoughtful and moral reckoning, both terrestrial and beyond. Robinson uses science fiction as a site of experimentation to explore translatability and the linguistic relationship between humans and other-than-human entities. He contends that science fiction's speculative nature allows it to rethink translation in ways realistic fiction cannot. Robinson further claims that science fiction (SF), even when it engages with translation only superficially, inherently challenges and reimagines the nature of language and communication, whereas realistic fiction tends to reinforce conventional and unexamined assumptions about how language functions. Robinson contends

that American science fiction from the 1960s onward began to seriously engage with the complexities of language and cultural difference, particularly through the lens of the Sapir-Whorf Hypothesis, which suggests that language shapes thought. This shift prompted writers to confront the challenges of translation—not just between human languages but speculatively across species and worlds. The passage across species and worlds raises a speculative but critical question: if linguistic relativity makes human-to-human understanding difficult, then how much more complex must communication with nonhuman entities be (3)?

Translating the Nonhuman masterfully integrates translation studies, speculative fiction, ecocritical sustainability, and linguistic theory into a cohesive and innovative scholarly framework. Rather than treating these domains as isolated disciplines, Robinson interweaves them to explore the philosophical, rhetorical, and ethical dimensions of translation—particularly as they pertain to nonhuman entities and radically unfamiliar communicative systems. At the beginning of the book, in the subchapter titled “Structure of the Book,” Robinson explains that he has organized the work around three essays, each analyzing a different science fiction text and designed to be read in any order. He further asserts that his aim is to move beyond isolated case studies and offer a tentative map of how science fiction can illuminate the challenges of human–nonhuman translation. Robinson has picked these three science fictions not arbitrarily but, rather, deliberately, as each essay imagines language as a site of transformation, of thought, of power, of interspecies relation.

Accordingly, the book’s three extended essays are each focused on a distinct science fiction text, and each essay applies a different theoretical lens to examine how speculative fiction reimagines the act of translation across cultural, biological, and planetary boundaries: “The first studies Delany’s *Babel-17* through the lens of Peircean semiotics; the second studies Elgin’s *Native Tongue* with an eye to J. L. Austin’s theory of the performative utterance and Eve Sedwick’s [sic] periperformative corrective; and the third studies Chiang’s ‘Story of Your Life’ and its 2016 screen adaptation *Arrival*, using sustainability theory” (8). In thus combining science fiction and linguistic theory, Robinson not only expands the scope of translation theory but also positions science fiction as a critical site for interrogating the limits of language, the politics of representation, and the future of interspecies communication.

In the first essay Robinson critiques Joseph Fitzpatrick's computational reading of *Babel-17* as reductive, arguing instead for a psychosemiotic approach grounded in Peirce and Mead. He reframes Rydra Wong's translation "knack" as embodied, habitual knowledge and sees the novel's true threat in its severing of language from social identity, which induces a schizoid state tied to cultural trauma (11). By linking this to Afrofuturist and postcolonial thought, Robinson presents *Babel-17* as an allegory of identity and resistance (50), urging readers to view translation as a deeply social and empathetic act.

By contrast, in the second essay of *Translating the Nonhuman*, Robinson reads *Native Tongue* as a feminist challenge to translation theory showing how language can both enforce patriarchal control and enable liberation. He critiques English's gendered biases and uses Bourdieu's symbolic power to explain how male dominance is linguistically maintained. Drawing on Sedgwick's performativity, Robinson argues that the novel's impact lies in its emotional effect on readers, who are prompted to envision new linguistic possibilities (82). The creation of *Láadan*, rooted in the Sapir-Whorf Hypothesis, becomes a speculative tool for resistance (59). Robinson extends this to real-world translation, emphasizing the need for empathetic, embodied strategies to bridge cultural divides as he asserts that "[m]ore than translation, of course, this is transculturation" (81).

