

Netherlands American Studies Review

Spring 2021

NETHERLANDS **NASA**
AMERICAN  STUDIES 
ASSOCIATION



Welcome

to the third edition of the Netherlands American Studies Review, the bi-annual student journal of the Netherlands American Studies Association (NASA). After the success of our first two issues in 2020, we present another collection of excellent student papers written in the field of North American Studies at Dutch universities.

In this Spring 2021 issue, you will find nine carefully selected pieces that reflect the topical diversity and interdisciplinary nature of our field in the Netherlands. Our contributors cover a wide variety of issues, ranging from Black voting rights to political cartoons and from the Great American Novel to Canadian identity. These papers were written by students in different stages of their higher education, ranging from the final stages of their bachelor's to the earliest stages of their PhDs.

We are very thankful for all the students who sent us their work, for the editors who worked tirelessly to select and fine-tune their papers, and, of course, for the NASA Board, which has supported us throughout the process. We are proud of the final product and hope it will inspire you as much as it did us.

We hope you will enjoy the Spring 2021 edition of the Netherlands American Studies Review!

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ISSN: 2772-4492

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Through the Eyes of the Beholder: Self-fashioning in Elisabeth Vigée-Lebrun's Encounter with Benjamin Franklin in *Souvenirs*

Puck Limburg | University of Amsterdam

This paper was written for the course America Inside Out in the Research Master in History

First impressions last, and a figure like Benjamin Franklin was sure to catch attention at the decadent French court of the late eighteenth century. "I was struck by his extreme simplicity; (...) if it were not for his noble face, I would have taken him for a large farmer," wrote Elisabeth Vigée-Lebrun in her *Souvenirs* (1835-7) upon recalling her first encounter with this famous American.¹ Vigée-Lebrun was the personal court portraitist of Queen Marie-Antoinette, and a painter famous for her talent to portray her sitters in an accurate yet flattering way. Nevertheless, the only portrait she ever made of Franklin was a textual one, created many years after their initial meeting somewhere between 1778 and 1785.²

The passage Vigée-Lebrun dedicated to Franklin in *Souvenirs* is quite short in comparison to the entirety of the work. *Souvenirs* consists of three volumes, each made up of a collection of personal letters and notes dedicated to the story of her life. Volume I consists of twelve letters, a list of paintings the artist made before 1789, and a final section called 'Notes et Portraits.' It is this last section that includes the paragraph on Franklin. Despite the passage's brevity, however, it is rich in detail. Franklin, who was in France as an ambassador hoping to gain support for the newly founded United States of America, was also incredibly famous in Paris. His popularity with the French was unrivaled, as he enjoyed the reputation of a libertine party animal and was celebrated for his wit and fierce intelligence.³ Vigée-Lebrun in turn adeptly used this image of him in *Souvenirs*. In her text, he functioned as someone who had not merely been seen, but as someone who actively wanted to be seen by others and who others wanted to be seen with.

Vigée-Lebrun was far from alone in her pursuit to document her own life. In fact, Franklin himself famously wrote his own *Autobiography* (1791) years before Vigée-Lebrun immortalized the renowned American in her writings. As authors of their own autobiographies, Franklin and Vigée-Lebrun both re-imagined their lives in textual form. Comparing these two narratives of the self will help illuminate how these two authors understood their own selves and how they chose to represent those selves in writing. The fact that Vigée-Lebrun's *Souvenirs* included a passage on Franklin makes this comparison more layered. Specifically, her recollection of Franklin makes it possible not only to consider how an author can portray their own self in their work, but also how such a reflection of this constructed self can be found in the writings of others. Moreover, the passage in *Souvenirs* also illustrates how one author's constructed self-image can be used in a different author's self-narrative to elevate the latter's own constructed written self. More than a mere attempt to preserve their own lives, Vigée-Lebrun and Franklin wrote their autobiographies with specific

objectives in mind. The function and construction of these self-fashioned selves, as well as the dynamic between those images, will be the focus of this essay.

First of all, it is important to understand the context in which Vigée-Lebrun wrote her memoirs, as it heavily influenced the way she presented herself in her autobiography. She wrote the letters that would form the first volume of *Souvenirs* – in which Franklin made an appearance – between 1835 and 1837 as part of a correspondence with her friend, Russian Princess Natalia Ivanovna Kurakina.⁴ About eighty years old at the time, Vigée-Lebrun was looking back on a long and tumultuous life, having lived through the French Revolution and having painted both Catherine the Great and Napoleon. Yet, Vigée-Lebrun considered her time as the favorite of the ill-fated Marie-Antoinette, whom she remembered most fondly, as her glory days. *Le Premier Tome* of *Souvenirs*, then, covered Vigée-Lebrun's life from childhood to the end of the 'Ancien Régime.'

Vigée-Lebrun's artistic celebrity is central to the text. From the first page onwards, she made it clear that she believed herself destined to become a famous painter. When remembering her youth, she described how her father, in an almost prophetic manner, declared upon seeing her drawings: "You will be a painter, my child, if there ever was one."⁵ Throughout *Souvenirs*, Vigée-Lebrun never failed to mention the high status of her patrons or the success of her artworks, emphasizing her own success as an artist. Although Vigée-Lebrun was not the only successful female artist in Europe in the late eighteenth century – Angelica Kauffmann, Adélaïde Labille-Guiard and Marguerite Gérard are a few other noteworthy examples – being a prominent female artist was still controversial. The illustrious French Academy, for instance, rarely accepted women painters.⁶ Publishing *Souvenirs* was thus a means for Vigée-Lebrun to claim and shape her own narrative; to protect her legacy as an influential artist and a woman of society. The small textual portraits of important people like Franklin she claimed to have seen or met should be understood within this context, as they helped elevate her own status.

In 'Notes et Portraits,' 'Le Docteur de Franklin' steps into the text right between the sections on 'Monsieur de Talleyrand' and 'Le Prince de Nassau', two other well-known people at the time.⁷ Vigée-Lebrun's awareness of the power of Franklin's celebrity is also evident from her firm statements about him: "No man in Paris was so fashionable, so sought after as doctor Franklin (...) and it was seen as a great fortune to be invited to a dinner where one could find this celebrated person."⁸ Moreover, she made herself appear to have been one of those fortunate ones, as she explained to her reader: "I can say with certainty that meeting him, even for several times, was not enough to satisfy the curiosity he aroused."⁹ Apparently, Vigée-Lebrun had been fortunate enough to be in Franklin's presence on a regular basis. By laying claim to this privilege, as it was supposedly only a happy few who had the honor to meet the illustrious American regularly, Vigée-Lebrun underlined her own secure place amongst the French elite.

Nevertheless, it is important to question whether she ever actually met him. Whereas Vigée-Lebrun's description of Franklin certainly fitted his image in Paris, it lacks a certain layer of personal observation, like the inclusion of personal anecdotes. Her portrayal invoked

the myth of Franklin rather than the man of flesh and blood. Moreover, Vigée-Lebrun immediately resorted to his remarkable “simplicity,” alluding to his “completely gray suit, [and] his flat hair, without powder, falling to his shoulders.”¹⁰ This image of the wigless and comically underdressed Franklin was not unique among astonished but amused French courtiers. In fact, Franklin himself even mentioned it in a letter to his friend Emma Thompson from 1777:

Figure me in your mind as jolly as formerly, and as strong and hearty, only a few Years older, very plainly dress'd, wearing my thin grey strait Hair, that peeps out under my only Coiffure, a fine Fur Cap, which comes down my Forehead almost to my Spectacles. Think how this must appear among the Powder'd Heads of Paris.¹¹

Franklin was in on the joke of his appearance. Besides, his fashion choices were a conscious means to a political end; to appear wigless in public was one way to catch the attention of the fashion-conscious French. In France, Franklin already enjoyed the reputation of a celebrated scientist and writer before ever having set foot on French soil in the 1760s.¹² When he subsequently arrived at the French court as the ambassador of the United States dressed in a simple American Quaker outfit, he left a deep impression on the lavishly overdressed courtiers. His eccentric appearance further heightened French interest in the American phenomenon that Franklin was to them. The fact that Franklin himself was not a Quaker further underlines that he clearly understood how he could use his own image to persuade the French to support the American War of Independence against Britain – his reason for being in Paris, after all. Rather than trying to simply imitate the opulent fashion of Versailles to appeal to the French, Franklin chose to dress in a way that bluntly contrasted with the elegant courtiers. In doing so, he captivated the French elite with his eccentricity and simplicity.¹³

If Vigée-Lebrun merely invoked the persona of Franklin rather than recalling an actual memory of meeting him in person, it is important to also consider Franklin’s textual portrayal of himself in his autobiography. Americanist Michael Warner interprets *Autobiography* as “Franklin’s construction of the personal in the conventions of print” in which he deliberately constructed a personal and social self.¹⁴ Like Franklin’s deliberate self-presentation as the “simplistic,” “large farmer” in Paris, he consciously manufactured his written persona as well.¹⁵ *Autobiography* and *Souvenirs* both stood in the tradition of the eighteenth-century ‘life-writing’ genre, which was all about the representation of the author’s own life and self. However, Franklin was perhaps more aware than Vigée-Lebrun was in *Souvenirs* of how he could most efficiently shape this personal narrative in his favor.

The differences and similarities between *Autobiography* and *Souvenirs* can help to make sense of the specific conceptions of self at play in these texts. Consider, for instance, the opening to *Souvenirs*, in which Vigée-Lebrun dedicated her writings to Kurakina: “My dear good friend, you have asked me so many times to write to you my memories, that I have decided to satisfy you.”¹⁶ This plea that the author supposedly received to document her own

life is reminiscent of a letter by Benjamin Vaughan from 1783 that Franklin included in *Autobiography*: “Sir, I *solicit* the history of your life from the following motives. Your history is so remarkable, that if you do not give it, somebody else will certainly give it; and perhaps so as nearly to do much harm, as your own management of the thing might do good.”¹⁷ This last statement expressed the same concern about claiming and shaping one’s own narrative that supposedly motivated the creation of *Souvenirs* as well.

Yet, there is an important difference between the two narratives. Vigée-Lebrun confided her memories to her friend alone, rather than intending to share them with the world, as Vaughan asked of Franklin. Unlike *Souvenirs*, *Autobiography* was also an example of ‘self-help literature,’ a text providing an example of an exemplary life that was meant to be read by other people.¹⁸ Moreover, where Vigée-Lebrun merely recalled this plea from Kurakina, Franklin provided his reader with Vaughan’s letter itself. As such, Vigée-Lebrun remained in the unreliable realm of memory, while Franklin provided hard proof. Vigée-Lebrun continued to her friend: “my heart has a memory (...) the sweetest moments of my existence will be known to you as well as they are to me.”¹⁹ This way, Vigée-Lebrun emphasized the deeply personal connotation of the memories she was about to share with Kurakina, thereby also highlighting the alleged confidentiality of her writing. Overall, *Souvenirs* invited the reader into a sense of shared intimacy, a stark contrast with Franklin’s calculated and public narrative.

How can the more self-centered, intimate nature of *Souvenirs* be explained? For the most part, it seems to be a consequence of Vigée-Lebrun’s conception of what the self is or ought to be. Specifically, she appealed to the Rousseau-ian idea of the self as a personal, inner phenomenon, unique to each individual to uncover for themselves.²⁰ Rousseau described his own self as follows: “I know my heart, and have studied mankind; I am not made like any one I have been acquainted with, perhaps like no one in existence.”²¹ The epigraph on Vigée-Lebrun’s titlepage underlines this influence: “In writing my *Souvenirs*, I will recall times gone by, and they will, so to speak, double my existence.”²² She attributed the quote to Rousseau but seems to have modified it slightly. It stems from an unfinished work by Rousseau called *Reveries of the Solitary Walker* (1782):

If in my more advanced age, and on the verge of dissolution, I remain (according to my present wish) in the same disposition, I shall recollect, on reading these *Reveries*, the pleasure I experienced on writing them; and thus, recalling past time, shall redouble my existence.²³

Rousseau could relive his life later on by rereading his “reveries” and his existence was thus doubled in the process. Yet, Vigée-Lebrun seems to have implied something different with her rephrasing of Rousseau. Rousseau’s *Reveries* were a contemplation of his existence and consciousness, not a recollection of the events of his life. Vigée-Lebrun, however, rather than pondering the implications of her being, mostly gave her reader a polished remembrance of her life. Redoubling in *Souvenirs*, then, alluded more to Vigée-Lebrun capturing the events of her life in print and leaving a legacy. This idea of “redoubling” one’s life in writing can also

be found in Franklin's *Autobiography*: "The Thing most like living one's Life over again, seems to be a *Recollection* of that Life."²⁴ Nevertheless, the typification that Rousseau used to describe Montaigne in *Reveries* also applies to both Vigée-Lebrun and Franklin: "[Montaigne] wrote his Essays only for others, I my Reveries entirely for myself."²⁵

Rousseau's somewhat judgmental comment about Montaigne sparks the question: what is the purpose of recalling one's own life? How should someone write down and remember their life and for whom? As historian Joyce Chaplin points out in her 2012 introduction to Franklin's *Autobiography*, "ideas of a unique and authentic inner self" did not yet exist when Franklin wrote the work.²⁶ Vigée-Lebrun on the other hand wrote at a time when newer conceptions of the self, influenced by Rousseau, had become more conventional. Nevertheless, she was not necessarily concerned with exploring those ideas or incorporating them into her *Souvenirs*. The creation of narratives, however, whether on a small or a large scale, is always a form of identity making.²⁷ Autobiographies, as an interplay between memory, self-narration, and self-understanding, are a form of narration that an individual has control over. This control makes it possible for an author to 'redouble' their life as they re-narrate their lived experiences.

Although reclaiming one's own story through autobiography is powerful, the self-narrated narrative will never be the only narrative to exist. Despite his carefully constructed story in *Autobiography* as the 'Self-made Man,' Franklin himself came to embody multiple narratives. These range from "Heroic Artisan, Journalist, Scientist" to "Diplomat, and Founding Father."²⁸ In all these different narratives, the image of Franklin is used to fulfill a different purpose. Vigée-Lebrun's description in *Souvenirs* is no exception. She recalled the popular image of the underdressed Franklin at the French court, describing his Quaker ensemble as resembling that of a "large farmer." If it were not for "his noble face," she would not even have recognized him as a diplomat.²⁹ It is here that the two constructed personas of Franklin and Vigée-Lebrun meet.

Because it is unclear whether Franklin and Vigée-Lebrun actually met in real life, there are two possible interpretations of the paragraph on Franklin in *Souvenirs*. On the one hand, Vigée-Lebrun herself came from a modest civilian family and had to constantly prove her worthiness at court.³⁰ Her use of the word 'noble' can in turn be read as her brushing off a possible initial misinterpretation of Franklin as part of the lower classes. Mistaken as she was in thinking she saw a big farmer enter along with the other ambassadors, she redeemed herself by then recognizing his true social status. In doing so, she reaffirmed her own place among the elite. If on the other hand Vigée-Lebrun's encounter with Franklin was entirely fictional, her description of Franklin becomes more layered. If that were the case, she merely played with the image of Franklin as an American 'curiosity,' rather than recalling the memory of a living, breathing man. She only recalled the myth of the unkempt, remarkable 'celebrity' at the court of Versailles, whose simple appearance contrasted so starkly with the other diplomats, "all powdered, in full ornate, and adorned by gold and cords."³¹ In this interpretation, Franklin functioned as a ploy in Vigée-Lebrun's narrative scheme; a fantastical figure from the past underlining her lost glamorous and wondrous life at the French court.

Significantly, Vigée-Lebrun concluded the passage with Franklin's visits to Madame Brion in Passy, where her characterization of the unfathomable, strange, and mysterious Franklin was pushed even further. "I never heard him say one word," she wrote.³² Although he enjoyed the music Brion's daughters provided, Vigée-Lebrun's Franklin would not engage in conversation and she "was tempted to believe that the doctor was vowed to silence."³³ Despite his numerous achievements in real life and his reputation as an imposing personality with a dissolute lifestyle, in this recollection, Franklin is nonetheless reduced to a silent icon. The silence of his character is then another indication that Franklin's mere image was more important to Vigée-Lebrun's text than the actual words he spoke.

To see and to be seen matters, even in written form. With its purposes ranging from strategic self-representation to thorough introspection, autobiographical writing is both an exercise in self-understanding and in self-fashioning. In Vigée-Lebrun's fatalistic portrayal of her life as a successful artist, her meeting with Franklin the myth and celebrity was inevitable. The fragment from *Souvenirs* in which she describes this meeting presents a version of Vigée-Lebrun she consciously constructed herself, who encounters a version of Franklin she carefully selected. This way, Vigée-Lebrun ensured that the desired narrative would unfold.

Souvenirs thus displayed a cross-section of different narrated selves. Franklin functioned as a narrative device in Vigée-Lebrun's writings, but this Franklin was in turn merely a reflection of Franklin's own constructed self. In a sense, there thus existed an inflated web of constructed selves interacting with each other within the text. These written alter egos, meant to redouble the author's own life, illustrate that the real selves of these individuals remain a sort of nebulous phantom that the audience can only approximate. There are moments where one reader would swear that they can see these selves between the lines, like a ghost behind a window, but another reader might conclude that it is just the curtain and their imagination.

Notes

¹ "Je fus frappée de son extrême simplicité; (...) si ce n'eût été son noble visage, je l'aurais pris pour un gros fermier," Élisabeth Louise Vigée-Lebrun, *Souvenirs*, (Barcelona: Mercure de France, 1835-7; 2020), 162-163.

² A big reason Vigée-Lebrun became a favorite of Marie-Antoinette was because she could render the Queen's features in such a way that the portrait still resembled her, without accentuating her flaws too heavily. See Cecile Berly, *Louise Elisabeth Vigée Le Brun: Peindre et écrire Marie Antoinette et son temps* (Paris: Editions Artlys, 2015).

³ Thomas Fleming, "Franklin Charms Paris: The 70-year-old Statesman Lived the High Life in Paris and Pulled Off a Diplomatic Miracle," *American Heritage*, 60.1 (2010): 2.

⁴ *Souvenirs* would later be complemented with older letters written between 1808-9 to another friend, the Polish countess Anna Potocka. *Writings by Pre-Revolutionary French Women, Volume 2*, eds. Anne R. Larson and Colette H. Winn (New York: Garland Publishing, Inc., 2000), 573.

⁵ "Tu seras peintre, mon enfant, ou jamais il n'en sera." Vigée-Lebrun, *Souvenirs*, 16.

⁶ Mary D. Sheriff, "The Law, the Academy, and the Exceptional Woman," in *The Exceptional Woman: Elisabeth Vigée-Lebrun and the Cultural Politics of Art* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1996), 79; Gita May, *Elisabeth Vigée LeBrun: The Odyssey of An Artist in An Age of Revolution* (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 2005), 7, 26, 43-44.

⁷ Monsieur de Talleyrand (1754-1838) was an influential French clergyman and diplomat. Le Prince de Nassau probably refers to the French prince of Nassau-Siegen (1745-1808) who was part of the Polish Order of the White

Eagle. Vigée-Lebrun painted his portrait in 1776, which is now part of the collection of the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York.

⁸ “Nul homme à Paris n'était plus à la mode, plus recherché que le docteur Franklin, (...) et l'on regardait comme une bonne fortune d'être invité à un dîner où se trouvait ce célèbre personnage.” Vigée-Lebrun, *Souvenirs*, 163.

⁹ “Je puis dire toutefois qu'il ne suffisait pas de se rencontrer avec lui, fût-ce même très fréquemment, pour satisfaire la curiosité qu'il excitait.” Ibid.

¹⁰ “Habit gris tout uni, ses cheveux plats, sans poudre, tombaient sur ses épaules,” Vigée-Lebrun, *Souvenirs*, 162-163.

¹¹ Benjamin Franklin, “To Emma Thompson,” Saturday February 8, 1777, *The Franklin Papers*, <https://franklinpapers.org/framedNames.jsp>.

¹² Franklin had visited France twice as a private citizen in the 1760s before returning in 1776 as the official ambassador to the United States.

¹³ Fleming, “Franklin Charms Paris,” 2; Christian Lerat, “Les Premières Années de la Diplomatie États-Unienne: l'Influence Décisive de Benjamin Franklin à Paris (1776-1778),” *Transatlantica*, 2 (2009): 3; Katharine Baetjer, Marjorie Shelley, Charlotte Hale, and Cynthia Moyer, “Benjamin Franklin, Ambassador to France: Portraits by Joseph Siffred Duplessis,” *Metropolitan Museum Journal*, 52 (2017): 57-59; Stacy Schiff, *A Great Improvisation: Franklin, France and the Birth of America* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 2005), 55-56, 79-80.