In the third essay of *Translating the Nonhuman*, independently yet as a continuous connection to translation studies with the previous essays, Robinson argues that Ted Chiang's *Story of Your Life* and its film adaptation *Arrival* offer a compelling model for rethinking translation in the age of the Anthropocene. Drawing on Michael Cronin's concept of eco-translation, Robinson critiques traditional, conflict-driven approaches to translation and instead advocates for an immersive, receptive model exemplified by Louise Banks's engagement with *Hep-tapod B*. This nonlinear, alien language not only reshapes the character's perception of time but also symbolizes a broader ethical shift: learning to communicate with the nonhuman world—plants, animals, ecosystems—not to dominate it but to understand and sustain it. Robinson's central claim is that translation must evolve into a practice of ecological humility, where linguistic and semiotic sensitivity becomes key to planetary survival. Robinson further argues that both science fiction

and translation studies are structurally linked to colonial narratives. He shows how each of the three speculative texts discussed in this book reveals translation as a potential tool of colonial domination, especially when it enforces normative readings of unfamiliar languages or cultures. His intervention highlights translation not as neutral exchange but as a contested site of power. With all characters, Robinson explores more resistant models of translation that challenge colonial assumptions and open space for ethical engagement with radical differences. Robinson also argues that language—especially according to the Sapir-Whorf Hypothesis—can trap thought within oppressive structures such as colonialism, patriarchy, and ecological exploitation. Through *Babel-17*, *Native Tongue*, and *Story of Your Life*, he explores translation in order to escape these constraints. Extending this to the Anthropocene, Robinson suggests that learning *Heptapod B* enables not just temporal shifts but deeper communication with Earth itself (6). Translation becomes a survival tool, urging interpreters to explore new ecosemiotic pathways for reimagining our relationship with the nonhuman world.

Throughout the book, Robinson's support is both convincing and intellectually generative. His close readings are rigorous and theoretically grounded, and he uses each text not merely as an illustration but as a site of philosophical inquiry. By engaging with speculative fiction's imaginative potential, Robinson expands the scope of translation studies beyond traditional linguistic frameworks. The cross-referential structure of the book—where essays periodically trace parallels among the three works—further reinforces the coherence of his overarching argument. The methodological approach spanning multiple disciplines will appeal to scholars working in the fields of literary studies, cultural theory, translation studies, linguistics, gender studies, and science fiction.

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*Angela Carter's Pasts: Allegories
and Intertextualities.* Edited by
Sarah Gamble and Anna Watz.
Bloomsbury Academic, 2025.
232 pp.

Sarah Gamble and Anna Watz note in their introduction to *Angela Carter's Past: Allegories and Intertextualities*, that, for Carter, the present is formed from the past, so that “a reinterpretation of the artefacts of history can initiate social change in the here and now” (4–5). The resulting complicated attitude toward the past in Carter’s work, at turns admiring and rebuking but never dismissive, forms the central theme of their collection, with contributors exploring Carter’s engagement with various parts of cultural and political history, such as traditional folk ballads, Renaissance drama, and the social tumults of postwar Japan. What results is a rich and compelling look at the complex web of reference between Carter’s body of work and broader cultural tradition, one which draws welcome attention to parts of that body often overlooked by critics, like her early poetry and her radio plays. The collection is thus an informative and insightful resource for scholars looking to deepen their understanding of Carter’s oeuvre and its connection to literary tradition, as well as for those looking for critical work on often underdiscussed works by Carter.

The book opens with a foreword by Carter’s friend and fellow writer, Rikki Ducornet, recounting an idyllic summer the two spent together in rural France and highlighting Carter’s love of storytelling and their shared literary fascinations—in particular, Borges, Lispector, and Sade.

These warm recollections serve well to illustrate the themes addressed in the editors' introduction. Gamble and Watz characterize Carter as an author supremely aware of, and in constant conversation with, past works, ideas, and movements, effectively framing the diverse contributions to the collection within a broader concern for this characterization of Carter's work.

The first section of these contributions, titled "Allegories," focuses on Carter's grounding in literary history and her repurposing of forms and motifs from that history to comment on contemporary social and political concerns. As expected, her debt particularly to medieval and Renaissance allegory establishes a major theme for two of the four chapters in this part, with other chapters offering similar resonances in Carter's work with folk songs and the image of Mary's *hortus conclusus*, or walled garden, in medieval religion. In each case, Carter's allusions to these features of older literature are nevertheless critical ones, foregrounding the violence inherent in literary abstraction, in paternal authority, and in women's subordination as wives and mothers. Together, these chapters paint a picture of Carter as a writer who not only is deeply and self-consciously immersed in premodern and early modern literature and culture but also views this immersion as a factor setting her apart from many of her so-called more modern contemporaries.