¹⁴ Michael Warner, “Franklin and the Letters of the Republic,” *Representations*, 16 (Autumn 1986): 110-15, 20-22.

¹⁵ Thomas Fleming, “Franklin charms Paris: the 70-year-old statesman lived the high life in Paris and pulled off a diplomatic miracle” in *American Heritage*, 60:1 (2010): 1-2.

¹⁶ “Ma bien bonne amie, vous me demandez avec tant d'instances de vous écrire mes souvenirs, que je me décide à vous satisfaire,” Vigée-Lebrun, *Souvenirs*, 15.

¹⁷ Benjamin Franklin, *Benjamin Franklin's Autobiography*, ed. Joyce E. Chaplin. (New York: Norton Critical Edition, 2012; 1791), 70.

¹⁸ Ibid., xiii-xiv.

¹⁹ “Mon coeur a de la mémoire (...) les plus doux momens de mon existence vous seront connus aussi bien qu'ils me le sont à moi-même,” Vigée-Lebrun, *Souvenirs*, 15.

²⁰ Ann McArdle, “Rousseau on Rousseau” *The Individual and Society*, in *The Review of Politics*, 39:2 (April 1977): 252.

²¹ Jean-Jacques Rousseau, “First Book” in *Confessions*, 1781-98, n.p., <https://www.gutenberg.org/files/3913/3913-h/3913-h.htm>.

²² “En écrivant mes Souvenirs, je me rappellerai le temps passé, qui doublera pour ainsi dire mon existence,” Vigée-Lebrun, *Souvenirs*, 5.

²³ Jean-Jacques Rousseau, “First Walk,” in *Reveries of the Solitary Walker*, 1782, n.p.

<http://gutenberg.net.au/ebooks19/1900981h.html>; Jean-Francois Perrin, “Penser en Écrivain: À Propos des *Confessions* de J.-J. Rousseau,” *Archives de Philosophie*, 3:78, (2015): 467.

²⁴ Franklin, *Benjamin Franklin's Autobiography*, 9.

²⁵ Rousseau, “First Walk.”

²⁶ Chaplin, *Benjamin Franklin's Autobiography*, xiii.

²⁷ Mert Deniz, “Remembering, History, and Identity: The Sculpted Life of Benjamin Franklin” in *European journal of American studies*, 14:2 (2019): 8.

²⁸ Ibid., 23.

²⁹ “Son noble visage” “un gros fermier” Vigée-Lebrun, *Souvenirs*, 163.

³⁰ May, *Odyssey*, 7-10.

³¹ “Célèbre personnage,” “tous étaient poudrés, en grande tenue, et chamarrés d'or et de cordons,” Vigée-Lebrun, *Souvenirs*, 163.

³² “Je ne lui ai jamais entendu dire un seul mot,” Ibid.

³³ “j'étais tentée de croire que le docteur était voué au silence,” Ibid.

The Societal Eggshell: Breeding in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries

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This paper was written for the course America Inside Out in the MA program in American Studies

In November 1849, American physician Dr. J. C. Bennett conducted the first American poultry show of the New England Ornithological Association at the Public Gardens in Boston. Over 10,000 people attended and gazed at the almost 1,500 birds on show that Thursday. Prior to the event, Bennett had announced the presence of “Golden Pheasants, Plymouth Rocks, Shangaes, Yankee Games, Cochin Chinas, Fawn-Colored Dorkings, Great Malays, Pearl White Dorkings, Great Javas, English Ravens, Wild Indian, [and] Bavarians” through the *Boston Cultivator*.¹ Eloquent orator and future Secretary of State Daniel Webster presented two Javas in the hope of having the purest breed of poultry that day. There was, regrettably, no consensus between the judges on the purity of breeds – mainly because of a lack of guidelines. No winner could be called. The second-ever poultry show, organized a year later by the first association of poultry breeders, categorized the participating animals into purebreds, one-half crosses, and old native local varieties. The show was so popular it resulted in an overcrowded tent, with birds stacked on top of each other, some as high as five coops tall. It became impossible to judge the animals and once again, no winner could be called.²

The first and second American poultry shows reveal a growing interest in the manufacturability of life, or in other words, breeding. This essay aims to complicate the verb breeding by looking at it in two different contexts: an eighteenth and a nineteenth-century context. First, I will look at Benjamin Franklin’s autobiography in which breeding represents familial tradition. I argue that the verb breeding conveys a paradox within Franklin’s work because, on the one hand, Franklin propagates the idea of breaking from the familial tradition, while, on the other hand, his ability to break free is part of his familial tradition. Second, I will turn to breeding in a Civil War context where the word becomes affiliated with eugenics, as demonstrated in the *Miscegenation* pamphlet of 1864. This document outlines the purposefulness of the ‘interbreeding’ of human races for the unionizing of the Northern and Southern states. I will show, though, that this pamphlet was actually written by two pro-slavery authors who tried to shape public opinion to influence the outcome of the presidential election of that same year. Ultimately, this essay provides a critique on meritocracy. As Franklin tried to grapple with inherited abilities to break from his testators, we are subject to our own. Testators, in this case, are not merely persons; they represent all of our surroundings, or in other words, our society. If it is indeed true that we are judged based on our merit, then it could be argued that we owe our merit to society. Metaphorically, I call this society an eggshell because it surrounds us and we are, within it, being bred to infinite different individuals. While the eggshell metaphor might not be an exact analogy, it helps explain the

eighteenth-century meaning of breeding as derived from Franklin's work and it subsequently puts nineteenth-century eugenics in a societal context.

A standard connotation for the verb breeding in the eighteenth century was 'brooding.' Brooding - according to the *Oxford English Dictionary* "to produce as it were by incubation" - is the act of a bird sitting on its egg for it to hatch.³ Eighteenth-century breeding transcends the literal meaning of brooding as it refers to a father imposing his profession onto his son. As the child hatches from its mother, he enters the patriarchal eggshell to be bred to follow in his father's footsteps. Benjamin Franklin was an avid user of 'breeding' in this familial sense. The first part of his autobiography contains many examples of this: "John was bred a Dyer, I believe of Woollens. Benjamin was bred a Silk Dyer, serving an Apprenticeship at London."⁴ Franklin, as the personification of 'the Self-Made Man,' wanted to break from the familial tradition. The antidote for 'being bred' was 'ingenuity:'

Thomas was bred a Smith under his Father, but being ingenious (...) he qualified himself for the Business of Scrivener, became a considerable Man in the County Affairs, was a chief Mover of all public Spirited Undertakings for the County or Town of Northampton and his own Village (...), and he was much taken notice of and patroniz'd by the then Lord Halifax.⁵

Literary historian Mithcell Breitwieser argues that Franklin's use of 'ingenuity' is a combination of 'ingenuousness' (sincerity or a naïve nature) and 'ingeniousness' (cleverness or intelligence).⁶

Franklin established the tension between the eggshell of traditionalism and ingenuity by describing his relationship with his father with the financial term 'tithe' (a tax to support the church and clergy) when he was put in grammar school at eight years old.⁷ Breitwieser suggests that tithe contrasts with the verb 'to breed' because money implies an innate value.⁸ Alternatively, it is possible that tithe and to breed complement each other. Breeding is not about creating something new, as the purely biological meaning might suggest; rather, it is about brooding the innate value so that it can hatch.

These familial tensions receive quite some attention in the first part of Franklin's autobiography. The circumstances that bred him and the traditions he wanted to break from pose a particularly difficult contrast to the reader. While Franklin wanted to break from his patriarchal lineage with ingenuity, ingenuity was also bred. He wrote about his father and uncles as being bred into something, but also having the ingenuity to break from it: "Benjamin was bred a Silk Dyer, serving an Apprenticeship at London. He was an ingenious Man. I remember him well, for when I was a Boy he came over to my Father in Boston, and lived in the House with us some Years."⁹ Following Breitwieser's argument about breeding and ingenuity we can see how Franklin dealt with the existential crisis of the paradox of bred ingenuity: the ability to break from his familial lineage was simultaneously inherited from that same lineage. Franklin expected suspicion toward that paradox with his readers and

legitimized the use of his ‘bred ingenuity’ by implying that the disobedience of patriarchal traditionalism is in fact an homage to it.¹⁰

We could take Franklin’s ‘ingenuity versus breeding’ struggle as a case study for American (or maybe even global) society. Benjamin Franklin, ‘the Self-Made Man’, is seen as the epitomization of the American Dream – to work your way up the social and financial ladder from scratch – and he is considered to be one of the most illustrious of American men. The autobiography partly functions as a guide to become (with ingenuity) your best ‘self-made self.’ He breeds his son and his audience by imposing his successes onto them:

Having emerg’d from the Poverty and Obscurity in which I was born and bred, to a State of Affluence and some Degree of Reputation in the World, and having gone so far thro’ Life with a considerable Share of Felicity, the conducting Means I made use of, with the Blessing of God, so well succeeded, my Posterity may like to know, as they may find some of the suitable to their own Situations, and therefore fit to be imitated.¹¹

But, as becomes clear from the role of breeding in Franklin’s text, his ingenuity, which allowed him to climb the ladders of life, was also bred. What made Franklin transcend his ‘Poverty and Obscurity’ were not merely his own means, but the means he made use of. Luck was on his side when a balance of inherited ingenuity and the socio-natural environment was mixed up for him. It is only natural that Franklin believed, when he wrote the different parts of his autobiography, that he was in charge of his own life. At the same time, he argues against meritocracy – as portrayed by the tensions between passively ‘being bred’ and active ingenuity. The skeptical outlook on the balance of luck and personal influence results in the belief that nothing is acquired and everything is given by the societal eggshell. This skepticism does not necessarily oppose the usefulness Franklin saw for his autobiography because by reading it, you make it part of the eggshell around you – yet it opposes the idea of ‘the Self-Made Man’ because ‘self-made’ had essentially been rendered impossible: Benjamin Franklin, ‘the bred Self-Made Man.’

Franklin’s paradox played out in new, nineteenth-century contexts in the era of the first American poultry shows several decades later. The breeding of poultry – and specifically chickens – took off in the 1820s. Livestock shows emerged in the mid-nineteenth century with goats, sheep, swine, cattle, equines, and poultry on display. Breeders created and perfected (according to their standards) species, and the belief in their manufacturability opened up an array of possible outlooks on life. The interest in breeding was an elitist one and it was scarce in early American colonial days, when chickens were mostly bred for practical use and some persons held roosters for cockfights. Chickens survived on their own and they interbred in the barnyard. Natural selection meant a dominance of chickens with darker or patterned plumage as the lighter or white chickens were spotted more easily by invading predators. This hatched the idea that colored chickens were healthier than white ones. It took enlightened farmers – or men with enough time and money on their hands – to attribute non-practical values to chickens. George Washington and Thomas Jefferson were

such farmers; because they did not have to worry about land ownership, they had the luxury of applying scientific methods to the breeding of poultry.¹²

Symptomatic of the growing belief in the manufacturability of life, as revealed by the breeding of poultry, various pseudosciences popped up during the nineteenth century with an interest in races, or breeds. Scientific racism, as the common denominator, usurped anthropology, craniotomy, and pseudoscientific ideologies like social Darwinism to ‘scientifically’ justify racism. In the societal eggshell, a racist and anxious society was bred. The Civil War as the culmination of this particular society brought forth an interesting pamphlet concerning the subject of breeding. While the Southern states defended the continuation and extension of slavery, they fought against the idea of a growing central government. Fear was created for the intermingling of races. What would it mean if the ‘white’ race was to give up all of its privileges? That is where the pamphlet *Miscegenation. The Theory of the Blending of the Races, Applied to the American White Man and Negro* (1864) comes in.¹³ This anonymously written document (printed in New York) promoted the idea of the ‘interbreeding’ of the white and the Black races with the prospect of a stronger unionized America.

This process was usually referred to with ‘amalgamation,’ from the medieval Latin ‘amalgamare:’ to mix with mercury. The 1864 pamphlet most importantly coined the term ‘miscegenation,’ from ‘miscere’ (to mix) and ‘genus’ (gender or race). For specifically mixing ‘blacks’ with ‘whites,’ the term ‘melaleukation’ was coined, derived from the Greek words ‘melas’ (black), ‘leukos’ (white), and ‘mignumi’ (to mix).¹⁴ The pamphlet promoted the idea of miscegenation as the only just solution to the American race problem. The authors based their arguments on the ideals of American democracy and the contemporary popular racial (pseudo)scientific disciplines. They argued that it was scientifically proven that “the intermarriage of diverse races is indispensable to a progressive humanity,” but sadly the people have never let their votes speak for this.¹⁵ America, in the early twentieth century aptly called a ‘melting pot,’ had all the ingredients to make “the finest race” on earth.¹⁶

The European response to the pamphlet was cynical, to say the least. An anonymous contribution to the British-Irish *The Anthropological Review* thought it not worthwhile to take any notice to the pamphlet, were it not an indication for the “remarkable form of insanity which is just now affecting the people of Federal America.”¹⁷ Even more shrewdly described in the following words: “insight into the extraordinary mental aberration now going on in Yankeedom.”¹⁸ Before the author delves into the pamphlet, it is shortly noted that they suspected it to be a hoax.¹⁹ The suggestion of a con is interesting because there were no other publications with these remarks until eighty years later: in the late 1940s, the historian Sidney Kaplan uncovered that the pamphlet indeed turned out to be a hoax. *Miscegenation* was written by David Croly and George Wakeman – both editors of the *New York World*, a democratic pro-slavery newspaper – in an attempt to stir Southern resentment against abolitionism.²⁰

The pamphlet is, thus, a striking and early example of ‘fake news’ in an attempt to influence public opinion. The goal of the pamphlet was to insinuate that Lincoln’s emancipating of the ‘blacks’ equaled miscegenation. The future was neither white nor black,

as the name of its eighteenth chapter (“The Future – No White, No Black”) suggested.²¹ Therefore, the miscegenation question, Croly and Wakeman argued, should be one of the issues in the upcoming presidential race of 1864. It is noted that even for Southern slaveholders ‘interbreeding’ was the only right option. Even though the estimated value of enslaved labor was valued at “two thousand millions of dollars,” the value of their blood mingled with ‘American’ blood could never be valued in money.²² The pamphlet gives a whole new dimension to the Civil War in the context of abolitionism. The Southern ability to offer any kind of resistance to the military force of the Northerners is allocated to the presence of so many Black people because they “infused into the air a sort of barbaric malaria, a miasm of fierceness,” which, given enough time, had strengthened the white people.²³ Thus:

Let the Republican party go into the next contest with a platform worthy of itself; worthy of the events which have occurred during the last three years; worthy of America, worthy of the great future. Let the motto then of the great progressive party of this country be Freedom, Political and Social Equality; Universal Brotherhood. Let it send a message to all the nations of the earth, “Come hither with your means, come hither in the strength of your manhood, come hither with the wealth of your varied bloods. Let us establish here a nation founded on the principles of eternal justice, and upon the application of the doctrine of human brotherhood.”²⁴

The claim that Southerners owed the ‘black race’ caused immediate critiques. One of which was a speech delivered to the House of Representatives in 1864 by Ohio Congressman Samuel Cox. He argued that the Black population could not survive without slavery and miscegenation was not the answer to that problem. Plus, miscegenation with Black people would open doors for other ‘inferior’ races to enter the ‘pure’ American breed.²⁵

‘Breeding,’ as a word, has traveled far, taking on different meanings in distinct contexts. People were patriarchally bred to a purpose of life and Franklin tried to show how to break free from this through ingenuity – which turned out to be a paradoxical undertaking. During the nineteenth century, a growing interest in the manufacturability of life resulted in the breeding of poultry and the first livestock shows. The notion that the creation of life was now a fabricable process led to the *Miscegenation* pamphlet: the pamphlet played with this idea and turned it against Northern unionists in an attempt to influence the outcome of the presidential election of 1864. Breeding and its many definitions and connotations have been bred through all sorts of eggshells, be it societal, academic, or racial.

The societal eggshell is the main product of looking at breeding in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. It turns out to be a metaphor for society in which the familial structures bred Franklin to be ingenious and in which the racial structures bred Croly and Wakeman to write the *Miscegenation* pamphlet. The eggshell is what still shapes us today, and what simultaneously stands in the way of progress – a similar paradox as explained by Franklin’s autobiography and portrayed by the pamphlet. In our day and age, what stands in the way of

progress is more often than not the fear of letting go of existing structures or privileges based on a belief that life is a zero-sum game and that who works hard, wins. This essay has aimed to critique such belief through the metaphor of the eggshell: Franklin's autobiography teaches us (paradoxical to his own belief) that such fear is unjustified because it is more about enriching our personal eggshell than breaking down those of others.

Notes

¹ John Robinson, *The First Poultry Show in America. Held at the Public Gardens, Boston, Mass., Nov. 15-16, 1849* (Boston: The Farm-Poultry Publishing Company, 1913), 3.

² Patricia Lacey, "All Cooped Up." *The History of the American Bantam Association. A 131 Year Evolution* (Bloomington: Xlibris Corporation, 2010), 17-8.

³ "Brood, verb," in *Oxford English Dictionary. The Definitive Record of the English Language*, accessed November 19, 2020, <https://www-oed-com.proxy.uba.uva.nl/view/Entry/23740?rskey=tmduk2&result=1&isAdvanced=false#eid>.

⁴ Joyce Chaplin, *Benjamin Franklin's Autobiography. A Norton Critical Edition* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2012), 11.

⁵ Joyce Chaplin, *Franklin's Autobiography*, 11.

⁶ Mitchell Breitwieser, *Cotton Mather and Benjamin Franklin. The Price of Representative Personality* (Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 241.

⁷ Joyce Chaplin, *Franklin's Autobiography*, 14.

⁸ Mitchell Breitwieser, *Representative Personality*, 242.

⁹ Joyce Chaplin, *Franklin's Autobiography*, 11.

¹⁰ Mitchell Breitwieser, *Representative Personality*, 242.

¹¹ Joyce Chaplin, *Franklin's Autobiography*, 9.

¹² Janet Dohner, *The Encyclopedia of Historic and Endangered Livestock and Poultry Breeds* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001), 413.

¹³ David Croly and George Wakeman, *Miscegenation. The Theory of the Blending of the Races, Applied to the American White Man and Negro* (New York: H. Dexter, Hamilton & co., 1864).

¹⁴ David Croly and George Wakeman, *Miscegenation*, ii.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, i.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 14-8.

¹⁷ "Miscegenation," *The Anthropological Review* 2, no. 5 (May, 1864): 116.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰ Sidney Kaplan, "The Miscegenation Issue in the Election of 1864," *The Journal of Negro History* 34, no. 3 (July, 1949): 284.

²¹ David Croly and George Wakeman, *Miscegenation*, 55.

²² *Ibid.*, 61.

²³ *Ibid.*, 41-2.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 62-3.

²⁵ Samuel Cox, "Miscegenation or Amalgamation. Fate of the Freedman," in *Speech of Hon. Samuel S. Cox, of Ohio, Delivered to the House of Representatives, February 17, 1864* (Washington, D.C.: The Constitutional Union, 1864), 7.