The second section, "Violence and Revolution," is concerned with Carter's explorations of the often explosive political and social reactions to the cultural past. In this part, particular attention is paid to the influence of violent outbursts in Japan, where Carter lived in the early 1970s: Yukio Mishima's failed 1970 coup to return the old Imperialist order and the self-destructive United Red Army's similarly failed 1972 attempt to overthrow all traces of that order are both seen reflected in Carter's work from that revolutionary decade. The contributors argue, with particular focus on Carter's 1974 short story collection *Fireworks*, that Carter critiques the loss of individuality accompanying and justifying these violent programs. In the texts examined, the critics see a contrast between the blood and confusion of dogmatism and the relative clarity and freedom of independent thought. The section's concern with the subservience often hidden within rebellion makes it a symmetrical pairing with "Allegories" and its focus on the possibility of rebellion within a seeming subservience to tradition.

The chapters in the third and final section, “Contrarities and Collisions,” provide a clearer picture of how Carter herself understood not only her influences, be they from literature, film, philosophy, or theatre, but also their importance to her. In these readings, Carter is seen judging certain influences, such as the films of John Ford and the tradition of Western Occultism, to be of only limited use to a truly liberated future; meanwhile, others, French author Colette and gay British novelist Ronald Firbank, are more fully celebrated by Carter as providing means, via frank, bold sexuality and high camp, respectively, of undermining repressive ideologies of gender and culture. In the process of making this distinction, the section often offers an important counterbalance to the first section’s more optimistic perspective on the potential of Carter’s project of repurposing the tradition. Where Polly Paulusma’s earlier reading of Carter’s use of the sibling romance motif stresses its ability to undermine patriarchal authority, Robert Duggan’s contribution to this last section argues that, for Carter, this motif’s disconnect from the expectations patriarchy places on women means it fails to really challenge those expectations. The image of Carter presented in these chapters is of a writer with no illusions of escaping a tradition with which she frequently finds fault; she nevertheless insists on determining for herself just who and what in that tradition will influence her and how.

In its presentation of Carter’s work across forms, genres, and periods of her career, *Angela Carter’s Pasts: Allegories and Intertextualities* offers readers a complex overview of the way Carter deliberately positions herself both alongside and against the preceding centuries of literary history. As such, it is a valuable source for researchers focusing on Carter or those curious about how English literature of the twentieth century conceived of its relationship to what came before.

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*Poor Things: How Those with Money
Depict Those without It.* By Lennard J.
Davis. Duke University Press, 2024.
304 pp.

Lennard J. Davis's *Poor Things: How Those with Money Depict Those without It* is clear about its aim from the opening line: "This book is about the genre of artistic creativity that takes as its subject poverty and poor people" (ix). Davis acknowledges that such preoccupations are not unique but have long and pervasive histories in literature, film, and art. What sets *Poor Things* apart is its approach through "habitation, a getting to know over time, an earned intimacy with poverty" (xi). The book does not deny the need (as Walter Benn Michaels and Adolph Reed, Jr., have argued) for a politics that redistributes wealth rather than merely representing poverty. Rather, Davis observes that we live in a culture where discussing systemic economic change often proves easier than achieving it, and so, given current political conditions, he argues that we must still shed light on those living within these systems. Davis contends that this representational work matters, not when driven by shame, pity, or distance—as is too often the case—but when undertaken from an insider's perspective that offers a glimpse into a way of life understood on its own terms. He posits that poverty is not necessarily something to be fixed or transformed but something that deserves recognition as a way of being in the world, given the economic systems we have. In this sense, *Poor Things* is as much a crucial corrective study as it is an ode to individuals experiencing poverty.

Davis seems to anticipate his readers' questions through the aptly titled interchapter 1, "Why Me?" This question lies at the heart of *Poor Things*, and in this early section, Davis responds by sharing intimate accounts of his family history and childhood: "Although I was part of three generations (most probably many more) of poverty, I never heard anyone in my family lament this state of affairs" (2). Reflecting on his own origins, he asserts the need to revisit academic approaches to poverty—not from a removed perspective but from the inside out.

In chapter 1, Davis urges scholars to recognize misrepresentations of the poor for what they are. He notes that many in academia have not experienced poverty, yet they still research, write, and teach on the subject. While he acknowledges that some academics do come from struggle, he points out that their current positions in higher education often place them at a remove from those experiences. Thus, Davis challenges readers—especially those in the academy—to interrogate their unconscious biases. If we do not, we risk displacing the poor subject from the actual position of subject.

Chapter 2 interrogates the "representational inequality" (17) of the poor in creative works, particularly as it relates to the rise of the novel in eighteenth-century England. Many middle- and upper-class writers—such as Friedrich Engels, Elizabeth Gaskell, Charles Dickens, and Nellie Bly—wrote authoritatively about the poor despite having little to no personal experience with poverty. Davis refers to these accounts as "poornography" (3), sensationalized imaginings of East End life that catered to popular demand. These distorted portrayals proved commercially successful and remain canonized today. In response, Davis urges scholars to turn to writers of poverty found in American proletarian literature of the 1920s and 1930s. These authors were themselves poor, heard, and published—yet they remain largely excluded from the canon. For Davis, we must ask whose voice we're actually hearing on the page; only then can we begin to distinguish the lived realities of poverty from their fictionalized representations.

Chapter 3 advocates for giving poor people the platform to tell their own stories. For Davis, only "endo-writers" (73)—those who come from poverty—have the lived experience to write authentically about the poor. These insider voices offer an alternative to the clichéd portrayals often produced by "exo-writers" (73), or those writing about lives outside

their own class. Between these two groups are “transclass writers” (72), who have experienced poverty but have since moved into more privileged social positions. While all three groups can publish work, Davis imagines a future in which communities of poverty gain access to creative and academic spaces, allowing them to hold exo- and transclass writers accountable. Only when artists are answerable to the communities they represent, he argues, can harmful (mis)representations of the poor be truly challenged.

Chapter 4 explores how eighteenth-century literature reveals a deep social preoccupation with the poor. Davis traces how systems of power favoring the wealthy and able-bodied gave rise to fictional accounts of poverty in the first place. To address this, he introduces the concept of the “biocultural,” a term describing the intersection of science, medicine, technology, and culture in enforcing constructed social realities—especially about the bodies of the poor (28). Assumptions about hygiene, addiction, physique, mental health, and intelligence abound in eighteenth-century literature, showing how myths are culturally actualized through writing that distances, others, fetishizes, and exploits its subjects.

Chapter 5 turns to the relationship between poverty and prostitution. Most narratives about female sex workers in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries were written by economically independent men, who, given societal expectations of female chastity, assumed prostitution was the inevitable result of poverty. Davis contrasts these portrayals with *Madeleine*, a 1919 first-person account believed to be written by a female sex worker. He argues that the lines between “poor women who married for security, those who exchanged sex for security, those who exchanged money for goods and services, and those who exchanged sex for money” were far more fluid than dominant narratives acknowledged (18–19).

In chapter 6, Davis examines Dorothea Lange’s photograph *Migrant Mother* to critique the relationship between the middle-class observer and the poor female subject. While such photographs are often seen as empathetic points of contact, Davis emphasizes the distance—physical, spatial, and economic—between what he calls the “exo-observer” and the “endo-subject” (19). This divide highlights the power imbalance between those who control representation and those who are

represented. Importantly, Davis also draws attention to instances in which endo-subjects actively respond to and resist these portrayals—such as poet Maggie Anderson, who uses her voice to counter distorted images of her Appalachian town and reclaim narrative agency.

Poor Things: How Those with Money Depict Those without It takes a crucial step toward justice for the poor by exposing gaps in scholarly approaches, elevating long-excluded firsthand accounts, and questioning who gets to write about poverty. Emerging with tender pride from Davis's own story, the book wrestles with the tension between study and objectification: Davis admits, "[Y]ou can't really write about poverty without inadvertently engaging in poornography[.] Making that point throughout the book doesn't erase my own complicity" (153). By confronting the complexities of writing, poverty, and representation, *Poor Things* does not reveal its shortcomings; rather, it models a successful, equitable approach to studying biocultures, income inequality, and class disparity.

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Interpreting the Amistad Trials: How Interpreters and Translators Make and Shape History. By Jeanette Zaragoza De León. Bloomsbury Academic, 2025. 272 pp.

In this contribution to the field of translation studies, Jeanette Zaragoza De León uses the Amistad Trials as a case study to illustrate her proposed Interpreting and Translation Filter (ITF), which she designed to provide scholars with a methodology for navigating historical archival research. Scholars interested in the field of translation and interpretation can draw on De León's work in two ways: (1) as a methodology for understanding and interpreting archival documents through her ITF and (2) as a case study of how language, while at the core of translation and interpretation, is not the only factor that must be considered when translating. A compelling addition to the field of interpretation and translation studies, De León's study encourages scholars to engage with historical documents beyond the words on the archival page.