Hypocrites All!:

Britain's "Fainting Ladies" and the Logical Sentimentalism of Anti-Tom Novels, 1852-1857

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This paper was written for the course America Inside Out in the MA program in American Studies

Uncle Tom's Cabin (1852) was an instant global success.¹ Harriet Beecher Stowe's sentimental anti-slavery novel was widely read, translated into twenty-six languages, and hurriedly sold in pirated pamphlets, and even more broadly consumed.² Reproductions of "Uncle Tomitudes" through pantomimes, jigsaws, dolls, songs, panoramas, lithographs, and pastry shops ensured that Stowe's character "became (...) the most frequently sold slave in American history."³ Historian Heike Paul has studied the 'cultural mobility' of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* in this context, concluding that the novel was subject to a series of "projective appropriations" in Germany which emphasized the "longings and needs" of white Germans while downplaying Stowe's central message regarding the exploitation of enslaved Black Americans.⁴ As Uncle Tom became iconized in England, he also became "detached from his original, political meaning," instead incorporated into a longer tradition of British abolitionism's moral superiority in comparison to American depravity.⁵ Paul's analysis of *Uncle Tom's Cabin's* cultural mobility is, however, inherently limited, confined by the assumption that the transatlantic reception of Stowe's novel was unidirectional. Instead, English "Tom-mania" swept back across the Atlantic to form an integral part of flourishing proslavery "Anti-Tom" literature in America.⁶

Anti-Tom novels have predominantly been studied as methodologically simplistic attempts at didactic empiricism, concerned with countering Stowe's perceived sentimental fantasy by presenting the 'real facts' of American slavery.⁷ These 'facts' were often gendered, juxtaposed with the supposedly blind sympathies of overly sensitive British women. Rather than writing blandly analytical sociological fiction, Anti-Tom authors instrumentalized the emotion they ostensibly decried, seeking to capitalize on Stowe's commercial and political success by perfecting her work rather than rejecting it. Reconfiguring ideas on the merit and historical importance of instrumental fiction within the context of transatlantic mid-nineteenth century abolitionism, this genre of "logical sentimentalism" should not be dismissed as the reactionary ravings of an aggrieved planter elite, and was instead an insidious attempt to shape "the very bedrock of reality" regarding the slavery question both inside America and outside it.⁸

Uncle Tom's Cabin sold 1.5 million copies in England by the end of 1852, its success there dwarfing anywhere in Europe and the United States.⁹ Technological advances in steam pressing, papermaking, and railroad distribution, reductions in stamp tax, and increases in literacy and leisure time amongst the working and middle classes had created a newly popular reading public, and Stowe's novel was culturally recognizable in the context of a longer

tradition of slave narratives and abolitionist tracts from figures such as Olaudah Equiano, Mary Prince, and William Wilberforce.¹⁰ Much as Stowe intended, her readership was not confined to elite circles, the contemporary British newspaper *The Nonconformist* writing that “the sons of toil as well as the children of opulence have wept over its pages.”¹¹ If, as historian Audrey Fisch has argued in “Uncle Tom and Harriet Beecher Stowe in England,” the quick commodification and dissemination of *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* in England meant that knowledge of its contents and message was “widespread and superficial,” which posed almost as much concern to sections of the British elite as it did to the Southern slaveholding establishment.¹² Although *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* reaffirmed notions of nationalist superiority compared to America in many British periodicals and literary journals, with the *Eclectic Review* using Stowe’s work to champion the British as “the virtuous and true-hearted of their race” compared to the “foul blot” on America’s humanity caused by slavery, Victorian intellectuals feared the potentially transgressive power of a narrative designed to excite the emotions of the masses, especially “easily swayed” women and the working class.¹³ The *Times* accused Stowe of suffering from the “female error” of “assailing” her readers’ “hearts,” fretting over the lessons that could be drawn from *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* “if the intellect be weak and the heart strong,” and concluding that “truth (...) demands more delicate dealing (...) by her logical and unforced developments.”¹⁴ Logic was gendered and with authors such as Charles Dickens and Emily Brontë condemning working-class poverty and the political unrest of the Chartist movement unresolved, the fact that the working class were weeping over a female-authored narrative of resisting exploitation threatened to undermine the narrower ‘truth’ that the British elite felt Stowe’s novel should represent: the enlightened strength and moral legitimacy of British constitutional monarchism.

Following Paul’s model of cultural mobility, it is unsurprising that *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* became a locus of “projective appropriations” regarding British national identity during the mid-nineteenth century. The “transatlantic re-transport of Stowe’s fictional and imaginary world,” however, was not a one-way street, and Paul’s analysis can be extended to account for the American reaction to British interpretations of the text.¹⁵ Americans paid special attention to the reaction of British elites, principally a group of elite women who authored the “Stafford House Address” in 1853. Addressed to “Their Sisters” in America, the Address affirmed the morality of abolitionism, declaring American slavery to have violated the sanctity of marriage, separated children from their parents, and prevented Christian education. The document tallied 562,448 signatures and was sent to Stowe in twenty-six volumes, its popularity sparking a furious American response that was not limited to the slaveholding South. The New York *Observer* reprinted the Address with every mention of “Negro slavery” changed to “white slavery,” former First Lady Julia Gardiner Tyler doubling down by reminding the Duchess of Sutherland to “leave it to the women of the South to alleviate the sufferings of their dependents while you take care of your own.”¹⁶ If Stowe’s politics of sentimentalism were viewed as stoking an illogically emotional response through *Uncle Tom’s Cabin’s* scenes of motherly sacrifice, infant death, and Christian martyrdom, then for these American commentators, it was the holier-than-thou English concern for American issues thousands of miles away that proved the most illogical of all, especially whilst the very same elites

hypocritically turned a blind eye to the suffering of England's white working class. No doubt much of the resentment levied against the Stafford House women stemmed from the same misogynistic backlash Stowe received as a woman attempting to unashamedly influence the political sphere. Its ideological core, however, can be placed in a longer tradition of literary proslavery 'whataboutism' that sought to delegitimize abolitionist critiques of the institution by emphasizing rational rather than emotional analysis, including pointing out the moral inadequacies of abolitionists themselves.¹⁷

Such rhetoric was honed amidst a longer dialogue with Northern abolitionist works such as *American Slavery As It Is* (1839) and the *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass* (1845), with Southern proslavery writers urging Northerners to "cure [their] own sins first" and juxtaposing the divinely ordained "warmhearted benevolence" of Southern plantations with "the image of the wracked, consumptive bodies of feeble boys and girls of six and eight toiling in the suffocating sweatshops of the new industrial jungles" above the Mason-Dixon line.¹⁸ When Northerners were directed to reflect on "the vile dens of your own enlightened cities," they and similar authors relied on the discursive groundwork laid by previous works such as Leander Ker's *Slavery Consistent with Christianity* (1840) and James Henley Thornwell's *Rights and Duties of Masters* (1850).¹⁹ As this was as much a critique of urban capitalism as smug Northern superiority, London was no safer than New York or Chicago, and middle and upper-class English sympathy for southern Blacks was seen as an extension of their lack of provision for the 'dependent' laboring poor whilst performing concern for enslaved West Indians.²⁰

The logic that underpinned Anti-Tom novels during the 1850s in America therefore came with literary antecedents. Nonetheless, it would be disingenuous to suggest that there was nothing new about Anti-Tom works. Previous defenses of slavery did not have to contend with a work of such undeniable popularity and power as *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, setting off a scramble to delegitimize both the message of the book as well as Stowe's credibility as an author. As literary critic and historian David S. Reynolds suggests, "Stowe was a frustrating writer for proslavery novelists to rebut, since she agreed with them on many points except the central moral issue of slavery."²¹ Since Stowe did not believe in full political or social equality for Black Americans and advocated for their recolonization, demonstrated by Eliza's and Cassy's eventual journey to Liberia at the end of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, Anti-Tom authors were forced to adapt existing literary strategies in order to contend with Stowe's success. In order to do so, these proslavery authors formulated a new genre of "logical sentimentalism," leaning on old techniques of "realist" and fact-based fiction whilst employing the emotionally driven narrative devices that had helped make Stowe's novel so influential amidst the "first great flourishing" of "domestic sentimentalism" in American popular fiction.²² Such efforts exhibited a range of shared methodological techniques despite differences in traditional genre, plot, and narrative; for example, between the sociological analysis of George Fitzhugh's *Cannibals All!* (1857), the melodramatic indictment of English chimney sweeping in *Tit for Tat* (1855) written by the anonymous 'Lady From New Orleans,' or the benevolent depiction of a supposed plantation idyll in Mary Henderson Eastman's *Aunt Phillis's Cabin* (1852). Following Stowe's example, these novels discard the pretense of authorial distance, instead

embracing a didactic style aimed at the reader's heart and brain, with invitations for rational self-reflection often surrounded by a sentimental or violent appeal to the emotions. Fitzhugh, for instance, directs the reader to "throw down our book" if "you would cherish self-conceit, self-esteem, or self-appreciation," an appeal to logic followed by a gruesome equation of the "moral Cannibalism" of the stubborn reader to the "Feejee Chieftain, who breakfasts, dines, and sups on human flesh."²³ This implication of savagery in failing to comprehend the factual morality of the proslavery argument, or at least the hypocritical immorality of abolitionists, is echoed in *Tit for Tat*, where 'Lady' follows a discussion of a British chimney-sweep regulation bill by proclaiming, "Ah, reader! did you ever behold a child burnt to death?"²⁴

What distanced these novels from Stowe's, however, was their hyper-awareness of the need to justify such didactic sentimentalism through the provision of hard facts. Stowe seemed only to realize this necessity after criticism of her novel began to emerge, the publication of her source material in *A Key To Uncle Tom's Cabin* (1853), an attempt to prove the veracity of her narrative and refute charges of fantastical exaggeration. Anti-Tom novels, however, covered their tracks beforehand, seeking to cement their positions as unassailable truths by linking melodramatic sentimentalism with archival and journalistic research. In *Tit for Tat*, the abducted young Earl of Hopemore bears witness to a number of atrocities at the hands of his 'Master' Tom Burman, brought to tears by the "scorched and shrivelled skin" of a fellow climbing boy Fred, the peeling skin of another, and a "child (...) broiled on the burning flue of a Manchester steam-engine."²⁵ In each of these cases, a footnote proves the veracity of the atrocities committed, each pointing to evidence from a House of Lords debate on the 19th of May 1854 on the "appalling details of the slavery and murder of little white English children."²⁶ The conscience of the reader is consistently invoked in such contexts, with 'Lady' asking, "can it be possible, the American reader will exclaim, that a scene as this could occur in England (...) the home of all those high-souled and titled ladies who wept such endless tears over Uncle Tom's Cabin?"²⁷ In his 1854 work *English Serfdom and American Slavery*, Lucien Chase employed the same technique. The American Mr. Jones reads a report on "the condition of hand-loom weavers, made to the parliament of Great Britain in 1840" to the English Lord Melville in order to "prove that the slave is never reduced to such a horrible state," an earlier footnote on the same report assuring the reader that this report "was actually made to the British Parliament."²⁸ Far from being prisoners of elitist intellectualism in their conception of "truth," Anti-Tom authors internalized Stowe's belief in the concrete ability of emotions to exert real-world effects, interweaving tears, violence, melodrama, and meticulous footnoting in rational pleas to the conscience of their audiences.

It is a testament to the importance of British public and political opinion that Anti-Tom authors were so concerned with the perception of American slavery across the Atlantic. That so much energy was devoted to rebutting the haughty English response to *Uncle Tom's Cabin* was perhaps the result of uncontrolled emotion itself, the anger palpable in *Tit for Tat's* condemnation of British "intermeddlers (...) who wept a Mississippi of their tears" over "the tinsel pages of an American romance" or Fitzhugh's attack on the "vampire capitalist class" of English elites.²⁹ It is clear, however, that these authors did not operate on rage alone, instead crafting historically layered critiques of a deeply unequal British society. As part of a

broader effort to demonstrate that “the unrestricted exploitation of so-called free society (...) is more oppressive to the laborer than domestic slavery,” *Cannibals All!* denounces a “capitalist and moneyed interest government” devoid of the paternal instincts inspired by slavery and argues that the English Poor Laws proved more exploitative than American slavery by confining laborers to one parish, controlling employer-employee relations, restricting wages to poverty levels, and severely punishing “vagabonds” through whipping and branding.³⁰ *Aunt Phillis’s Cabin* draws attention to the complicity of imperial Britain’s role in the global slave trade, stating that “as long as England needed the sons and daughters of Africa to do her bidding, she trafficked in the flesh and blood of her fellow-creatures.”³¹ Chase echoes this charge, the American Mr. Jones reminding an Englishman in the Dexter Hall Society that if “slavery is an evil, it is one that English avarice established, and one that English jealousy, and not English philanthropy, now seeks to destroy,” a retort received with “loudly applauded” by the audience.³² Crucially, however, Anti-Tom authors managed to insert emotion into socio-historical commentary. In *English Serfdom*, for instance, Mr. Jones follows a discussion of the English press-gang system by recounting a tale heard “within this hour” of a “mother (...) left to wage an unequal contest with hunger, if not with dishonor” after her husband’s conscription, her son begging “so piteously” for “a few shillings of that vast sum you are about to expend in the cause of abolitionism to keep his mother from starvation.”³³ Even *Cannibals All!*, the most rigidly analytical of the texts, relies on emotionally driven anecdotes to relay its message, for instance quoting W.H. Hewitt’s protest against “little tender children ... often awaked only by the horrid machinery rending off their limbs” in order to portray “free society” as “slavery to capital” and Christian slavery as its benevolent alternative.³⁴

It would be easy to pit Anti-Tom novels and Stowe’s *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* against each other, imagining them as dichotomous examples of Northern and Southern attempts to solve the ‘slavery question’ within America’s literary sphere. As has been argued, however, the continuity between these works reveals not an outright rejection but rather an attempt at methodological reconciliation. This is not limited to an attempt to perfect Stowe’s “economy of sentiment” through death, sacrifice, and infant suffering by melding it with rational analysis.³⁵ Instead, whilst critiquing both Stowe and the North, Anti-Tom authors attempted to carve out space for reunification through conversion between South and North, abolitionist and slaveholder. A number of subtle clues suggest that anti-English sentiment, particularly along class and gendered lines, provides the crux for such attempts, serving as a common enemy around which previously irreconcilable American differences can be resolved. In *Tit for Tat*, Mr. Mills, whose son the Lord harshly punishes for stealing livestock at the start of the novel, declares that “there is not a more ignorant, or a more vulgar, or a more un-Christian class in the country than a great many of these rich and titled people.”³⁶ Lord Hardheart’s valet Mr. Delassour states that parliamentary patronage “must end in the informed masses despising the rich and ignorant,” and Hardheart, failing to recognize his own son as he tries his captor Master Tom, cruelly dismisses Hopemore’s pleas to “save me from those horrid sweeps.”³⁷ Even “Master Tom” is able to deny individual responsibility for participating in the brutal sweep-boy trade, painting the nobility as the root cause of his evil deeds by claiming

“poor folks like us must get our livelihood ... if the gentle-folks will not have their chimneys swept by this new-fangled machinery.”³⁸ The reader is similarly invited to take their place amongst the “informed masses” in *English Serfdom*, where Mrs. Kane tells her young son Lord Henry “the English nobility inherit their power by descent ... they regard the lower classes only as soulless, feelingless instruments to minister their happiness.”³⁹ The preface to *Aunt Phillis’s Cabin* provides the most blunt example of such an attempt, nostalgically harkening back to “the time when our fathers fled from persecution,” living with “the slavery that (...) had been entailed upon them by the English government” and establishing how “the whole nation sanctioned slavery by adopting the Constitution which provides for them.”⁴⁰ Its author, Mary H. Eastman, laments that “our nation was then like one family (...) they loved as brothers who had suffered together,” invoking a masculinized lost American identity forged through republican constitutionalism, the acceptance of slavery, and the bravery of the founding fathers against English enemies.⁴¹ If “the people of the South still have the views of their revolutionary forefathers” whilst “many of the North have rejected the opinions of theirs,” Eastman views this as tragic rather than eternal; a problem for her novel and others to solve.

If the American reader was invited to coalesce around a common hatred of the British elite, playing on historic animosity in an attempt to craft an inward-looking cultural foreign policy of American moral superiority, this sense of a lost *male* unity is doubly important. Elite British women bear much of the brunt of Anti-Tom animosity, *Tit for Tat* ridiculing the “gentle, sensitive, fainting ladies of Great Britain” and their “guilt of connivance” and “crime of indifference,” whilst *English Serfdom* is dedicated to the “Aristocratic Ladies of Great Britain” and comments on “England’s too susceptible Dames.”⁴² Such a reaction was often due to the transatlantic cultural transfer of *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* and its reception amongst those exemplified by the Stafford House women, with *Tit for Tat’s* dedication declaring its desire to reply to “the Memorial of the British ladies” and thus to show “the world ... the true colors, the real worth and character of all that British enthusiasm that “Uncle Tom” called forth across the Atlantic.”⁴³ As such, within the utopian logic of reconciliation that Anti-Tom authors present as a model for political change, it is only men who are able to change their minds for the better. In *English Serfdom*, Mr. Jones is able to convince the English Lord Melville of his country’s evils and the benevolence of American slavery, the convert declaring: “I have been interested by your facts and arguments (...). It is never too late to learn.”⁴⁴ Similarly, Mr. Chapman in *Aunt Phillis’s Cabin* recounts the “features on women’s faces that haunted me afterward in my dreams (...) children with shrivelled, attenuated limbs, and countenances that were old in misery and vice,” his companion the ‘Englishman’ stating “You are right, sir, I fear.”⁴⁵ In *Tit for Tat*, there are no instances of outright conversion. The easily convinced Englishman, however, remains a theme, the aptly named Lord Chief Justice Diamond remarking, “It was very vainly, indeed, that we sent our fleets to bombard the hold of the Algerines to set free Christian slaves, if we are to nurse them in the bosom of our own country.”⁴⁶ Such nakedly didactic narrative invoked a common brotherhood across the divides of ocean and ideology, abolitionism was feminized, and logical rationality assumed a

masculine air. On these terms, both the Englishman and the Northerner were invited back into the ‘family.’

As Anti-Tom authors criticized the irrationally sentimental sympathies of English women and portrayed logical ‘truth’ as inherently masculine, Stowe was subject to the same treatment. Eastman rebukes Stowe’s credibility entirely, stating in her afterword “this whole history is an absurdity,” mentioning Stowe’s inclusion of “scenes that a woman’s pen should never describe,” and dismissing *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* as a “living dramatic reality” and a “book of romance.”⁴⁷ Similarly, *Tit for Tat* refers to Stowe’s novel as an “American romance,” and *English Serfdom’s* attack on the “free indulgence in the romance of imagination” can be viewed as a condemnation of *Uncle Tom’s Cabin’s* economy of emotions.⁴⁸ Just as Stowe’s sentimental narrative was critiqued on gendered grounds as feminized fantasy by British reviewers and Anti-Tom authors alike, its very existence was questioned on the same terms, with Stowe’s depiction of violence and suffering in an attempt to influence the political sphere seen as transgressing her womanly role in mid-nineteenth century society. If Anti-Tom novelists feminized *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*, its author, Stowe herself, did not altogether disagree. In an 1844 introduction to the *Works* of English author Charlotte Elizabeth, an evangelical Protestant who drew attention to the poor working conditions of women in London, Stowe wrote that Elizabeth “is a woman of strong mind [and] powerful feeling,” belonging “to a class whose logic is rather of the heart than of the head, and of whom therefore we may expect a strong leaning towards ultraism.”⁴⁹ Despite sounding a note of caution on Elizabeth’s feminine propensity to lapse into moral Manichaeism, unlike Stowe’s critics, she does not view such logic as inferior or illegitimate. Instead, the use of emotion is a rational tool for individual and societal transformation, Stowe writing that “our logic has a way and character of its own [that] answers our purposes exceedingly well (...) though it may not be precisely in the fashion of the superior sex.”⁵⁰ For Anti-Tom authors, ‘logic’ was a masculine endeavor, albeit perfected through its combination with feminized emotional sentimentalism. Stowe refused this literary ideology, seeing no need to deny the rationality of a “true womanly sort of logic” at all.⁵¹

The dismissive feminization of Stowe’s sentimentalism did not stop with the Anti-Tom novels of the 1850s. As literary critic Jane Tompkins writes, twentieth-century critics “have taught generations of students to equate (...) emotionality with ineffectiveness, religiosity with fakery, domesticity with triviality, and all of these, implicitly, with womanly inferiority.”⁵² Such critics refused to place Stowe in the pantheon of Melville, Whitman, and Thoreau, male writers whose views on abolitionism were characterized by a fear of anti-slavery’s morally absolutist ‘extremism’ and prized for their “stylistic intricacy, psychological subtlety, [and] epistemological complexity.”⁵³ *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* was once again consigned to the genre of domestic fantasy, of historical importance but no literary worth. Anti-Tom novels have fared little better, seen as works of “disappointing literary merit” characterized by “flat characterization, clunky ideological apostrophizing, tediously doctrinaire conversations, and weak or stock plots.”⁵⁴ Jones and Richardson attempt to revise such perspectives, stating that “the very failures of the genre are what deserve our attention,” the “contradictions and the ambivalence of the proslavery position” emerging from the roughly thirty works published

between the release of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* and the Civil War.⁵⁵ This argument, as with Paul's framework of cultural mobility, can be expanded, made to encompass multidirectional webs of transatlantic correspondence and attempts at perfecting the emerging mid-nineteenth century genre of 'civic protest' and literary instrumentalism.⁵⁶ The 'logical sentimentalism' of Anti-Tom authors found its place within a longer history of proslavery literature, putting a new value on emotionally driven argument whilst maintaining its supposedly strict adherence to 'facts' and 'reality.' Their attempts to work through this central conflict should be taken seriously, revealing complex notions of gendered authorship, utopian subtexts of male reconciliation, and contests over how best to convey historical, religious, and moral 'truth.' To dismiss such efforts out of hand would denote a failure to grapple with how ideologies justifying white supremacy and exploitation are affirmed and upheld. Armed with the "powerful aid of facts" and the "trenchant blade of truth," Anti-Tom authors struck at the heart of Northern and English hypocrisy, embracing an ideology of 'whataboutism' that formed part of the broader mid-nineteenth century defense of American slavery.⁵⁷ The tears in their back pocket, however, were often their secret weapon.

Notes

¹ Harriet Beecher Stowe, *Uncle Tom's Cabin; or, Life Among the Lowly* (London: Penguin Vintage Classics, 2015, Originally Published 1852).

² Heike Paul, "Cultural Mobility Between Boston and Berlin: How Germans Have Read and Reread Narratives of American Slavery," in *Cultural Mobility, A Manifesto*, ed. Stephen Greenblatt, Ines G. Županov, Reinhard Meyer-Kalkus, Heike Paul, Pál Nyíri, Friederike Pamewick (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 126.

³ Stephen A. Hirsch, "Uncle Tomitudes: the Popular Reaction to Uncle Tom's Cabin," *Studies in the American Renaissance* (1978): 31.

⁴ Paul, 16.

⁵ Audrey Fisch, "Uncle Tom and Harriet Beecher Stowe in England," in *The Cambridge Companion to Harriet Beecher Stowe*, ed. Cindy Weinstein (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 101.

⁶ Gavin Jones and Judith Richardson, "Pro Slavery Fiction," in *Cambridge Companion to Slavery in American Literature*, ed. Ezra Tawil (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 101. Around thirty Anti-Tom works were published between 1852 and the Civil War, set in the South and North, as well as England, and often published by Northern publishing houses. They sought to portray slavery as a benign and paternal institution, often calling attention to the hypocrisy of its critics in the North and in England.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 103.

⁸ The works focused on in this essay are George Fitzhugh, *Cannibals All! Or, Slaves Without Masters* (Richmond, VA: A. Morris Publisher, 1857), <https://www.gutenberg.org/files/35481/35481-h/35481-h.htm>; A Lady from New Orleans [pseud.], *Tit for Tat; Or, Fixings of English Humanity* (London: Clarke and Beeton, 1855) ; Lucien B. Chase, *English Serfdom and American Slavery: Or, Ourselves - As Others See Us* (New York: H. Long and Brother 1854); Mary H. Eastman, *Aunt Phillis's Cabin; or, Southern Life As It Is* (Philadelphia: Lippincott, Grambo & Co, 1852).

⁹ Fisch, 96.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 97.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 101.

¹² *Ibid.*, 101.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 105, 107.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 104.

¹⁵ Paul, 133.

¹⁶ Wendy F. Hamand, "No Voice from England": Mrs. Stowe, Mr. Lincoln, and the British in the Civil War," *New England Quarterly* 61, no. 1 (1998): 104-5.

¹⁷ Merriam-Webster dictionary defines 'whataboutism' as "charging your accuser with whatever it is you've just been accused of rather than refuting the truth of the accusation made against you." Accessed December 21, 2020, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/words-at-play/whataboutism-origin-meaning>.

- ¹⁸ Alan Dowty, "Urban Slavery in Pro-Southern Fiction of the 1850s," *Southern Historical Association* 32, no.1(1966): 28.
- ¹⁹ Caroline Rush, *The North and South; or, Slavery and Its Contrasts. A Tale of Real Life* (Philadelphia: Crissy and Markley, 1852), quoted in Dowty, 29-30.
- ²⁰ Fisch, 103.
- ²¹ David Reynolds, *Mightier Than the Sword: Uncle Tom's Cabin and the Battle For America* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2011), quoted in Jones and Richardson, 106.
- ²² Dowty, 36.
- ²³ Fitzhugh, 27.
- ²⁴ A Lady from New Orleans [pseud.], 166.
- ²⁵ *Ibid.*, 122, 125, 165.
- ²⁶ *Ibid.*, ix. Examples of the footnotes are: "For the details of this case (Stephen Ratcliffe), see Lords' evidence, Answer 214, in Appendix," 125; "For the harrowing details of this case, Samuel Whitt, see Lords' evidence; Answer 216, in Appendix," 130; "See Question and Answer, House of Lords' Committee, No . 948; and another case numbered 950, in Appendix," 165.
- ²⁷ *Ibid.*, 122.
- ²⁸ Chase, 21.
- ²⁹ A Lady From New Orleans [pseud.], vii-viii; Fitzhugh, 175.
- ³⁰ Fitzhugh, 157.
- ³¹ Eastman, 21.
- ³² Chase, 89.
- ³³ Chase, 90.
- ³⁴ Fitzhugh, xvi.
- ³⁵ Jones and Richardson, 105.
- ³⁶ A Lady from New Orleans [pseud.], 102.
- ³⁷ *Ibid.*, 103, 203.
- ³⁸ *Ibid.*, 87.
- ³⁹ Chase, 41.
- ⁴⁰ Eastman, 20, 21.
- ⁴¹ *Ibid.*
- ⁴² A Lady from New Orleans [pseud.], 233; Chase, preface.
- ⁴³ A Lady from New Orleans [pseud.], ix.
- ⁴⁴ Chase, 211.
- ⁴⁵ Eastman, 95.
- ⁴⁶ A Lady from New Orleans [pseud.], 240.
- ⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 265, 267, 271, 278.
- ⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, viii; Chase, 164.
- ⁴⁹ Charlotte Elizabeth, *The Works of Charlotte Elizabeth*, (New York: New York: M.W. Dodd, 189), xii.
- ⁵⁰ *Ibid.*
- ⁵¹ *Ibid.*
- ⁵² Jane Tompkins, *Sensational Designs: The Cultural Work of American Fiction 1790-1860* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), 124.
- ⁵³ *Ibid.*, 126.
- ⁵⁴ Jones and Richardson, 101.
- ⁵⁵ *Ibid.*
- ⁵⁶ Cecelia Tichi, "Novels of Civic Protest," in *The Cambridge History of the American Novel*, ed. Leonard Cassuto (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011).
- ⁵⁷ Chase, viii.

Huck Finn in the Golden Age: Eternal Adolescents and the Great American Novel

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This paper is an excerpt from Van Engelen's MA Thesis "The Great American Novel: Writing National Identity" written for the programs History: Europaeum - European History and Civilisation (Leiden, Oxford and Paris 1 universities) and Literary Studies: English Literature and Culture (Leiden University)

But I reckon I got to light out for the Territory ahead of the rest, because Aunt Sally she's going to adopt me and sivilize me and I can't stand it. I been there before.
- Mark Twain, *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*²

The 1950s saw the most spectacular economic boom in the history of the United States, an incredible lift-off that was felt by many Americans. Consequently, a sense of prosperity and limitless possibility became ubiquitous in popular culture. Extreme consumerism and materialism were championed as all-American ideals, the 'Dream of upward mobility' as an act of resistance, stronger than any army in the ideological war with Communism.³ This was America's 'Golden Age,' as the Eisenhower-era has often been called in hindsight. Sanctifying the social riser as a national archetype, though, had a troubling consequence, as failure to live up to the Dream's promise became "a kind of betrayal" of that shared national fate.⁴ Pop culture from the era, then, has been described as "obsessed" with "the perils and prospects of becoming an adult," the latter being described in increasingly narrow terms.⁵ Reflecting that communal preoccupation, the *Bildungsroman* bolstered its position as American genre par excellence in these years. Many of the era's classics have earned their status by pitting that obsession with youth and conformism against clichés in American literature and culture at large. These were the conventions that coalesced in the tradition of the Great American Novel.

The term Great American Novel (GAN) was coined in 1868 by John William DeForest, who called upon his fellow American authors to write a work that would paint "the picture of the ordinary emotions and manners of American existence."⁶ The call came during the boom of cultural nationalism in the West and just after the Civil War: the GAN was to provide a national image that overcame postwar regional divisions and to define American exceptionalism with a literature that (in contrast to the sorry state of US literature before) befitted such a national allure. The response to DeForest's call has been overwhelming, as dozens of novels are still composed and/or hailed as GANs each year.⁷ Most attempts are quickly forgotten, but after one and a half centuries of GAN-ism, a very select canon has slowly been formed: a couple of dozen titles that are considered to epitomize the American literary tradition's obsessions, and to hold something essential about the country's identity.⁸

The GAN, singular, has never been found; a canon of multiple GANs has been established in its place.

From the 1920s onward, seeking to secure a *Sonderweg* in Western literature, American critics started to conceive of the US style as ‘Romance.’ In actuality, American literature had been dominated by realism, but since that was also the European style *par excellence*, it proved an awkward path to take in the quest for exceptionalism. An American novel was no longer thought of as a mimetic picture of reality, but as a metaphor-ridden “all-questioning fable” that caught the national spirit through a symbolic act.⁹ Once this invented tradition had become widely accepted, the GAN (US literature’s ideal type) was now thought to have always been *The Scarlet Letter* (1850), *Moby-Dick* (1851), *The Great Gatsby* (1925) or *Huckleberry Finn* (1884); novels whose centrality to the American tradition was constructed in hindsight. These ‘Romances,’ or more specifically the interpretation of them as metaphorical mediations on American identity, have become the blueprint of the GAN-tradition.

The *Bildungsromans* discussed below were built on that invented foundation. They are fables reflecting on national clichés like the American Dream, individualism, and the frontier. Their authors’ understanding of the GAN-rules is precisely what allowed them to enter the literary arena in which the canonical American identity was at stake; yet they always played the game subversively, following the rules but not entirely, thus pointing out inconsistencies and problems within Golden Age optimism. ‘Ethnic *Bildungsromans*’ had long been present in American literature, but only in the 1950s did it become a mainstream phenomenon, critically reflecting on the national obsession with growing up from minority perspectives.¹⁰ As Black people’s socioeconomic status stayed frustratingly behind during the Golden Age, it is hardly surprising that it was a Black author who first established this new genre.¹¹

In 1952, Ralph Ellison’s *Invisible Man* was hailed by critics as the single most important text since WWII.¹² A year later, Ellison became the first Black man to win the National Book Award (NBA). His acceptance speech displayed a keen awareness of the Romance prerequisites for literary prestige: he considered “the chief significance” of his novel to be its rejection of realism’s “rigid concepts of reality” or “sociology,” which had characterized American protest novels before, and its embrace of a reality “simply far more mysterious,” to be reflected in “the bright magic of the fairy tale.”¹³ Initially, Ellison read a Black tradition into the Romance/GAN canon as an essayist, by emphasizing *Huckleberry Finn*’s preoccupation with race as its moral core. Together with critic Leslie Fiedler’s “Come Back to the Raft Ag’in, Huck Honey!” (1948), Ellison did much to make this reading standard.¹⁴ Turning to fiction, then, he sought to position his own “blueprint for Negro writing,” as Richard Wright’s then-standard work was titled, through a rejection of the latter’s naturalism and an alignment with broader American traditions. *Invisible Man* did so by embracing *Huckleberry Finn*’s picaresque adventurism and Romance’s heavy symbolism, alluding to canonical figures like Melville (who is quoted in the novel’s epigraph), while still “document[ing] virtually every aspect of segregated African American culture” like a true

GAN.¹⁵ Looking to bridge the then existing gap between Black and mainstream American literature, the novel was thus an act of stylistic ‘integration.’

Yet it was a subversive one: the impossibility of Black integration in a more literal sense was precisely what the novel problematized, a criticism smuggled into the canon through aesthetic conformism. Ellison’s protagonist is denied the right to be a full-fledged individual because of his skin color, hence his withholding his name in favor of the titular ‘invisible man.’ His story, like Huck Finn’s, is essentially a series of vignettes. Each one allegorizes a different approach to climbing the Dream’s social ladder. The invisible man, “like almost everyone else in our country, started out with my share of optimism:” faith in the Dream akin to Booker T. Washington’s (1856-1915), who thought that Black people should refrain from actively fighting oppression, and instead concentrate on rising in society through education and entrepreneurship.¹⁶ Economic independence would eventually result, Washington thought, in emancipation. *Invisible Man*’s earliest scenes satirize this position as, in GAN-terms, ‘Uncle Tom-ism.’ First, the protagonist wins a college scholarship, beating other Black graduates in a statewide competition. Ellison portrays this beating literally: a bloody “battle royale” unfolds in front of guffawing white notables, who shout “tear him from limb to limb” and “let me at that n[...]ger!” Yet the boy maintains that these are wise and honorable men, the only ones who “could judge truly my ability.”¹⁷ By the time he, covered in the blood of himself and his rivals, delivers a winning speech that literally quotes Washington’s “Atlanta Compromise,” his faith in just, white paternalism looks utterly ridiculous.

The invisible man is not quick to lose it, but as that first, absurdist allegory suggests, his optimism is indeed unwarranted. Washington’s philosophy of upward mobility denies a Black American ‘visibility:’ Mr. Emerson, the white benefactor of his all-Black college, revealingly tells the boy he is a ‘cog’ in his (Emerson’s) fate as a patron saint of upward mobility. “But you don’t even know my name,” the narrator thinks.¹⁸ When he accidentally shows Emerson the old slave quarters adjacent to the college, shocking the patron into hysteria, he is sent away by the institution’s Black president, Dr. Bledsoe: the boy has betrayed his race, Bledsoe thinks, by failing to cover up its traumatic past. Here, failing to ‘act the part’ of Dreamer is not merely a betrayal to the national fate, but to an ethnic one. Ultimately, Bledsoe and Emerson are guilty of the same: they do not see an individual, but a representative of a collective social rising.¹⁹

Once expelled, the protagonist goes looking for a job, but all he gets out of his visits to New York skyscrapers is an involuntary flirtation with a white man who, in an extended reference to the (in)famous claims of interracial homoerotic tensions in *Huckleberry Finn* by Fiedler’s “Come to the Raft Ag’in,” wants the boy to be the ‘Jim’ to his ‘Huck.’ He then attempts to join the working class, during which the Romance canon is similarly present: incidents of absurdly inflated symbolism in a factory, which produces white paint in whale-sized tankers (recognize the *Moby-Dick* reference) under the slogan “keep America pure,” result in the narrator’s giving up on the social ladder completely. Keeping up the picaresque pace, he then joins the Marxist Brotherhood. Yet when he showcases great talent in spreading the socialist gospel, his fellow revolutionaries kick him out. They had thought it advantageous to recruit a Black man for their mission in Harlem, but are frightened by his actual input.

Thus they and “Norton and Emerson merge into one single white figure. They were very much the same, each attempting to force his picture of reality upon me and neither giving a hoot in hell for how things looked to me. I was simply a material, a natural resource to be used.”²⁰ This insight leads the protagonist to finally accept that he is invisible: no one sees him as a person, they see only his skin.

Realizing now that the promise of “rising *upwards* (...) is just a crummy lie [whites] kept us dominated by,” the narrator chooses instead to embrace his invisibility.²¹ He “knew that it was better to live out one’s own absurdity than to die for that of others,” and retreats underground, literally.²² There, he is “hidden out in the open,” for who can “recognize a choice in that which wasn’t seen...?”²³ The ending is ambiguously metaphorical, leaving plenty of leeway for interpretation. However one reads this act of distancing, though, the novel at least prescribes a spiritual retreat from the Golden Age’s sanctified ‘upward’-narrative, and from classifying external gazes (be they white, Black, or Marxist) that threaten to dissolve their object’s ego. Ellison’s criticism of the Dream thus had two components: he pointed out its inaccessibility for promising Black Americans, while also stressing the suffocating performativity of the Dreamer-role. Every time the invisible man tries to fulfill the cultural upward-narrative, a specific role is assigned to him that denies him individuality, which itself is celebrated, notably in *Huckleberry Finn*, as another American core value. Additionally demonstrating this paradox in the style of a Romance ‘fable’ has allowed Ellison to enter the GAN-canon (*Invisible Man* has been one of the most widely taught novels of the US since the 1980s), and suffuse it with doubts from within.²⁴

As said, *Invisible Man*’s most enduring legacy was kickstarting the tradition of the ‘ethnic *Bildungsroman*,’ which incorporated minority experiences of the American Dream. Jewish authors Bernard Malamud, Saul Bellow, and, slightly later, Philip Roth wrote in the same genre, especially the latter causing quite a stir in his community by doing so.²⁵ Roth later described the 1950s atmosphere with regards to social mobility: having won WWII, “sacrifice and constraint were over. The Depression had disappeared. (...) The lid was off. Americans were to start over again, en masse, everyone in it together.”²⁶ Social mobility, in this climate, was not an opportunity, but an obligation: “you must not come to nothing! *Make something of yourselves!*” a Jewish counterpart to *Invisible Man*’s Dr. Bledsoe.²⁷

Bellow, a Canadian immigrant of Russian parents, was one of the critics to hail *Invisible Man* as a masterpiece, and his own *The Adventures of Augie March* (1953) would receive similar praise a year later. His undisguised attempt at a GAN essentially reiterated that “Man must return to Himself” (thus he had summarized *Invisible Man*’s message in his review of the book); even more emphatically set against the “*make something of yourself!*” adage.²⁸ Augie, who like the invisible man climbs and descends the social ladder in a wide array of adventures, is a Jewish adolescent of humble birth, whose individualist Americanness is accentuated from the first sentence onwards: “I am an American (...) and go at things as I have taught myself, free-style, and will make the record in my own way.”²⁹ This in itself was quite a proclamation in a time when Jews were still deemed unfit by many men of letters to write American fiction. Roth has often cited this striking confidence as the boost he and his generation of Jewish authors had needed to dare embrace their own contexts as ‘legitimate’

subjects; exactly what Ellison has meant for many Black authors.³⁰ Precisely by incorporating their backgrounds into typically American tales of (challenged) individualism, Romance symbolism, and Huck-picaresque, they canonized their narratives as national instead of minority ones. Or, more assertively, they canonized minority narratives as the national one.

Yet like Ellison's 'assimilation,' Bellow's proves subversive. As Augie quickly escapes his poor family and skips from job to job, we expect him to rise in society, as the *Bildung*-narrative, that we are led to believe is unfolding, dictates. However, Augie refuses to do so, describing settling down as "individual man (...) illustrat[ing] a more and more narrow and restricted point of existence."³¹ Whenever, on his picaresque journey through dozens of highly contrasting jobs and milieus, Augie seems to find his 'restricted point' (be it wealth, comfort, or the love of his life), he flees. To his fellow Americans, he is an enigma: "what are you slopping around here for? You've got more possibilities than you know what to do with. (...) What are you postponing everything for?"³² But before they know it, Augie is gone again, off to try another fate. He despises Dreamers with "a chosen thing" (say, Captain Ahab and his white whale, or Gatsby and his beloved Daisy), for it "can't be one that we already have, since what we already have there isn't much use or respect for. Oh, this made me feel terrible contempt."³³

Augie's sentiment fitted the unease many adolescents and intellectuals felt during the Golden Age. Their experience is best understood within the context of 'suburbia,' the typical 1950s ideal of US domesticity, constantly reasserted as such in television sitcoms and commercials: a traditional family, spacious home, and quiet neighborhood became the archetypical décor of the Dream come true.³⁴ Associated with predictability, material comfort, and risk-free conformism, however, Eisenhowerian suburbs contrasted dramatically with Huck Finn's adventurism, Bellow and Ellison pointed out.³⁵ How could that ultimate individualist still be claimed as a national archetype? Their picaresques, essentially outstretched intertextual references to *Huckleberry Finn*, added weight to the question of whether the much-lauded adventurism and eccentricity of the frontier hero, whom historian Frederick Jackson Turner influentially described as having a "restless, nervous energy" and "dominant individualism" that had supposedly remained the foundation of American identity, were still possible in 1950s America.³⁶ Indeed, scholars have time and again noted how the 'frontier experience' or myth was "replicated in the explosive growth of the crabgrass frontier of suburbia."³⁷ Was the Dreamer a feral pioneer or a white collar worker? Who was the 'real' American?

If Augie despises chasing the whale, the 'chosen thing' of Dreamers, he fully subscribes to Huck's drifting down the river. His is the restless energy of Turner's pioneer: "look at me, going everywhere!" nowhere in particular, "why, I am a sort of Columbus of those near-at-hand and believe you can come to them in this immediate terra incognita that spreads out in every gaze."³⁸ In this final passage of the novel, Augie links his spirit to the era of discovery, but his "near-at-hand" twist on the archetype undermines the type of grandeur an Ahab or Gatsby strives for: Augie accepts the restrictions of the everyday, embraces them. Therewith, more overtly than Ellison, Bellow contrasts Huck-ism with "*make something of yourselves!*" for Augie prefers to stay an eternal Dreamer: "I may well be a flop at this line of

endeavor. Columbus too thought he was a flop, probably, when they sent him back in chains. Which didn't prove there was no America."³⁹ Augie's *Bildung* thus concludes with a claim of ultimate Americanness, yet with no social mobility to speak of: an ultimate rejection and embrace of the Dream, a simultaneity undermining the nationalism of Golden Age conformity.