In her seven-chapter book, De León provides a foreword describing her proposed ITF and argues that it is integral to the understanding of historical documents. An ITF serves to facilitate communication within language, both spoken and written, and De León's ITF uses seven distinct tools: historical and archival contextualization, textual analysis, biographical methods, analysis of recruitment process, identity and linguistic mediation, close reading, and an analysis of long-term history. These ITF tools encourage scholars to view translators as active agents within historical narratives, examining how their influence affected

historical shaping, remembrance, and understanding. Her ITF fosters scholarly engagement with these historical narratives to formulate a more complete account of archival documents than a simple textual analysis allows for. The book's seven chapters then apply these seven tools to the Amistad case, which concerned the trial of enslaved people who mutinied against their captors. These chapters discuss the Amistad case's historical context, its racial and ethnic issues, the recruitment and role of translators and interpreters, the case's initial hearings, and the actual trials themselves. An epilogue describes the author's personal and professional experience writing the book.

Chapter 1 begins with an overview of the Amistad trials, asserting that race, law, politics, and class must be considered when translating. This assertion corresponds to the first feature of ITF, historical and archival contextualization. De León discusses the court case revolving around the enslavement and illegal sale of fifty-three Africans who mutinied against their captors and were consequently tried for murder. In chapter 2, De León discusses close contextual analysis of archival documentation, which is ITF's second feature. She gives the example of the distinction between the terms "Bozales" and "Ladinos" (62). These enslaved people were given the title of "Ladinos" on their documents by the Spaniards who enslaved them, a title that suggested legal enslavement in the Spanish colonies. However, these enslaved people were "Bozales," meaning they were kidnapped, had not resided in the Spanish colonies, and therefore were being illegally trafficked. Such close contextual analysis demonstrates how interpretation and translation scholars might understand the historical narration within documentation. De León observes that translation and interpretation are at the core of understanding interpersonal relationships among participants in such an event, saying, "Language, culture, ideology, and history, intrinsically braided, supported the evidence in the case" (111). For instance, De León discusses the excitement that the enslaved people displayed when interacting with the interpreters, mentioning that they spoke beyond words, through context, body language, and speed of speech. De León provides supportive rhetorical insight into this concept, concluding that the fast-paced speech supported feelings of hope and excitement at the prospect of reliable communication and support (134). This additional

insight allows readers to understand that translation is not only a communication issue; it is also about connection.

In chapter 3, De León discusses the political implications of finding interpreters and translators. These biographical methods correspond to the third feature of any ITF, which, as De León mentions, includes the translator's education, linguistic abilities, profession, and political connections. She shifts to the practical difficulties faced in finding interpreters and translators for this trial in chapter 4, introducing a fourth feature to her ITF. Such difficulties involved the ability to translate across multiple languages, an active recruitment process, professional training, and translators' reliability and accuracy. She highlights the importance of this process, saying that "[h]aving an interpreter did not guarantee winning the case. But not having one guaranteed the Africans losing their lives" (210). The intervention of the interpreters and translators did result in the overturning of the case, allowing the Africans to be freed and permitted to return to Africa.

Chapter 5 discusses identity and linguistic mediation, building a case for how identity and language interact within a court context, which corresponds to the fifth feature of De León's ITF. De León mentions that it was not uncommon for the Africans to fake an inability to speak their native language due to a hesitancy to trust (154). As trust was crucial in this court case, it was important to cultivate a trusting relationship between the interpreter and enslaved persons that extended beyond the interpreter–enslaved-person communication. The Abolitionists, who were fighting for the freedom of the enslaved Africans, also sought to humanize the Africans in the public eye by honoring their traditions and culture, working to build "trust" with the public (111). By understanding the role that identity plays in understanding historical narratives, scholars of ITF can apply a similar methodology in their own research, allowing for a more complex understanding of historical agents.

Chapter 6 provides a close reading of the archival documentation and discusses how the interpreter's contributions affected scheduling, outcomes, and narrative. Here, De León suggests close reading as an ITF tool, providing details such as how often the interpreters were switched out to reduce their level of exhaustion. Yet a brief recess was

still necessary due to the strenuous nature of the job (166). De León also elaborates on the role identity played, discussing an article referencing an interpreter both as “black” and as an “interpreter,” references that, De León suggests, undermine both identities. De León demonstrates a need to examine the racialized structure affecting interpreters within the historical narrative.