Augie, somewhat more typically than the invisible man, was one of many postwar literature's "eternal adolescents," as I propose to call them: protagonists in *Bildung*-narratives who refuse to grow up in a conventional sense. Like Huckleberry Finn, they chose instead to remain un-"sivilized," and embrace never-ending youth. They uncouple the American obsession with youth and Dreaming (connotation: opportunity) from that with social mobility (connotation: conformism). Huck's *Bildung* gone-awry consists of realizing that conforming to traditional maturity prescribes a loss of all-American individualism and moral integrity (as it involves an acceptance of slavery). Anticipating and influencing the following decade's counterculture, Huck's legacy allowed Golden Age-authors to examine the era's conformism and question the gold's glitter.

The most famous eternal adolescent was and continues to be Holden Caulfield from J.D. Salinger's *The Catcher in the Rye* (1951). It resonated spectacularly with young audiences, who worried about futures within the conformist society their parents' generation had embraced.⁴⁰ Holden's crass and subjective style emphatically echoes the one Twain had pioneered in *Huckleberry Finn*. Like his illustrious ancestor, the boy is extremely displeased with the 'phony' adult world he sees around him and is desperate to hold onto the authenticity of youth. He runs away from his education, his parents, from growing up. Yet what embedding his aimless wanderings through New York in the canon clarifies, is that whereas "for Huck there still is the frontier; he can always light out for the territory," Holden is trapped: there is no more un-"sivilized" world, no hope for the charmingly maladjusted.⁴¹ Holden, consequently, is far more desperate. Refusing self-analysis, he projects his fear of growing up into a societal straitjacket onto some fellow adolescent passers-by: "it was sort of depressing," he thinks, "because you kept wondering what the hell would *happen* to all of them," worrying not that they will turn out poor, but "boring."⁴²

Indeed, being dull became something of a virtue in the 1950s, with significant cultural weight: "there are two mythic journeys in the US. The first (...) was the trek to the West, ending in California. The second, the archetypical journey of the mid-20th century, was from the city to the suburbs."⁴³ Bellow and Salinger certainly mistrusted the latter, but a group of East-coast adolescents ('Beats') went even further, flat-out refusing to partake in it.⁴⁴ One of them, Jack Kerouac, turned their story into a national 'event' with *On the Road* (1957), which controversially prescribed a return to the optimism and energy of the first mythic journey, replicating it as a pilgrimage dedicated to an older, purer Dream.

The novel's protagonist and narrator, Sal Paradise, is addicted to crossing the continent, feverishly caught up by the promise of the Western frontier: "the whole country lay like an oyster for us to open; and the pearl was there, the pearl was there. Off we roared."⁴⁵ His companion, Dean, figures as the "cowboy" in Sal's constant daydreams of Westerns, prairies, and pioneers. He credits Dean with "a wild yea-saying overburst of American joy; it

was Western, the west wind, an ode from the Plains, something new, long prophesied, long a-coming.”⁴⁶ The entire novel is written in this Melvillian tone of GAN-epic, and relentlessly alludes to the American (pop-)cultural idiom. Dean is Turner’s pioneer, displaying “restless, nervous energy; that dominant individualism (...) that comes with freedom” to the point of insanity: he is “that mad Ahab at the wheel.”⁴⁷ The difference is that Ahab’s obsession had an object, remarkably absent in the Beats’ fervor in searching for ‘IT,’ a phrase often repeated but never filled in. Like *Augie March*, *On the Road* rebels against ‘restricted points of existence’ by championing aimless energy and eternal adolescence.

Yet within this rejection, as mentioned before, references to American archetypes abound. *On the Road* conceptually places the budding *counterculture*, before it had altogether taken off, *within* the confines of all-American conventions. Doing so allows Kerouac to question, as had Bellow, what exactly was the American part of the Dream: Dean’s individualist frontier-energy, or suburban domesticity? The Beats, a (toxically) virile community, rejected the latter in ways that are shocking today, and were doubly so in Eisenhower’s America: Dean betrays his three wives and leaves his children fatherless. Still, Sal, who never shies away from that ugly side, has absolute faith in the Dean’s Americanness. *On the Road*’s final passage mirrors *The Great Gatsby*’s famous climax, with Sal likewise looking over the entire continent, contemplating “all that raw land that rolls in one unbelievable huge bulge over to the West Coast, and all that road going, all the people dreaming in the immensity of it.”⁴⁸ For Sal, America is the mythic journey West, is Dean, as Gatsby was for Nick Caraway: “I think of Dean Moriarty, I think of Dean Moriarty,” Sal concludes like a prayer.⁴⁹ Dean is the ultimate Dreamer and its ultimate rejection, with absolute simultaneity: the concept’s schizophrenia was laid bare.

Kerouac’s radicalism caused an intensely divided opinion among literati, but the 1960s’ hippies thought of his book as their GAN; as did countless later generations of backpackers, following in the Beats’ footsteps and keeping alive the frontier myth as a source of individualist regeneration.⁵⁰ So where did all this uncertainty leave American masculinity? After all, the typical frontier character was male, whereas the domestic focus of (suburban) consumer society was widely perceived as somewhat effeminate.⁵¹ In pondering this conundrum, John Updike, one of the most decorated American authors of the twentieth century, apparently understood the GAN-canon’s functioning as an ongoing discourse. His breakthrough novel *Rabbit, Run* (1960) was conceived as a direct response to Kerouac, an argument in favor of male adulthood and taking responsibility. Updike later wrote: “I resented [*On the Road*’s] apparent instruction to cut loose. *Rabbit, Run* was meant to be a realistic demonstration of what happens when a young American family man goes on the road – the people left behind get hurt.”⁵² Harry ‘Rabbit’ Angstrom was Updike’s attempt at a US “everyman,” his “ticket to America” and the GAN of family life.⁵³ Rabbit, a former high school basketball star, has great trouble accepting his adult fate of normalcy. Like many white American males of his time, he has thus lost a sense of cultural centrality in favor of domestic boredom. He shares Sal and Dean’s lack of an ‘IT;’ the omission of a strong religious sensibility is ceaselessly emphasized.⁵⁴ Frustrated to the core, he leaves his wife Janice and

their children for a passionate extramarital affair. Subsequently, Janice's alcoholism spins out of control, until she accidentally drowns their child, less than a month old.

People got hurt: Updike's message was ostensibly delivered. And yet, having entered the slippery GAN-arena, the author was unable to safeguard his book's morals from the lure of the frontier. The descriptions of Rabbit's affair, inevitably controversial at the time,⁵⁵ illustrate his disturbing egoism, but also a renewed sense of virility, which together with his despair before the 'escape,' suggests a sense of impotence within 1950s manhood. What is to be the point of his life, Harry asks a local priest: "be a good husband. A good father." "And that's enough?" he desperately asks, what about "the thing behind everything," IT? "I don't think that thing exists."⁵⁶ Three sequels emphasized how Janice and Rabbit were a mismatch from the beginning, destined to make each other unhappy, and suggested that, maybe, Rabbit could have saved *himself* at least by running away for good. There is no solution, ultimately: conformism will make Rabbit unhappy, but "if you have the guts to be yourself," like the eternal adolescents, "other people'll pay your price."⁵⁷ Both versions of the Dream are dead ends.

The 1950s' capsized *Bildungsromans* all claim a high, sometimes even heroic degree of nationalism, albeit an alternative one. They claimed a spot in the GAN-canon by adhering to its style and interests, yet so fundamentally un-American is the eternal adolescents' refusal to rise *upwards* that, once they were in, they blew up the 1950s' American Dream. Utilizing the canonical power of the Huck- and frontier archetypes, these novels undermined the 'Americanness' and superiority of post-war comfort, the suburban way of life deemed a winning hand in the Cold War. The novels discussed pitted domesticity's superior place in the national identity against that of the frontier, exposing a troubling rift between the two; they weaponized US mythology, as etched into the GAN-canon, against present realities.

Notes

¹ Thanks to my supervisors: Dr E.F. van de Bilt (Leiden), Dr M.S. Newton (Leiden) and Dr Nicholas Gaskill (Oxford University); and second reader Prof. Dr P.T.M.G. Liebrechts (Leiden).

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³ Lawrence R. Samuel, *The American Dream: A Cultural History* (New York: Syracuse UP, 2012), 50.

⁴ Greil Marcus, *Mystery Train* (New York: Penguin Press, 1991), 20.

⁵ James Gilbert, *Men in the Middle: Searching for Masculinity in the 1950s* (Chicago: Chicago UP, 2005), 1-2.

⁶ John William DeForest, "The Great American Novel," *Nation* 6 (1868): 27.

⁷ Lawrence Buell, *The Dream of the Great American Novel* (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 2016).

⁸ *Ibid.*; Leslie Fiedler, *Love and Death in the American Novel* (London: Cape, 1967), 23.

⁹ Leo Marx, *The Machine in the Garden: Technology and the Pastoral Ideal in America* (Oxford and New York: Oxford UP, 2000), 342-3; Kermit Vanderbilt, *American Literature and the Academy: The Roots, Growth, and Maturity of a Profession* (Philadelphia: Philadelphia UP, 1989), 156.

¹⁰ Buell, *The Dream of the GAN*, 191-92.

¹¹ Robert M. Collins, *More: The Politics of Economic Growth in Postwar America* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2000), 41-2.

¹² Mark Greif, *The Age of the Crisis of Man* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton UP, 2015), 165-6.

¹³ Ralph Ellison, "Ralph Ellison's NBA Acceptance Speech," speech delivered 1953, National Book Foundation, accessed March 27, 2021, https://www.nationalbook.org/nbaacceptspeech_rellison.html#.VtYI7pMrKV4.

¹⁴ Buell, *The Dream of the GAN*, 183-7.

- ¹⁵ John Lowe, "Writing the American Story, 1945-1952," in *The Cambridge History of African American Literature*, eds. Maryemma Graham and Jerry W. Ward Jr (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2011), 352.
- ¹⁶ Ellison, *Invisible Man*, 1952 (London: Penguin Classics, 1981), 464.
- ¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 22-5.
- ¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 41.
- ¹⁹ Klara Szymańko, *Invisibility in African American and Asian American Literature: A Comparative Study* (Jefferson: McFarland & Company, 2008), 31.
- ²⁰ Ellison, *Invisible Man*, 409.
- ²¹ *Ibid.*, 408.
- ²² *Ibid.*, 450.
- ²³ *Ibid.*, 410; Szymańko, *Invisibility*, 26.
- ²⁴ Buell, *The Dream of the GAN*, 191-2.
- ²⁵ See Philip Roth, *The Facts*, in which the author describes accusations at his address of being an "antisemitic Jew."
- ²⁶ Roth did so through his alter-ego Nathan Zuckerman, in: *American Pastoral* (New York: Random House, 1998), 40.
- ²⁷ *Ibid.*
- ²⁸ Greif, *The Crisis of Man*, 188.
- ²⁹ Saul Bellow, *The Adventures of Augie March*, 1953 (London: Penguin Modern Classics, 2001), 1.
- ³⁰ Roth, "Rereading Saul Bellow," in *Why Write? Collected Nonfiction 1960-2013*, ed. Idem (New York: Library of America, 2017), 294.
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- ³² *Ibid.*, 203.
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- ³⁴ Jan Nijman, "Introduction: Elusive Suburbia," in *The Life of the North American Suburbs: Imagined Utopias and Transitional Spaces*, ed. Idem (Toronto: Toronto UP, 2020), 5-7.
- ³⁵ *Ibid.*, 8.
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- ⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 208.
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- ⁵⁰ Jay Parini, *Promised Land: Thirteen Books That Changed America* (New York: Doubleday, 2008), 295, 300.
- ⁵¹ Gilbert, *Men in the Middle*, 5, 50.
- ⁵² John Updike, "Introduction," in *Rabbit Angstom* (New York: Everyman's Library, 1995), x.
- ⁵³ *Ibid.*, vii-viii.
- ⁵⁴ Pinsker, "Restlessness in the 1950s," 71.
- ⁵⁵ Later, the still more explicit sexuality in his *Couples* (1968) would become an outright scandal, but also his claim to fame, landing Updike a spot on *TIME*'s cover.
- ⁵⁶ Updike, *Rabbit, Run*, in *Rabbit Angstom*, 241.
- ⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 129.

“This Is What We Call Smart Power”: American Policy toward Venezuela from Bush to Trump

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This paper was written for the Research Seminar in the MA program International Relations in Historical Perspective

The United States and Venezuela have been entangled in regional antagonism since the election of Hugo Chávez in 1999. Relations between the two states did not improve with the subsequent election of former vice president Nicolás Maduro in 2013s.¹ Indeed, the continuation of Chavist political leadership in Venezuela was not well received in Washington. Furthermore, the crisis triggered by Maduro’s questionable reelection in 2019 created an unprecedented opportunity for President Donald Trump to address a long-standing problem for US regional interests. Despite the robust rhetoric of the Trump administration, however, Nicolás Maduro remains in power and shows no intention of conceding to foreign pressures.

The Trump administration was not the first to fall short in confronting a Chavist Venezuela, however. Three successive US presidents, namely George W. Bush, Barack Obama, and Donald Trump, have failed to remove Chávez and Maduro from Venezuelan leadership. Over time, the US has adopted a pro-active foreign policy toward Venezuela, and the American approach to the country has become a topic of national debate. Notably, each of the successive administrations characterized their approach as a break with the policies of their predecessors.

By contrast, an examination of recent academic literature reveals that this has not been the case. In fact, political scientists Michael Camilleri, Daniel Hellinger, and Luis Suárez Salazar and Victoria J. Furio all suggest a constancy in the US approach to Venezuela, especially in the use of policies of coercion.² Based on their findings, this research seeks to provide a brief analysis of US soft and hard power tactics against Venezuela from the inauguration of Hugo Chávez in 1999 until the 2019 presidential crisis. This paper argues that George W. Bush, Barack Obama, and Donald Trump have employed a similar ‘smart power’ approach to undermine the power and policies of Hugo Chávez and Nicolás Maduro. Following a discussion of Joseph Nye’s notions of soft, hard, and smart power, the paper examines how the past three presidents have used these forms of power in their approach toward Venezuela.

To narrow the scope of this analysis, the paper relies on the process-tracing method. Political scientists Colin and Bennett describe process tracing as a method that establishes the causal relation “between an independent variable (or variables) and the outcome of the dependent variable.”³ This method makes it possible to develop a greater understanding of the causal dynamics that led to the outcome of a specific historical case. Within the context

of this study, process tracing helps to identify similar patterns and operative mechanisms in the policies of Bush, Obama, and Trump.

First, it is important to define the concepts of hard, soft, and smart power. Political scientist Joseph Nye developed these three notions in an effort to understand the changing nature of power and growing US hegemony in the post-World War II international system. Whereas realist scholars traditionally defined power in singular terms as strength for war and perceived it as a military manner, Nye differentiated between hard and soft power. On the one hand, hard power involves “the ability to use the carrots and sticks of economic and military might to make others follow your will.”⁴ While carrots stand for inducements such as the reduction of trade barriers, sticks represent coercion, including coercive diplomacy, economic sanctions, or the threat of military intervention. Soft power on the other hand is non-coercive and relies on “the ability to shape the preference of others.”⁵ Soft power instruments include public diplomacy, institution-building, and even education. Furthermore, Nye distinguishes three sources of soft power: culture, political values, and foreign policies.⁶ Elements of both soft and hard power characterize the US approach to Latin America and the rest of the world, for instance in the Marshall Plan to rebuild Europe after World War II.

In addition to defining these two types of power, Nye also added important nuances to address the limitations of his concepts. For one, soft power has not been always used for good purposes, as “it is not necessarily better to twist minds than to twist arms.”⁷ Moreover, Nye argues that soft power has become as important as hard power in the modern world due to the high costs of the latter. Still, the revitalization of hard power approaches by the Bush administration challenged the scholar’s paradigm. To counter the misperception that soft power can single-handedly produce effective foreign policy, Nye introduced smart power, which constitutes a combination of both hard and soft power.⁸ Specifically, it is an approach that underscores the necessity of a strong military, but simultaneously invests in institution building and bilateral and multilateral agreements to establish legitimacy or gain influence. Its applicability to the real world and compatibility with existing theories made the term popular in both academic and political circles. In light of these trends, US policy toward Venezuela presents a case study that can contribute to a better understanding of smart power.

Historically, relations between the US and Venezuela have been shaped by the general American approach to Latin America. The US first set out to become a hegemonic power in the Western Hemisphere with the Monroe Doctrine of 1823. Since then, the US has proven resourceful in preserving its regional hegemony through the use of military means and economic influence.⁹ After World War II, the competition between the United States and the Soviet Union led to increased US interest and a more pro-active approach toward Latin America.¹⁰ Indeed, the US did not hesitate to employ its soft power tools to draw regional players into its sphere of influence.

During the Cold War, the US pressured numerous Latin American countries into signing unequal economic treaties and initiated regional security institutions. One such institution is the Organization of American States, which the US created in 1948 as a bulwark

against the spread of communism in the Western hemisphere. Moreover, it promoted regional development based on American economic ideas like neo-liberalism, and presented itself as a representative for the region in international institutions like the United Nations.¹¹ In response to calls for decolonization and growing left-wing populism, however, the US turned to a carrot-and-stick approach after 1960.¹² The stick consisted of covert operations like the overthrow of the Chilean government in 1973, economic sanctions, and isolationist policies like the Cuban embargo. The carrot relied on the use of US economic power to counter anti-American sentiment.

After the Cold War, the US increasingly chose to rely on its soft power. This approach was successful throughout Latin America, where many presidents turned to neoliberalism in response to the political and cultural crises of the 1990s.¹³ In a unipolar world, Latin American leaders sought cooperation with the greatest economic and military power and adopted both multilateral initiatives and bilateral agreements. Nevertheless, the momentum of neoliberalism and modernization did not last long because growing debt soon led to higher unemployment. Governments sold national companies to foreign investors, and the concentration of wealth in the higher social classes caused further frustration among the public. Moreover, the erosion of local cultures due to the dominance of Western values contributed to the spread of revolts and the rise of populist governments. These leitmotifs were present in Venezuela before the election of Hugo Chávez as well.¹⁴

Tensions between Venezuela and the US began to grow when Hugo Chávez first became president in 1999. As the leader of a major socialist party, the Fifth Republic Movement, he successfully exploited the general disappointment of the Venezuelan population regarding the economic and political policies of the traditional two parties. To tackle economic problems and social unrest, Chávez further nationalized the country's oil industry. This decision proved to be highly effective, as the rise of oil prices in 1999 led to an influx of money into the Venezuelan economy. Moreover, Chávez poured these petrol dollars into social and domestic reforms, and transformed the anachronistic sectors of education and health, and improved public services. The combination of modernizing reforms and the rise of living conditions contributed to his popular support, also known as 'Chavismo.'¹⁵

Throughout his first term, Chávez continued to pursue pro-active policies and accumulated more popular support. Nevertheless, the prospect of his re-election in combination with new laws granting Chávez more political power led right-wing opposition leaders and part of the military to stage a coup d'état in April 2002.¹⁶ Although Chávez managed to restore his power quickly, the coup signaled a breaking point in US-Venezuela relations. Because George W. Bush had ties with the Venezuelan right-wing opposition and feared future cooperation between Cuba and Venezuela, he decided not to warn Chávez about the coup despite having prior information.¹⁷

Following his reinstatement, Chávez adopted a different approach toward the Bush administration, in which oil played a significant role. Because Venezuela was home to the Western hemisphere's largest oil reserves, the Venezuelan president decided to instrumentalize oil as a geopolitical weapon.¹⁸ Chávez's oil diplomacy used petrol dollars as bait to get other regional states to sign bilateral and multilateral agreements.¹⁹ His oil

diplomacy also aimed to fulfill the dream of his personal hero Simón Bolívar: the unification of Latin America and reduced European and American influence in the region. In 2005 for example, Chávez founded Petrocaribe, a Caribbean energy organization where member states could purchase Venezuelan oil more cheaply.