Chapter 7 presents a long-term historical reflection upon the Amistad trials, a seventh ITF tool. De León advises that linguistic mediation should be centralized when looking at historical outcomes. This chapter provides a comprehensive view of the trials, noting that they ended with the pro-slavery side appealing to the US Supreme Court, which upheld the original verdict freeing the Africans (208). This broad view can allow for a big-picture analysis and contributes to a compelling methodology for interpreting archival materials.

In the epilogue, De León succinctly summarizes the main goals of the project, such as teaching strong archival analysis, highlighting the roles of interpreters and translators as historical agents, and demonstrating the role of racialized structures within translation and historical narratives. This concluding piece serves as a reminder, after reading the nuanced accounts presented in each chapter, of the primary purpose of this case study: to show how difficult it is to understand a historical event such as the Amistad trials without full contextual information, thereby demonstrating a need for her ITF. The intermixing of languages, cultures, and identities supports her argument that translation and interpretation research is necessary to appreciate the nuances of historical moments such as this. De León’s book delivers a thoughtful intervention that encourages researchers of archival sources to use her ITF when interpreting and enables them to emulate her model to achieve greater nuance and depth in their own scholarly projects.

Kaitlynn Jane Toay
University of Kansas

New Sincerity: American Fiction in the Neoliberal Age. By Adam Kelly.
Stanford University Press, 2024.
386 pp.

In the field of post-45 literary studies, the questions of what comes after postmodernism, when did postmodernism end, and how do we describe literature now all remain open and heavily discussed. Books such as Lee Konstantinou's *Cool Characters*, Timothy Bewes's *Free Indirect*, and *Postmodern/Postwar—and After*, edited by Jason Gladstone, Andrew Hoberek, and Daniel Worden, all take different approaches to considering the periodization of the last eighty years of literature. Kelly's book takes a small portion of that time, literature by "post-boomers" (a term he coins for authors born between 1957 and 1972) as its historical and literary corpus (4). These texts are characterized by the representation of egalitarian social movements, experimental art, and the belatedness of emancipatory politics—alongside changes to the US literary academy—that contribute to their authors' interest in sincerity as a response to postmodern irony.

This periodization, long tied to David Foster Wallace's own observation in his landmark essay "E Unibus Pluram" (which Kelly calls "the ur-text for tracing the turn to sincerity among post-boomer writers"), responds to the normative domination of neoliberal policies in the United States (19). Kelly borrows Lionel Trilling's definition of sincerity as being true to oneself for the purpose of being true to others. Neoliberalism, Kelly claims, with its emphasis on the entrepreneurial

self, flips the relationship between self and others, proposing sincerity as being true to others for the purpose of being true to oneself. In this transformation, neoliberalism subsumes the ethical under economic logic, and post-boomer writers are left with the question of how to evade complicity with this subsumption. One literary strategy developed over this period is New Sincerity: “In literary New Sincerity, the writer articulates a desire for contamination . . . by invoking a reader who can acknowledge and even co-produce the gift of writing” (34). In other words, if neoliberalism positions the author as always selling oneself to a reader, then by imagining a reader and making that relationship transparent in their fiction, “New Sincerity writers are seeking . . . a way *through*” that ethical subsumption (32).

Kelly’s first chapter looks at the onset of New Sincerity as an aesthetic proposed throughout the corpus of David Foster Wallace, and it is the book’s most airtight example of how the aesthetic works. To explore how Wallace considers the question of whether “sincere action [can] be taken, and sincere art be created, under historical conditions anathema to both ethical conduct and artistic practice, when corporate capitalism and neoliberal ideology have rendered moral and aesthetic ends increasingly inseparable from economic ones” (50–51), Kelly looks to *Westward the Course of Empire Takes Its Way*, a novella published in the collection *Girl with Curious Hair* only months after the cornerstone essay of neoliberal political philosophy, Francis Fukuyama’s “The End of History?” This question underwrites Kelly’s reading of the story, which represents New Sincerity’s diagnosis of post-boomer writing through a writing workshop professor’s comments on a student’s story, these comments using language symptomatic of said corporate capitalism and neoliberal ideology. The story is inviting the reader in to make the entrepreneurial totality of neoliberalism transparent and attempt to co-construct art separate from those marketing impulses.