What is striking is that Hugo Chávez began to act in a manner similar to the US in the region. He utilized Venezuela's increasingly positive public image to initiate and participate in regional initiatives like the 2003 Mercosur Economic Complementation Agreement with Colombia, Ecuador, and Venezuela. Furthermore, he challenged US soft power by confronting American interests in existing international organizations like OPEC, and by providing financial aid to regional partners like Cuba to sabotage US policy.²⁰ As a result, Chávez's ambitious policies brought him into confrontation with the US. For instance, he did not hesitate to use hostile rhetoric, even calling Bush the devil in a 2006 speech at the UN.²¹ He also took more drastic anti-American measures such as halting oil sales to the US, providing financial support to Al-Qaeda, and selling weapons to regional terrorist groups like the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC).²²

As American-Venezuelan relations turned hostile, the Bush administration used a mix of smart power strategies against Chávez, but without great success. Besides indirectly supporting Chávez's ousting in 2002, the American president sought to undermine Chávez by funding the Venezuelan opposition and insurgent groups.²³ Still, Chávez's reelection in 2006 proved that the existing approach had not been sufficient to hinder his growing popularity. Hence, the Bush administration decided to turn its attention to hard power instruments, while continuing to invest in soft power tools.

In fact, the US had already been employing tactics reminiscent of Cold War covert operations since 2001. For example, it was using alleged social welfare programs like the National Endowment of Democracy (NED) and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) to fund anti-Chávez groups.²⁴ In subsequent years, however, hard power measures became more ominous. The Bush administration exercised psychological operations to destabilize the Venezuelan military while allowing for the possibility of total war in Venezuela.²⁵ Bush also authorized military buildups, contingency plans for the disruption of Venezuelan oil supplies, and military simulations like Plan Balbo, which simulated a US invasion of western Venezuela from Colombia and Panama. At the same time, Bush imposed economic sanctions on Venezuelan officials who were involved in narco-trafficking or cooperated with FARC.

The Bush administration also sought to strengthen its soft power to isolate Venezuela internationally, especially in the economic domain. On the one hand, the US built up its multilateral institutions, while signing bilateral free-trade agreements with states like Chile and Colombia.²⁶ On the other hand, the Bush administration attempted to use the image of the US as a representative of progress to undermine Chávez's international image. An excellent example is the US accusation of domestic violations of human rights following deaths during anti-government protests in 2004.²⁷

A closer examination reveals that although the Bush administration used both soft and hard power tools, the combination failed to deal a serious blow to Chávez's regime. In terms

of hard power, Bush's measures had a limited effect on the Venezuelan military and fell short of hindering Chávez's plans. As for soft power, Bush's negative public image following the invasion of Iraq in 2003 significantly diminished the impact of his foreign policy. Bilateral and multilateral initiatives with regional players failed to diminish Chávez's influence in Latin America. Furthermore, Chávez countered Bush's military operations by maintaining public support inside Venezuela and preserving the regional balances of power.²⁸ Despite being unsuccessful, however, Bush's smart power approach toward Venezuela would provide a template for his successor.

Democratic President Barack Obama faced several challenges in the first years of his presidential term. In addition to the 2008 financial crisis and plummeting oil prices, Obama also had to reckon with the negative global image of the US and the country's dismal relations with Venezuela.²⁹ During his campaign, Obama supported a moderate approach to foreign policy and criticized the Bush administration's policies. Moreover, he specifically promised to be more engaged in his approach to Latin America.³⁰ As such, everything indicated that soft power diplomacy would guide the American approach to the region. However, it became clear shortly after his election that this would not be the case.

Similar to his predecessor, Obama employed smart power measures against Venezuela. In fact, Obama put smart power at the center of his foreign policy.³¹ In terms of hard power, the US maintained and expanded economic sanctions, while using programs like USAID and NED to fund private institutions, NGOs, and media challenging Chávez's authority.³² Obama also strengthened interventionist strategies like military simulations in the Caribbean Basin.³³ Furthermore, the Obama administration used growing tensions between Venezuela and Colombia in 2009 to sign a pact for the military use of seven Colombian military bases. This move caused regional outrage but succeeded in applying pressure on the previously 'unmovable' Chávez.

New developments were also visible in the realm of soft power, where the Obama administration employed a mix of discourse, multilateralism, and economic power to weaken and isolate Chávez. Specifically, Obama sought to counterbalance the status and popularity of Venezuelan institutions like Petrocaribe by offering bilateral economic cooperation to states in Venezuela's sphere of influence.³⁴ Moreover, Obama condemned Venezuela's relations with "rogue regimes" like Iran and Cuba, and accused domestic officials of involvement in narco trafficking and human rights violations.³⁵ Despite Obama's greater commitment to soft power, however, incidents like US support for the 2009 coup d'état in Honduras partially damaged his democratic image.³⁶

While Chávez viewed Obama positively at first, he resumed his anti-American rhetoric after realizing that the US would continue to employ a smart power approach toward Venezuela.³⁷ Contrary to previous years, however, Chávez now faced a series of regional and domestic issues. Tensions with Colombia, early signs of an imminent economic crisis, and regional dissatisfaction with Chávez's oppression of political opposition posed unprecedented challenges to his foreign policy. As the 2012 election approached, Chávez adopted several reforms to provide short-term relief for the people of Venezuela. However, this decision had two negative consequences: it created an opportunity for Obama to weaken Venezuela's

regional influence, and it worsened existing socio-economic problems.³⁸ Ultimately, Chávez won re-election, but passed away in March 2013. At the time, his death seemed to signal the end of a long-standing problem for American foreign policy, and the possibility of a new start in US-Venezuela relations.

The hope of reconciliation between the US and Venezuela abruptly ended after the election of former vice president Nicolás Maduro. The newly elected Chavist president inherited a state on the brink of economic and social collapse. Chávez's overreliance on petrol dollars resulted in a major socio-economic crisis when a global drop in oil prices occurred in 2013.³⁹ Despite Maduro's efforts to alleviate the crisis through further nationalization of private companies and price controls, poverty and shortages continued to escalate.⁴⁰ Subsequently, Venezuela ended up with skyrocketing inflation, and consumers grew increasingly frustrated. The mix of economic issues, food shortages, and the rise of corruption and crime led to social unrest and protests in 2014. Several protestors died in clashes with government forces, and Maduro's decision to arrest opposition leader Leopoldo López caused international concerns about human rights violations.⁴¹ Still, suppression did not prevent the political opposition from winning a majority in the 2015 National Assembly elections.

Their unprecedented victory created a window of opportunity for Obama's smart power approach against Venezuela during his second term. On the one hand, Obama's increased focus on soft power relied on extensive multilateral diplomacy within regional institutions, international advocacy for human rights, and the support of Venezuela's political opposition. On the other hand, Obama continued the hard power practice of individual sanctions when he signed an executive order in 2015 blocking the assets of individuals involved in human rights violations.⁴² Furthermore, he adopted additional economic sanctions against Venezuela in 2014. That same year, he also issued a presidential order to update the country's status to national threat. Latin American states did not respond well to this move, because to them it represented another example of US interventionism in the region.⁴³

In general, Obama's second term was characterized by the continuation of a smart power approach toward Venezuela, which proved especially successful compared to the Bush years. The combination of an internal social-economic crisis with Obama's increased investment in US soft power set his administration up for greater success. In addition, Obama made more efforts to promote regional and bilateral cooperation in Latin America, further isolating Venezuela.⁴⁴ This shift was also facilitated by Maduro's failure to ensure his legitimacy and popularity in both a national and a regional context.

The 2016 election of Republican President Donald Trump shocked both global and regional leaders. Despite promising an isolationist foreign policy, Trump called on Venezuela less than a month after his election to release López "out of prison immediately."⁴⁵ In their approach toward Maduro, the Trump administration followed "the playbook left in place by its predecessor" but with a Republican twist.⁴⁶ The forty-fifth president continued to employ smart power measures to apply pressure on the newly weakened Venezuelan president. Trump either enhanced or maintained existing hard power measures, focusing on economic coercion through sanctions against individuals.⁴⁷ Although Trump revealed in August 2017

that he was considering a military option in Venezuela, he eventually organized a regional tour in Latin America aimed at bilateral cooperation instead.⁴⁸ At the same time, Trump also attempted to invest more in multilateral diplomacy to contain Venezuela, while adopting sharper public advocacy concerning violations of the constitution, free and fair elections, and human rights violations.

Despite those efforts, Trump's "malice, ad hoc policy responses, and blatant disinterest" rendered his use of soft power ineffective.⁴⁹ Hence, Trump returned to a hard power approach. Specifically, he adopted economic sanctions targeting an additional forty-four Venezuelans in line with Obama's 2015 executive order. Due to their economic nature, these measures had a twofold effect on Venezuela's economy. While they applied further pressure on Maduro's government by restricting the influx of petrol dollars, they also led to socio-economic deterioration. The latter resulted in social unrest and calls on Maduro to step down, but the Venezuelan leader responded with the adoption of more authoritarian and oppressive practices. Moreover, facing pressure from the US, Maduro also sought assistance from China and Russia to tackle economic and political problems.⁵⁰

Tensions grew in the wake of Maduro's victory in the 2018 election, which analysts have described as a show election because of a boycott by the opposition, and because it marked the lowest voter turnout in the country's democratic era.⁵¹ Nevertheless, although the two other candidates rejected the results and domestic unrest erupted, Maduro was inaugurated on January 10, 2019. This turn of events resulted in more protests led by Juan Guaidó, head of the National Assembly and the leader of the social-democratic Popular Will party. The inability to find a settlement between the two sides caused an unresolved crisis, with the nation and the world divided in their support for either Nicolás Maduro or Juan Guaidó.⁵²

Trump did not hesitate to use the crisis to his advantage by dismissing Maduro's reelection and recognizing Guaidó as the interim president. This soft power measure was in line with the OAS suspension of Maduro and received support from Latin American leaders and the global community.⁵³ Moreover, Trump also provided financial aid to the people of Venezuela and publicly advocated against the violation of human rights, but without success.⁵⁴ In response, the Trump administration resumed hard power measures by imposing further sanctions that targeted Venezuelan individuals and companies. In August 2019, Trump ordered new sanctions, this time targeting the Venezuelan government.⁵⁵ Furthermore, he called on other European and Latin American leaders to aggressively expand multilateral sanctions that would place political and psychological pressure on Maduro.⁵⁶

A closer examination of Trump's policies shows that his approach was in line with the smart power strategies of the Obama and Bush administrations. Specifically, he alternated between hard power measures like economic sanctions and supplementary soft power tools like multilateral diplomacy to undermine Venezuela's power. Moreover, Trump eventually took advantage of Maduro's lack of legitimacy, Venezuela's deepening economic issues, and the regime's human rights violations. At the same time, however, the US approach was hindered by Trump's negative global image, and his unpredictable rhetoric. In addition, he pursued aggressive policies toward other Latin American countries like Cuba and impeded a

collective regional approach. On top of that, Michelle Bachelet, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, criticized Trump for his use of sanctions because they mostly affected the local population.⁵⁷ Overall, an improvement of Trump's image in Latin America would have contributed significantly to the efficiency of his approach to Venezuela.

To sum up, there are major continuities in the US approach toward Venezuela during the period from 1999 until 2019. This research has shown that the administrations of George W. Bush, Barack Obama, and Donald Trump all relied on smart power, using a mix of hard and soft power strategies to challenge Hugo Chávez and Nicolás Maduro. None of the three presidents hesitated to use hard power measures, ranging from economic sanctions to attempts to destabilize the Venezuelan military. Still, Trump mostly relied on economic hard power measures, whereas Bush and Obama did not refrain from more interventionist tactics.

This paper demonstrates that soft power has not only co-existed with hard power but has also been crucial to the success of the US approach to Venezuela in its own right. The three administrations have sought to undermine Venezuela's regional legitimacy and policies through public diplomacy, regional institutions, and bilateral agreements. Nevertheless, the analysis indicates that the success of these soft power measures depended on the global image and appeal of each US president. A great example of this phenomenon is the contrast between the Obama and Bush presidencies. Whereas Bush's inefficiency to overcome his negative image and challenge Chávez's regional influence pushed him toward hard power measures, Obama's success relied on the efficient use of smart power and an investment in improving the image of the US in Latin America.

It is also important to highlight that the efficiency of US smart power strategies relied in large part on the maneuvers and diplomacy of Venezuela. For instance, Hugo Chávez adopted a type of behavior that echoed that of the US by exploiting existing anti-American feelings and using political circumstances to counteract US popularity in Latin America. Furthermore, Chávez's oil diplomacy proved to be crucial for both his domestic popularity and his ability to find political support for his ambitious reforms. In the absence of petrol dollars and legitimacy, Maduro has been unable to successfully counterbalance US economic and political pressures. Therefore, Maduro's shortcoming creates an unprecedented window of opportunity for the US, where smart power could function as a catalyst. In order to succeed, however, the US needs to recalibrate and balance its approach. As this paper has shown, the presidencies of Obama and Bush offer insights and lessons that could contribute to the favorable outcome of this endeavor.

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Black Votes Matter: Tracing Cycles of Voting Rights from Selma to *Shelby*

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This paper was written for the course MA Thesis: Colloquium and Workshop in the MA program in North American Studies

George Floyd's death in May 2020 had a massive global impact. Floyd died after Minneapolis police officer Derek Chauvin held his knee on Floyd's neck for eight minutes. This resulted in mass protests that exceeded the national border. In, for example, Europe, Australia, and Mexico people have taken to the streets to protest police brutality against racial minorities and racial inequality in general. Many believed that George Floyd's death was not a unique event but a characteristic of a society that is racist and unequal in numerous ways. As many as 69 percent of Americans believed that Floyd's death was part of a bigger problem.¹ Research shows inequality between African Americans and white people regarding educational access, economic chances and mobility, healthcare insurance, life expectancy, and incarceration.² An additional source of inequality lies in one of America's quintessential core values: the right and ability to vote.

A political system can be changed by choosing those in charge through the ballot. Numerous politicians have stressed the paramount importance of voting to change the system and existing leadership of the United States. Indeed, "activists, celebrities and elected officials nationwide have taken up a familiar call to action in the wake of George Floyd's death while in the custody of Minneapolis police: vote."³ The truth is, however, that African Americans' access to the ballot is not equal to that of other people. Although the Fifteenth Amendment grants the right to vote to African Americans, there have been a plethora of attempts to undermine this amendment. On top of that there are local laws that infringe on citizens' rights to vote or that make the process to cast a ballot considerably more difficult. These attempts predominantly occur at a state level, and the way they occur varies between states since the electoral process is constitutionally a state affair.

Tactics to disenfranchise African Americans have evolved over the course of US history, mostly due to the implementation of the Voting Rights Act (VRA) of 1965. In the early years of the US, African Americans were disenfranchised through slavery. When slavery was abolished, African Americans were racially discriminated against through Jim Crow laws, such as poll taxes and literacy tests. The VRA remedied this, but voting rights took a step backward again with the Supreme Court case *Shelby County v. Holder* (2013), which ruled certain parts of the VRA unconstitutional. Consequently, states were once more in charge of their own electoral processes. Today, the most prominent tactics or adopted measures to disenfranchise segments of voters include voter identification laws, gerrymandering, disproportionate incarceration, and purging voter rolls. Furthermore, a joint publication of the Center for American Progress and the National Association for the Advancement of

Colored People (NAACP) found that African Americans are disproportionately disadvantaged by voting by mail.⁴

The statistics are telling. Many states with Republican legislatures have adopted restrictive voting laws. The legality of such laws is often determined along partisan lines. Data shows that “the pace of litigation [regarding restrictive voting laws] has remained at more than double the pre-2000 rate, and litigation in the 2016 election period is up 23 percent compared to the 2012 election period.”⁵ The post-*Shelby* elections are thus influenced by restrictive laws to a much higher extent than pre-*Shelby* elections. Interestingly, when a state can act on its constitutional sovereignty and alter its electoral process as it deems fit, the number of discriminatory laws under a Republican majority rises.

Shelby County v. Holder was a landmark case that had profound consequences for the electoral process. The Supreme Court argued that the coverage formula of the Voting Rights Act of 1965 was unconstitutional because it infringed on state sovereignty and did not treat all states equally since not all states were subject to the coverage formula. To be subject to the coverage formula as described in Section 4 of the VRA, the number of eligible and registered voters or the voter turnout in a state or separate political subdivision during the presidential election of 1964 should be below 50 percent. States which utilized a mandatory ‘test or device’ – which made the voting process more challenging – were also subject to the coverage formula. If a jurisdiction was subject to Section 4 of the VRA it must submit a desired alteration to its voting system, no matter how minor, for approval. Either the Attorney General or a three-judge district court in Washington, DC, must deem the proposal nondiscriminatory. It is the burden of the jurisdiction to show that the alteration is not discriminatory before the change can be put into effect. The reason for this process was rather straightforward in 1965, namely the institutionalized discriminatory voting laws that predominantly targeted African Americans. One of the questions posed in *Shelby* was if Section 4 of the VRA was still relevant in 2010. Could the current situation still justify the burden of proving an alternation to be nondiscriminatory? Simply put, was the voting system still as discriminatory when *Shelby* was decided as it was during the implementation of the VRA in 1965, or was it discriminatory to a lesser extent or not at all, which would mean that the remedies of the VRA were no longer necessary.

Throughout the history of the United States, the authority over a state’s electoral process has shifted from the state itself to the federal government. This article aims to investigate whether a pattern can be discerned regarding the dis- or re-enfranchisement of African Americans, depending on who is in charge of a state’s electoral process. I argue that African Americans are disenfranchised when a state has the authority over its electoral process and re-enfranchised if the federal government is involved. This process of enfranchisement follows a cyclical pattern. Each cycle has two stages: stage one is when a state is in charge of its electoral process, stage two is when the federal government has more control through adopted legislation. There have been four shifts regarding who is in control over a state’s electoral process. Historically, two cycles have been completed, and currently, stage one of cycle three is ongoing, with the states being in charge of the electoral process.

The nature of this article is predominantly one of legal history, and it touches upon democratic theory through the lens of the structure of government. A clear concept of democratic theory is equality of citizens and the concept of one person, one vote. This democratic standard implies that it is unethical for one vote to have a disproportionate impact compared to another. This article will evaluate the electoral process of the United States based on these concepts. It will investigate how the scope of the federal government is influenced by certain Supreme Court rulings and how the scope of federal and state power influence the equality of citizens in each cycle. The concepts of state sovereignty and state equality are thus paramount in all three cycles and their effect on the rights of citizens. Building upon a framework of legal history is paramount for the field of American Studies, because the United States has a common law system. This means that rulings are based, to a large extent, on precedents. The Supreme Court has set and overruled many of these and continues to do so today. The impact and implications a precedent may have regarding voter suppression must be examined because they can also indicate the current course of the Supreme Court and what might be a proper approach to respond to newly set precedents.

There exists an extensive body of academic literature on African American oppression in general, as well as voter suppression in particular. The struggle for voting equality is written about by, among others, Alexander Keyssar in *The Right to Vote - The Contested History of Democracy in the United States* (2000), Kevin J. Coleman in *The Voting Rights Act of 1965: Background and Overview*, and Chandler Davidson and Bernard Grofman in *Quiet Revolution in the South: The Impact of the Voting Rights Act 1965-1990* (1994). These works paint a broader picture of African American suppression and their struggle for equal access to the ballot. In 2010, Michelle Alexander wrote the influential book *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness*. She argues that African Americans were disproportionately targeted during the War on Drugs in the 1980s, which resulted in their disproportionate incarceration. Additionally, her work provides a useful historical overview of the oppression of African Americans.

This literature clearly demonstrates the existence of a historical pattern of African American enfranchisement with different cycles. Due to the scope of this article, cycle one will be explained briefly. Cycle one lasted from the establishment of the United States up to the Compromise of 1877. Stage one entails the period in which most African Americans were subjected to slavery and states oversaw their own electoral systems. During the era of slavery, African Americans were in a state of ‘social death’ in which they had no rights at all.⁶ There was no federal legislation in place that granted them the right to vote, nor were they given many rights in general. Rather, for white male Americans, African Americans represented “profits, fancies, sensations, and possessions.”⁷ Slavery, however, became part of an issue between Northern and Southern states, the Union versus the Confederacy, which culminated in the Civil War. The defeat of the Confederacy resulted in the liberation of four million African Americans, formalized by Abraham Lincoln through the Thirteenth Amendment. Stage two began after the Civil War, with the federal government being in control and adopting new legislation on electoral processes.