Kelly then uses this framework to conduct an encyclopedic reading of Wallace’s *Infinite Jest*, arguing that its disparate storylines (Steepley and Marathe, Hal Incandenza, James Incandenza, Joelle Van Dyne, and Don Gately) respond to the concern that “the nineteenth-century conditions that saw the formulation of Steepley’s traditional argument for negative freedom . . . have now given way to the nihilism of the neoliberal free market” (58). Kelly further argues that the novel’s response to that

concern is to enact a form of free indirect discourse that self-consciously asks the reader to construct these connections through following who the narrator or speaker is. If sincerity, in its original form, was being true to oneself as a way of being true to others, and if sincerity under neoliberalism is being true to others as a way of being true to oneself, Kelly understands the polyphonic narration of *Infinite Jest* as formally raising the question of what the self is and how it relates to others. By asking readers to co-construct the diegetic relationships actively, Wallace engages in the formal creation of New Sincerity. In wrangling the many components of this difficult novel, Kelly demonstrates the utility and even necessity of his periodizing proposal.

With that aesthetic example provided, the remaining five chapters of Kelly's book then fill in the details of the problems posed by neoliberal hegemony and offer examples of literary responses to those problems. His second chapter discusses the 1990s concept of the "new economy" (39)—bolstered by tech industry credit and then shattered alongside the dot-com bubble—by exploring how Dave Eggers's early work represents the spatiotemporal logic of credit and debt. Kelly understands the new economy and the credit-based economy of finance capital brought about by the end of Bretton Woods to be premised on a sincere belief in the present of futurity, with credit as endlessly deferring terminal economic recessions. He then explores how Eggers's first two novels formally enact this temporality by preempting reader responses in their metafictional components. Ultimately, Kelly argues, *A Staggering Work of Heartbreaking Genius* and *You Shall Know Our Velocity* emphasize the unsustainability of such a faith-based economy by acknowledging their flattening of time through preemption of audience expectations: "there is nothing, in the end, more temporally contaminated, more impure, than the process of reading, which must escape the pure logic of preemption" (127). Can being true to others really be a way of knowing the truth of yourself if you are aware of other's responses to you?

Venturing out from this question of reception, which is central to Eggers's work, the third chapter begins an engagement with perception, or what Kelly describes as "neoliberal erasures of other kinds—erasures of gender, race, class, and politics" (127). In these chapters, Kelly looks to Jennifer Egan's novels *Look at Me* and *The Invisible Circus* (chapter 3); Colson Whitehead's novels *The Intuitionist*, *Sag Harbor*, and *Apex Hides*

the Hurt (chapter 4); and Helen DeWitt's *Lightning Rods* and George Saunders's *CivilWarLand in Bad Decline* and *Pastoralia* (chapter 5) to carefully historicize how neoliberal hegemony erased these identities and how these texts aimed, if not to restore them, then to erase that erasure. Drawing upon histories of the novel form, criticisms of double consciousness, and writings of Austrian economist Joseph Schumpeter (an important early theorist of neoliberalism), Kelly explores the conditions of neoliberalism that these texts are responding to and the ways in which the formal features of these texts, primarily their various invocations of the reader, seek to make these identities visible. In a particularly striking section of his fourth chapter, Kelly argues that Whitehead's novels exhibit a unique double consciousness characterized by a cultural valorization of "a certain class of black Americans—the professional-managerial class," alongside "the pathologization, incarceration, and state terrorization of a large and 'disposable' black underclass" (206). These chapters illustrate how *New Sincerity* is not just a response to neoliberal hegemony by rich Californian white men named David but is instead a widespread response to a totalizing economic logic of a period.

The last chapter of *New Sincerity* takes up the question of politics: specifically, what political work can novels do in an age of subsumption of ethics under economics? Kelly's book mostly explores the post-boomer authors of *New Sincerity* as they understood themselves—politically powerless and embroiled in entrepreneurial ontology. There were, however, notable political movements in the decade: anti-war protests, the Brooks Brothers riots, and port blockades, just to name a few. While *New Sincerity* explains how the post-boomer authors conceptualized their novels as allegorizing their conditions of production, it leaves those conditions undiscussed.

Overall, *New Sincerity* is a monumental work of periodization that proposes a coherent set of aesthetic developments as a response to a dominant cultural ideology. Those interested in the history of aesthetics, contemporary fiction, or contemporary politics will find in this book plenty of generative reading.

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Notes on Contributors

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