Lincoln's successor, Andrew Johnson, was in favor of state rights, and his approach towards the South was one of leniency. The election of Johnson's successor, Ulysses S. Grant, was important for the development of African American suffrage. African Americans voted en masse for Grant in 1868, and most of Grant's constituency, often referred to as 'the Radicals', supported congressional Reconstruction. This entailed a process of making the Reconstruction of ex-Confederate states longer, harsher, and under greater congressional control.⁸ In 1868 and 1869 the Radicals pushed through the Fourteenth Amendment, granting African Americans citizen rights and equal protection, and the Fifteenth Amendment. Vitally important was that these Reconstruction Amendments empowered Congress to enforce its provisions through "appropriate legislation." Proper legislation to secure the rights granted through the Reconstruction Amendments was needed, but remained absent for decades. Indeed, "although African Americans rejoiced [the Fifteenth Amendment], it left open the possibility for states to create countless qualifications tests to obstruct voting" and "notably absent from the Fifteenth Amendment, for example, was language prohibiting the states from imposing educational, residential, or other qualifications for voting, thus leaving the door open to the states to impose poll taxes, literacy tests, and other devices to prevent blacks from voting."⁹ Thus, the leeway the Fifteenth Amendment granted to states resulted in mechanisms that denied newly enfranchised African Americans their political right, without "blatantly violating" the Fifteenth Amendment itself.¹⁰

During the Compromise of 1877, it was agreed upon by U.S. Congressmen that the federal troops would withdraw from the South. These troops had provided African Americans with protection at the polls. The Radicals, who were in favor of a harsh congressional reconstruction, did not manage to retain the political initiative. Rather, as Reconstruction ended, the Democrats started to impose racial boundaries to subvert civil rights laws and the Reconstruction Amendments. Consequently, the progress African Americans had made was almost nullified and at the turn of the twentieth century "blacks were almost completely disenfranchised in the South."¹¹ This marks the end of stage two of the first cycle, since the states were no longer under supervision but regained their constitutional right to oversee their own elections and implement legislation that dealt with them. The role of the Supreme Court should be addressed here too. It did not rule on the constitutionality of the Reconstruction Amendments but did touch upon the scope of congressional power regarding the Civil Rights Act of 1875. In the *Civil Rights Cases* (1883), the Supreme Court held that Congress exceeded its power by banning racial discrimination in public places. Congress, the Supreme Court ruled, had done enough for the freed slaves.¹² Cycle one showed clearly that the federal government has the power to re-enfranchise African Americans through legislation and the presence of federal troops in former Confederate states. It also showed that those states were determined to disenfranchise African Americans to either retain or regain their political power and abuse the loopholes in existing legislation. The Compromise of 1877 was the end of cycle one.

Stage one of cycle two began with the states having the upper-hand in shaping their electoral processes. After the Compromise of 1877, there was an influx of new legislation that became known as the Jim Crow laws; legislation specifically crafted to segregate and suppress

African Americans. This is stage one of the second cycle, in which the states regained authority. This stage lasted for a significant period, from 1877 up to 1965. With regards to voting, Jim Crow laws were very effective. In Virginia, no African Americans were estimated to have voted in the Presidential election of 1904. The same can be said for North Carolina, where the African American voter turnout dropped to zero between 1896 and 1904.”¹³ The freedom that states had to shape their voting system was thus largely abused. Despite the Reconstruction Amendments, African Americans were still discriminated against through poll taxes, grandfather clauses, old soldier clauses, and literacy tests, which were more subtle than slavery, but still incredibly effective at barring them from the polls. Fast forward to the middle of the twentieth century, Keyssar notes that in the 1950s in seven states “literacy tests kept African Americans from the polls: failure of the test could result simply from misspelling or mispronouncing a word.”¹⁴ In 1954 “Mississippi instituted a new, even more difficult ‘understanding test’, complete with a grandfather clause exempting those already registered,” moreover, “black residents of the five remaining poll tax states (Alabama, Arkansas, Mississippi, Texas, and Virginia) faced not only an economic hurdle but also discriminatory administration: poll tax bills were not sent to blacks and receipts were hard to obtain.”¹⁵ Furthermore, in Louisiana, “members of the White Citizens Council purged black registrants from the voting lists for minor paperwork irregularities, and a 1960 law provided for the disfranchisement of a person of ‘bad character’.”¹⁶

Michael Klarman, legal historian and author of *From Jim Crow to Civil Rights: The Supreme Court and the Struggle for Racial Equality* (2004), argues that it took serious voter participation of the African American community to eradicate Jim Crow laws and segregation.¹⁷ Keyssar notes that this could not have been achieved without significant governmental support, as “the black community by itself could not compel city and state authorities to cease discriminating.”¹⁸ It was almost a century after the Fifteenth Amendment when this was achieved, in the 1960s, as the result of a decade of fighting for civil rights for all. The Selma to Montgomery marches in particular spurred action on voting rights legislation.¹⁹ Civil activism in Selma, Alabama, was violently struck down in 1965. These events were broadcast globally and resulted in outrage. On a national level, civil rights activism with presidential support from Lyndon B. Johnson resulted in Congress making massive legislative steps, securing the right to vote for all. In 1965 President Johnson signed into law the Voting Rights Act. President Johnson stated that the vote “is the most powerful instrument ever devised by man for breaking down injustice and destroying the terrible walls which imprison men because they are different from other men.”²⁰ The implementation of the VRA started stage two of the second cycle, because after this moment the federal government took back charge over electoral processes.

The VRA was “designed by Congress to banish the blight of racial discrimination in voting, which has infected the electoral process in parts of our country for nearly a century.”²¹ For the purpose of this article, two sections are important so single out from the Voting Rights Act. These are Sections 4 and 5. As mentioned previously, Section 4 entails a coverage formula. Pressure on the government was high to ensure that its citizens could indeed all vote, as a democracy demands. There was thus a need for the ‘appropriate legislation’ that the

Fifteenth Amendment allowed. Section 5 entails that those who are subject to Section 4 need federal approval, or preclearance, to alter their electoral system, regardless of how small the alteration. When the VRA was adopted, the intention was for it to be in effect for the duration of five years. However, it was prolonged in 1970, 1975, 1982, and 2006 for an additional twenty-five years up to 2031. An additional important section was Section 2, which made the process to challenge existing legislation considerably easier. The Voting Rights Act of 1965 eliminated discriminatory laws and consequently African Americans were re-enfranchised. The percentage of registered African Americans was significantly increased just one year after the implementation of the VRA. But what is equally, if not more important, is that the VRA protected African Americans from becoming disenfranchised once again through Section 5.

The Voting Rights Act was thus vitally important for the re-enfranchisement of African Americans. However, it provided leeway for the federal government to interfere in what constitutionally is a state matter, namely the voting process, and additionally infringed on the concept of state equality, for not all states were subject to the coverage formula. A clear pattern can be analyzed here. Historically, if a state has the authority over its electoral system, African Americans are likely to be disenfranchised. The core reason for this is that African Americans are a small portion of the constituency of the Republican Party, which in recent years has been in charge in the Southern states. If the federal government is involved, however, African Americans are re-enfranchised. As the previous paragraphs have shown, this has gone full circle twice now. First, there was slavery and the social death of African Americans, followed by federal enforcement of the Reconstruction Amendments. Cycle two started with the Compromise of 1877 and states adopting Jim Crow laws that disenfranchised African Americans, and saw its second stage with the adoption of the Voting Rights Act of 1965.

The ruling in *Shelby*, which stopped federal intervention in states' electoral processes, was the beginning of the third cycle. *Shelby County v. Holder* marked the end of cycle two, and the beginning of the first stage of cycle three. Shelby County, Alabama, filed suit to have Section 5 of the VRA declared unconstitutional by a federal court in Washington, DC. The argument was that the coverage formula infringes on a state's sovereignty and that not all states are equal, for not all are subject to coverage. One of the core questions that the Supreme Court had to answer was if states' needs in 1965 were comparable to those in 2010 in ways that still could justify the burden, which had not changed since 1965. The burden being that every alteration to an electoral system had to be precleared by either the Attorney General or a three-judge District Court. Despite Congress having amassed a 15,000 page-long document in 2006 that deemed the prolongation of the VRA up to 2031 justifiable, with a five to four majority the Supreme Court ruled otherwise and deemed Section 4 of the VRA no longer constitutional. The federal government lost its coverage formula, which rendered Section 5, the preclearance section, useless. Albert L. Samuels, professor of Political Science, in his essay "Shelby County v. Holder: Nullification, Racial Entitlement, and the Civil Rights Counterrevolution," argues that this ruling is part of a larger trend of a "doctrine of nullification," entailing an ideology that "asserts the prerogatives of states to resist the perceived unconstitutional encroachments of federal power."²² The current climate of conservatism is characterized by the notion that reliance on the federal government is no

longer necessary or desirable. Consequently, “these policies need to be eliminated to prevent Blacks from being ‘the special favorite of the laws’ entitled to more legal protections than other citizens.”²³

The majority ruling deemed state sovereignty and state equality more important than voter equality. The dissenting opinion was clear: “Throwing out preclearance when it has worked and is continuing to work to stop discriminatory changes is like throwing away your umbrella in a rainstorm because you are not getting wet.”²⁴ The consequences of *Shelby* are profound. It has given the authority to shape a state’s electoral system back to states themselves and, in doing so, limited the federal government’s influence and capability to protect all its citizens. Historically, especially Southern, former Confederate states have attempted to nullify the concept of one person, one vote by suppressing and diluting the vote of African Americans. It is then paramount that the democratic concepts of one person, one vote, and citizen equality are evaluated on a state level post-*Shelby*. Future research may focus on this.

Alabama would be a suitable case study for future research, especially with the data that can be accumulated from the 2020 presidential election. It has a vast history of African American voter suppression, and shortly after, the ruling in *Shelby* Alabama adopted a voter-ID law. This law at the time was subject to Section 5, but was not submitted for review, most likely because similar litigation had not been precleared five times.²⁵ After the *Shelby* ruling, Alabama did put the law into effect. Under this law, voters had to present “one of a limited number of state-issued photo IDs to vote either at the polls or absentee.”²⁶ Estimates vary, but local news reported on the assertion by NAACP lawyers that “100,000 registered voters in Alabama can't vote because they don't have the photo identification required by the state and that most were poor, black or Latino.”²⁷ A more gruesome estimation had the number of people that cannot vote range between 250,000 and 500,000.²⁸ It was also in Selma, Alabama, that the marches to Montgomery began, which resulted in federal support of equal rights. Shelby County, which started the lawsuit concerning the VRA, is in Alabama as well. Alabama then has been the center of change regarding electoral processes more than once.

The central question of this article was if it was possible to recognize a pattern that indicates under whose authority African American voter suppression occurs. Four conclusions can be drawn. First, a pattern exists regarding the disenfranchisement of African Americans. When a state can act autonomously in the electoral process, African American disenfranchisement is more likely to occur, especially in Southern, former Confederate states. If the federal government infringes on a state’s sovereignty and intervenes in the electoral process, African American disenfranchisement is far more unlikely to occur, and African American voter registration and turnout increase. Secondly, the Voting Rights Act of 1965 was effective, and there was sufficient evidence to deem the ruling by Chief Justice Roberts in *Shelby* questionable. In all states and separate jurisdictions subject to the coverage formula of the VRA, African American voter registration and turnout increased. Yet, Chief Justice Roberts opined that this indicated that times had changed and that the data the coverage formula was based on was no longer relevant.

Furthermore, the GOP attempts to adopt legislation that provides it with an electoral advantage. The effect of this is the disenfranchisement of minorities, who tend to vote Democratic. The conclusion should not be that the GOP intends to discriminate against African Americans because they are African Americans, but rather because of African Americans' general political allegiance. Indeed, "these election reforms are designed to raise the costs of minority participation, because minorities do not support the GOP, not because Republicans simply have it out for minorities."²⁹ However, as political scientist Seth Charles McKee notes, if "these laws single out minority groups or have a racially disparate effect on minority participation, then who cares whether the nub of GOP maneuvering is electoral competition and not racial discrimination?"³⁰ Lastly, the Supreme Court has tremendous influence over who oversees a state's electoral process and has, historically, shifted between favoring state sovereignty and an increased federal government. Additionally, it has marked the transition of stage two to stage one with its ruling in *Shelby*. The current conservative, small government-favoring climate of the Supreme Court resembles the late nineteenth century, which marked the end of cycle one. In both instances, it argued that the federal government had acted sufficiently regarding the equality of its citizens and could thus take a step back. As history shows, it is then conceivable that in the, perhaps near, future the Supreme Court will side with the federal government again.

Historian Carol Anderson, in her book *One Person, No Vote* (2018), states that the gutting of the VRA has placed the responsibility for upholding the right to vote on the backs of the individual citizen.³¹ This burden is often too much to bear or to take up for individual citizens. The Supreme Court did leave room for the creation of a new coverage formula. An attempt is currently being made in the form of the Voting Rights Advancement Act. If this law were to pass Congress, the federal government would have the initiative again, and stage two of cycle three would start.

Notes

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³ David Litt, "Before Telling Protesters for George Floyd to Vote, Remember Not All of Them Are Allowed To," *NBCNews.com*, June 4, 2020, www.nbcnews.com/think/opinion/telling-protesters-george-floyd-vote-remember-not-all-them-are-ncna1224011.

⁴ Hasen quoted in Pippa Norris, et al., *Electoral Integrity in America: Securing Democracy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019).

⁵ *Ibid.*, 30.

⁶ See Orlando Patterson, *Slavery and Social Death: A Comparative Study* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1982).

⁷ Walter Johnson, "Slavery," in *Keywords for American Cultural Studies*, eds. Bruce Burgett and Glenn Hendler (New York University Press, 2014), 224-227.

⁸ Mary Beth Norton, Carol Sheriff, David W. Blight, Howard P. Chudacoff and Frederik Logevall, *A People and a Nation: History of the United States*, (Stamford: Cengage Learning, 2015), 418.

⁹ Norton et al., 419; Alexander, 29-30.

¹⁰ Chandler Davidson and Bernard Grofman, *Quiet Revolution in the South: The Impact of the Voting Rights Act, 1965-1990: Alabama, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Texas, Virginia* (Inter-University Consortium for Political and Social Research, 1996), 380.

¹¹ Kevin J. Coleman, *The Voting Rights Act of 1965: Background and Overview* (Congressional Research Service, 2015), 2.

¹² Albert L. Samuels, "Shelby County v. Holder: Nullification, Racial Entitlement, and the Civil Rights Counterrevolution," *Ralph Bunche Journal of Public Affairs* 4, no. 1 (2015): 188-210.

¹³ Richard H. Pildes, "Democracy, Anti-Democracy, and the Canon," *SSRN Electronic Journal* 17, no. 2, (2000): 295-319, 304.

¹⁴ Alexander Keyssar, *The Right to Vote: The Contested History of Democracy in the United States* (New York: Basic Books, 2000), 258-259.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Michael J. Klarman, *From Jim Crow to Civil Rights the Supreme Court and the Struggle for Racial Equality* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 189.

¹⁸ Keyssar, 259.

¹⁹ Davidson and Grofman, 14-17.

²⁰ President Lyndon B. Johnson quoted in David J. Garrow, "The Voting Rights Act in Historical Perspective," *The Georgia Historical Quarterly* 74, no. 3, (1990): 377-398, 377.

²¹ *South Carolina v. Katzenbach*, 383 U.S. 301, 308 (S. Ct. 1969).

²² Samuels, 2.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ "Shelby County v. Holder, 570 U.S. 529, (S. Ct. 2013) (Ginsberg, R.B., dissenting).

²⁵ Peter Dunphy, "When It Comes to Voter Suppression, Don't Forget About Alabama," *Brennan Center for Justice*, November 5, 2018, www.brennancenter.org/our-work/analysis-opinion/when-it-comes-voter-suppression-dont-forget-about-alabama, par. 2.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Kent Faulk, "Group: More than 100k Alabama Voters Can't Cast Ballots," *AL*, 4 March 4, 2017, www.al.com/news/birmingham/2017/03/naacp_legal_defense_fund_more.html.

²⁸ Ben Jealous and Ryan P. Haygood, *The Battle to Protect the Vote - Naacpldf.org*, Center for American Progress, November 2014, www.naacpldf.org/wp-content/uploads/The-Battle-to-Protect-the-Vote.pdf, 8.

²⁹ Seth Charles McKee, *The Dynamics of Southern Politics: Causes and Consequences* (CQ Press, 2019), 307.

³⁰ McKee, 307.

³¹ Carol Anderson, *One Person, No Vote: How Voter Suppression Is Destroying Our Democracy* (Camden: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2019).

Playing with Dangerous Toys: How Political Cartoons on North Korean Weapons Testing Metaphorically Frame the Country's Relations with the United States

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This paper was written for the course Framing Violence in the Minor Postcolonial Studies for the BA in Media and Culture

The January 2016 cover of *The New Yorker* features a child playing with toys: a plane in one hand, a missile in the other. Scattered on the floor lie toy soldiers and tanks. A seemingly harmless image, were it not for some disconcerting details: the child bears the face of North Korean leader Kim Jong-un and his toys carry inscriptions – the plane is stamped ‘USA,’ the missile ‘North Korea.’¹ This political cartoon critiques Kim for treating weapons of mass destruction irresponsibly: his childlike appearance connotes qualities of simplemindedness, stupidity, and ignorance of the harm these dangerous playthings may cause. The image evidences a certain disdain for the leader of the upper half of the divided Korean peninsula, officially the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (DPRK). The DPRK has in recent years frequently headlined the news due to its weapons testing, which has strained its relationship with the United States, and therefore political cartoons about the country abound.² While they may appear innocuous, these utterances contribute to a discourse on the relationship between these two countries and frame that relationship in specific ways through visual metaphors.

The DPRK is commonly understood as a ‘hermit kingdom,’ a ‘nuclear-armed dictatorship’ led by insane leaders ‘brainwashing’ their constituents into a personality cult proffering undying reverence for their overlords.³ Regardless of the accuracy of these beliefs, when considering the formative power of discourses, questions arise about how metaphors and framings of the DPRK inform public thinking about the country. In this research paper, I examine the way political cartoons metaphorically frame the relationship between the DPRK and the US with regards to the former’s weapons testing through critical discourse analysis. Such an inquiry derives some political pertinence from the fact that discourses, in which the political cartoons considered here partake, fundamentally shape and affect material realities, and discursive practices such as naming and describing actors influence geopolitical relations and conflicts.⁴ Such discursive characterizations of political actors can occur through metaphors, which represent and consequently define these actors in particular ways to emphasize some of their perceived traits.⁵ In this research paper, I aim to answer the question: How do political cartoons about the DPRK’s weapons testing metaphorically frame the country’s relationship to the US? Below, I first delineate the theoretical framework by expanding on discursive conflicts, frames, and metaphors. Furthermore, I employ the notion of Orientalism and its previous uses in studying Koreans’ portrayal in various Western political cartoons. After a word on methodology, I present my analysis and offer a conclusion.

To begin constructing a theoretical framework, first a consideration and definition of the term ‘conflict’ is warranted. Thereto, I employ conflict studies scholar Jolle Demmers’s definition of conflict as “a situation in which two or more entities or ‘parties’ perceive that they possess mutually incompatible goals.”⁶ Two things to note are that this understanding of conflict does not necessarily entail violence, for which the moniker ‘violent conflict’ is more apt. The term thus appropriately captures the tension between the DPRK and the US, who are not involved in an all-out war but whose interests clash when it comes to the possession of nuclear arms.⁷ Secondly, Demmers mentions that conflict depends on the perception of a situation underscores the discursive nature of conflicts, about which Michael Bhatia writes that discourse is “a battleground and contested space in contemporary conflicts” – a battle fought through processes such as ascribing names to parties and framing events and actors through metaphors.⁸ The purpose is to “attain a victory of interpretation and ensure that a particular viewpoint triumphs.”⁹ This viewpoint consequently informs the engagement with these subjects: a particular understanding permits “certain forms of inquiry and engagement, while forbidding or excluding others.”¹⁰ Discursive processes, therefore, warrant critical scrutiny, as they have great repercussions.

Sociologists Robert Benford and David Snow write that in conflict discourses collective action frames are created: the “action-oriented sets of beliefs and meanings that inspire and legitimate the activities and campaigns” of social actors.¹¹ Such frames help interpret the world and guide action. Benford and Snow describe three core tasks of frames: diagnostic framing, prognostic framing, and motivational framing.¹² The first identifies a problem, often deriving from some injustice, and attributes it to certain actors, the second articulates “a proposed solution to the problem,” and the third “provides a ‘call to arms,’” urging actors to undertake action.¹³ The construction of these frames can happen through discursive portrayals of the conflicting subjects. Demmers adds that such portrayals “fulfil at least two functions: (1) to recruit supporters by propagating a concrete us/them divide, and (2) to legitimize violent action.”¹⁴ These two functions are a point of focus in my analysis. While this assertion appears to suggest that discursive processes are knowingly employed to particular ends by those in power, Demmers asserts that discourses and definitions are not simply created by the powerful to control the masses: “Instead, power is constituted and transformed at all levels of society.”¹⁵ Definitions of subjects in conflict are contested, and while actors like institutions (which are considered legitimate sources of knowledge) may carry greater defining power, even their assertions are not undisputed.¹⁶ Importantly, constructing conflict occurs not just through political processes of assigning names and classifications – often the work of state institutions – but importantly also through popular cultural artifacts such as films, novels, and political cartoons.¹⁷

While they may seem innocuous, such cultural artifacts contribute to the formation of political thought.¹⁸ Political cartoons notably do so through visually articulated metaphors. Metaphors function, sociologists Erin Steuter and Deborah Wills write, by “symbolically transfer[ring] aspects of one object to another.”¹⁹ For instance, cartoons use animal imagery – like snakes and rats – to ascribe certain actors qualities of treacherousness or sinister deceitfulness.²⁰ Analogous to Bhatia’s assertions, metaphors shape how issues are seen, and

by adhering to particular metaphors “[w]e undermine our ability to conceive of (...) alternative solutions that could be called up by a different set of metaphors.”²¹ Of the form of political cartoons, Steuter and Wills write that they “elaborate and comment upon current events, and usually articulate a specific message from an ideological perspective.”²² I connect this specific messaging to the core framing tasks described by Benford and Snow: how do certain metaphors configure a problem, or suggest a solution to it? Notably, cartoons’ ideological perspectives are somewhat ambiguous: the limited space of the cartoon – conventionally a single image – is immediate and concise, but also impairs its communicative clarity because the reader “must decode the cartoon’s visual metaphors within an economical, sometimes cryptic, frame.”²³ While this limits the author’s control over the meaning readers attribute to it, some meanings likely dominate since cartoons employ “dominant tropes which are broadly shared across a given community.”²⁴

With their succinct messaging, political cartoons are often used for war-time propaganda efforts. They also have a long history of racist representations and a pernicious tendency towards Orientalist representations.²⁵ The term Orientalism, coined by postcolonial scholar and cultural theorist Edward Said, describes a “style of thought based upon an ontological and epistemological distinction made between ‘the Orient’ and (most of the time) ‘the Occident’” (the West).²⁶ Orientalism constructs a dichotomy between the Orient and the Occident in which the West is attributed a position of superiority while the Orient is deemed uncivilized and degenerate.²⁷ It thus installs a binary us/them divide, which is revived in times of conflict to rally support and antagonize enemies.²⁸ Orientalist rhetoric has historically been prominent in American discourses about Korea: historian Charles Kraus writes that around the time of the Korean war (which I address later), Koreans were depicted “as politically immature, culturally backward, and prone to dictatorship.”²⁹ This discursive definitional process “created and reinforced an unequal power relationship” between the US and Korea, and influenced policies pertaining to the country.³⁰ For instance, South Korean independence was delayed because their ‘backward culture’ was deemed to require intervention and aid from enlightened Americans.³¹ Kraus argues that Orientalist attitudes towards Korea have not been appropriately addressed, and have until today not entirely disappeared.³² This assertion, together with the historical persistence of Orientalist dichotomies in political cartoons, warrants the involvement of the notion of Orientalism for the case at hand: the US’s relation to the DPRK.

In order to assess how the DPRK is configured in the visual metaphors of political cartoons, I employ a critical discourse analysis (CDA) with a focus on frames. Thereby I aim to uncover what Steuter and Wills called the underlying “ideological perspective” of political cartoons.³³ Concerning discourse analysis, Demmers describes this methodology as studying “the ‘politics of portrayal’, examining how names and images are made, assigned and disputed.”³⁴ Certain principles distinguish CDA from discourse analysis more generally, giving it its criticality: CDA holds that “discursive practices contribute to the creation and reproduction of unequal power relations between social groups.”³⁵ Therefore, CDA is “politically committed to social change” and “aims to reveal the role of discursive practices in the maintenance of the social world,” of the status quo.³⁶

Discourse analysis may be performed qualitatively or quantitatively, or by a combination of both. I employ such a mixed-method approach.³⁷ I first gathered a corpus, which eventually consisted of 40 political cartoons about the DPRK's weapons testing and its relationship to the US. While I do not perform a quantitative analysis, I do study this corpus for patterns such as recurring words, images, or frames. The corpus is collected through online repositories collecting cartoons about the topic, and through Google Images searches including the terms 'North Korea' and 'Kim Jong-un.'³⁸ While this method likely produces a corpus biased towards popular results, this bias was accepted, as their popularity likely indicates that these cartoons are the ones that are seen most and reach the largest audience, and therefore potentially have the strongest influence on the public's political thought - this would imply they are representative of the predominant discourse on this subject. The corpus includes images ranging from 2013, when controversy around the DPRK's weapons development flared up, to 2019.³⁹

The first pattern of metaphoric framing entails the depiction of DPRK leader Kim Jong-un (who functions as the embodiment of the DPRK) as a child - an example of this recurring metaphor was already identified in the introduction. He is drawn as a small boy who wears brightly colored boyish t-shirts or even diapers, he sucks a teat, and often plays with weapons as toys, inscribed with markings such as a nuclear symbol.⁴⁰ Following the metaphoric transfer of meaning, this consistent belittling assigns Kim qualities of childishness; of being foolish, infantile, perhaps mischievous, but altogether ignorant of the dangerous situation he creates. This metaphoric frame is strongly Orientalist, as it characterizes Kim - and by extension all North Koreans - as immature and backward, which resonates with Kraus's assertions. The shoddy-looking missiles of some cartoons reaffirm this reading, disparaging North Korea for its inability to build weapons and reinforcing Orientalist notions of Koreans as being undeveloped.⁴¹ Political cartoons' depictions of Kim thus conform with a long history of Orientalist representations. However, the child metaphor contrasts with another recurring depiction, of Kim as a malevolent warmonger. He then throws rocket-shaped darts at a map of the US, delights in the US's classification of the DPRK as "a state sponsor of terrorism," or gleefully joins the biblical horsemen of the apocalypse.⁴² These depictions are often more acutely racist, giving Kim exaggerated slanted eyes and large buck teeth, echoing tropes of anti-Japanese propaganda from the Second World War (WWII).⁴³ However, the Kim-as-warmonger depiction is revealing about the child metaphor. The child metaphor could signify - capitalizing on political cartoons' room for interpretation - the possibility of growth, but Kim-as-warmonger erases this possibility. Altogether, child-Kim remains emphatically threatening: he is differently motivated, more by petty concerns or ignorance than malevolence, but this childishness is precisely why he is a threat.

Important to consider are the functions of the child metaphor. It appears evident that these discursive tendencies fulfill both functions identified by Demmers, to recruit support "by propagating a concrete us/them divide" and to legitimize violent measures.⁴⁴ The former is seen in the dichotomizing Orientalist rhetoric, which offsets the DPRK against the US. While the US does not feature prominently in many cartoons, it is clear that they are the target of Kim's schemes, or inadvertently the victim of his ignorant actions. The perceived

danger of the DPRK then warrants violent action to prevent a nuclear disaster. As such, there are both diagnostic and prognostic framings at work in these cartoons: they diagnose Kim and the DPRK as a problem that should be dealt with. Their suggested prognosis, the solution to the problem, is found by following the metaphor's logic. The dangerous child metaphor prescribes the answer: parenting. More accurately, Kim seems to necessitate a tough father figure – sometimes depicted as the US's national symbol of Uncle Sam – to discipline him.⁴⁵ Translating that into geopolitical action presumably amounts to US military intervention. Cartoons depicting Kim as a malicious warmonger warrant this same solution. Crucially, these metaphors preclude imagining alternative possibilities: Kim simply needs disciplining.

Another persistent tendency in the cartoons is likening Kim Jong-un to former US President Donald Trump. Various cartoons compare the two leaders by similarly depicting Trump as a child, or alternatively as a 'dim-wit.' He is thus also a petulant child or too simple-minded to be aware of the danger Kim is perceived to pose – Kim plays him “like a cheap violin,” as one cartoon suggests.⁴⁶ While these cartoons ostensibly ridicule Trump, critiquing his apparent foolishness and callowness, they presuppose that Kim is an irredeemable evil (either intentionally or by virtue of his childish ignorance) that requires action. By criticizing Trump, these cartoons still render Kim a threat that should be dealt with, which Trump is incapable of doing. This comparative understanding of Kim and Trump can be appropriately understood as what political scientist Séverine Auteserre calls a simple narrative, a narrative framework that explains events and enables certain practices and policies while excluding others – similar to metaphors' functioning.⁴⁷ These narrative frames derive their strength from a number of qualities, notably by assigning blame to identifiable actors and their intentional actions, by suggesting a simple solution, and by using pre-existing narratives.⁴⁸

Some historical context is necessary to gauge how the cartoons provide a simple narrative: the current tension between the US and DPRK is differently interpretable through a marginal frame that contests common understandings of the DPRK. It is important to understand that Korea was only divided after the WWII by the US, to prevent the peninsula from falling into the hands of the communist Soviets.⁴⁹ While North Korea gained sovereignty when the Soviets retreated in 1948, the South remained occupied by the Americans.⁵⁰ When the Korean War commenced in 1950, both halves of Korea believed they had sovereign claims over the whole peninsula – the war has therefore been characterized by political analyst Stephen Gowans as essentially “a conflict between national liberation and neo-colonialism.”⁵¹ The war involved international forces too, in fact the DPRK would most likely have prevailed were it not for American intervention. The US Air Force incessantly bombed the North, causing destruction “proportionately greater than that of Japan” in WWII and killing nearly three million Koreans.⁵² The DPRK was in shambles and struggled to recover. Nowadays, the conflict's influence is still tangible on the peninsula: American troops remain stationed near the North-South border and the DPRK has suffered from unceasing measures imposed by the US, like prohibiting access to international trade.⁵³ While American influence in the South is commonly posited as a defense against a potential invasion by the DPRK, some critics argue precisely the opposite.⁵⁴ Gowans, for example, describes the DPRK's development of nuclear weapons as self-defense: “Unremitting US hostility is the distal cause of the DPRK's decision

to develop nuclear weapons” – an insurance or protection from imperialist threats that have in the past destroyed the country.⁵⁵

This perspective diverts from commonplace narratives about the DPRK and sheds a different light on contemporary developments. The cartoons discussed here can then be appropriately grasped as simple narratives. They attribute a problem to the intentional, malicious actions of an identifiable actor, Kim Jong-un, who must be stopped. They offer a specific, simple solution to the problem, namely US intervention – the very threat the DPRK is arming itself against. Finally, these cartoons latch onto existing Orientalist narratives about Koreans and North Korea’s insane, evil leaders.⁵⁶ They also adhere strongly to a narrative about the US, and its foreign policies, as a global peacekeeper and spreader of democracy, alternatively described as American expansionism; “an ever-broadening imperial vision of global domination.”⁵⁷ This kind of American policy is ideologically corroborated through media culture, social scientists Carl Boggs and Tom Pollard write, which legitimates the “imperatives of empire:” the cartoons discussed here fulfill this function, arguing for US control over the DPRK.⁵⁸ Though it is perhaps easier to maintain this simple narrative than to challenge contemporary US imperialism, it remains important to remember that Kim might not be childish or warmongering but merely wants to protect the sovereignty of his country and the autonomy of its people. The political cartoons about the relation between the US and DPRK thus fall in line with the ideology of American expansionism.

In this paper, I have examined western political cartoons’ metaphoric framing of the relationship between the DPRK and the US with regards to North Korean weapons testing. Two metaphoric patterns were discerned in the corpus: portraying Kim Jong-un as a child and comparing him to Donald Trump. Following metaphors’ transfer of meaning, these analogies prescribe certain actions to deal with the DPRK. Whether Kim is depicted as a child or as a malevolent warmonger, he necessitates disciplining, likely in the form of US military intervention. Cartoons that liken Kim to Trump seemingly critique the latter for his perceived inadequacy and foolishness, but simultaneously reinforce the idea that Kim is intent on destroying the US. This portrayal effaces a history of US domination over the Korean peninsula and leaves no room for a marginalized perspective on the DPRK’s weapons testing as a means of self-defense, which some historians and political analysts consider to be the rationale behind North Korean weapons development efforts. The cartoons’ metaphors affirm a hegemonic simple narrative, defining a problem in clear terms and offering a simple solution to it – effectively erasing the possibility of imagining alternative approaches to the country. I have focused on framing processes that precede violent conflict – Benford and Snow’s framework is an example of this, studying how violence is positioned as an answer to a contemporary problem. However, as indicated, the US and DPRK have a long history of (violent) conflict, so further research might productively employ theories of post-facto framings of violence, such as anthropologists Ingo Schröder and Bettina Schmidt’s notion of violent imaginaries, to consider how this history is represented and how it informs current-day potential actions.⁵⁹

Notes

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Understanding Canadian Foreign Policy by Looking at Identity

Lessons from the 2018 Saudi Arabia Dispute

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This paper was written for the course Global Conflict in the Modern Era in the MA program in International Relations

Ask any foreigner what they think about when they think about Canada, and a few common answers will always pop up: hockey, maple leaves, snow, and general friendliness, to name just a few. Another common response that many in the diplomatic community will likely give is human rights, with Canada standing out as a strong promoter of human rights and an avid practitioner of a liberal foreign policy. This understanding resonates with the average Canadian citizen, too, who will often note their country's international promotion of human rights as a source of pride. This focus on human rights has especially been reinforced by Global Affairs Canada (Canada's Ministry of Foreign Affairs) under Justin Trudeau. But perhaps there can be too much of a good thing: too much snow can lead to snowstorms, too much hockey may lead to nothing else on television, and an excessive promotion of human rights might lead to undesirable diplomatic incidents with key allies or potential trading partners. This paper focuses on the latter and asks why Canada has become so enamored with its perception of human rights, maintaining its vision and rhetoric even when like-minded liberal allies refuse to do so.

The blind pursuit of a liberal foreign policy focusing on the promotion and protection of human rights became especially evident in 2018, with a number of diplomatic incidents plaguing Global Affairs Canada. Throughout the second half of 2018, Canada became increasingly vocal about human rights concerns in China, with some linking this development to the continued absence of a China-Canada trade deal.¹ Tensions between Canada and China later peaked in early 2019 when Canada arrested Huawei CFO Meng Wanzhou following an American extradition request charging her with violating US sanctions against Iran.² However, China was not the only relationship Canada was straining through the rhetoric and actions of their foreign policy. This paper focuses on Canada's critique of Saudi Arabia over the country's imprisonment of a prominent human rights advocate in August 2018. This scenario demonstrates the lengths to which Canada was willing to go to preserve its human rights strategy. In response to Canada's official critiques, Saudi Arabia responded harshly by freezing trade, recalling students from Canada, and cutting off diplomatic relations. Yet, Canada remained committed to its prior statements even when no key Canadian allies, like the European Union or the United States, came to support Canada's rhetoric, despite sharing similar human rights values.³ Simply put, the EU and US saw the costs of pursuing a foreign policy approach like Canada's as outweighing the benefits. This begs the question that will guide this paper: why did Canada alone see benefits in continuing with this human-rights oriented foreign policy?

This paper argues that such a seemingly irrational commitment to human rights is, in fact, a rational foreign policy approach for Canada. To come to this conclusion, this essay proceeds in three steps. First, I scrutinize the abovementioned Saudi Arabia-Canada dispute in 2018. Using this as a basis, I then examine some of the key literature covering the relationship between national identity and foreign policy. This section also identifies the existence of an identity-driven Canadian foreign policy. In the last section, I examine challenges to the idea of a Canadian identity-driven foreign policy, with a brief examination of the relationship between Canadian foreign policy, multiculturalism, and identity. Finally, I return to the case study of the 2018 Saudi Arabia-Canada dispute, and highlight the impact of an identity-driven foreign policy on Canada's actions in this dispute. Ultimately, I conclude that Canada's support of human rights and similar liberal policy ideals fits in with how Canadians perceive their identity on the world stage. Reinforcing national identity, especially for Liberal leaders like Trudeau, often brings more value than acquiescing to the economic or social inducements of less-rights respecting regimes and states.

On August 2, 2018, Canada's then-Minister of Foreign Affairs Chrystia Freeland tweeted from her personal account that she was "very alarmed" to learn that women's rights advocate Samar Badawi, who had long been critical of the regime, was imprisoned in Saudi Arabia. She went on to state that "Canada stands together with the Badawi family in this difficult time, and we continue to strongly call for the release of both Raif and Samar Badawi."⁴ The next day, the official Foreign Policy CAN twitter account mirrored the sentiment, tweeting:

Canada is gravely concerned about additional arrests of civil society and women's rights activists in #SaudiArabia, including Samar Badawi. We urge the Saudi authorities to immediately release them and all other peaceful #humanrights activists.⁵

This tweet was also posted in Arabic from the Canadian Embassy in Riyadh on August 5, 2018.⁶ These sets of tweets reference the arrest of Samar Badawi on August 1, 2018 by the Saudi Arabian government.⁷ Badawi has a loose connection to Canada, as her brother Raif Badawi, who is also an activist imprisoned by the Saudi Regime, has a wife resides in Montreal, Canada.⁸

Following the Canadian tweet in Arabic on August 5, Saudi Arabia denounced the Canadian statements as "entirely false and utterly incorrect."⁹ Some argue that the Saudi response was largely motivated by Canada tweeting these critiques in Arabic, which was interpreted as an embarrassment of the regime in front of its own people.¹⁰ The Saudi Arabians then took concrete actions. They expelled Canada's ambassador, froze trade, and recalled all Saudi Arabian students studying in Canada.¹¹ Saudi Arabia repeatedly asked Canada for an apology concerning this affair. Canada, contrary to popular stereotypes, refused to do so. Trudeau publicly supported the criticism of his colleagues and reiterated their messages. He stated: "We will continue to stand up for Canadian values and human rights

(...) Canadians have always expected our government to speak strongly, firmly and politely about the need to respect human rights around the world.”¹²

Domestic critics disapproved of Trudeau’s handling of this crisis. For instance, John Baird, a long-serving Minister of Foreign Affairs under Stephen Harper, argued that Trudeau’s stance was detrimental to Canadian interests.¹³ Baird and others examining the fallout of this incident pointed to a \$15 billion arms deal by Harper’s conservative government in 2014 as being especially jeopardized by this crisis.¹⁴ Regardless of this criticism, Trudeau refused to apologize or withdraw his statements – although observers have pointed out that Ottawa was wary of further escalation.¹⁵ To this day, Canada has not apologized for or retracted these critiques of the Saudi regime, which has not been beneficial to the relationship between these two states. Clearly, Canada was not motivated by traditional ‘realist’ power motivations, such as economics or other forms of ‘hard’ power. Why, then, did Canada take the stance that they did? In the next section, I will argue that the answer to this question lies in the relationship between Canadian identity and its foreign policy.

Various scholars have examined Canada’s relationship between identity and foreign policy formation. A key theme in these studies is that Canada has long struggled, both as a nation and as a people, to determine its identity.¹⁶ María Teresa Gutiérrez-Haces, a scholar of North American studies, noted this unique situation Canada finds itself in, stating that Canada has a “virtual absence of symbols traditionally sought by other states to create or reinforce the national identity,” likely as a result of the relative youth of the nation, coupled with the transition period away from British influence.¹⁷ For instance, Canada’s distinctive red-and-white maple leaf flag did not emerge until 1964, and Gutiérrez-Haces points to rhetoric by then-Prime Minister Lester B. Pearson indicating this was an explicit move away from Great Britain to craft a distinct symbol for Canadian identity.¹⁸ Gutiérrez-Haces also notes that the absence of a strong national identity was able to guide Canadian foreign policy in unique directions. She argues that a lack of distinct national symbolism and identity to guide foreign policy values allowed Canada to take a unique humanitarian approach to its foreign policy. She specifically notes that the promotion of ‘human values’ began occupying a prominent place in Canadian foreign policy: “Practically every Prime Minister, and everyone else responsible for Canadian foreign policy (...) have always mentioned these values as a key element to explain and justify Canada’s position in the world.”¹⁹ So, given the absence of a traditionally strong national identity, Canadian leaders were able to focus instead on values to define what it means to be Canadian.

Gutiérrez-Haces then goes a step further, arguing that under Pierre Trudeau’s leadership in the 1970s, the humanitarian and human rights approach to Canada’s foreign policy transitioned to be a defining part of national Canadian identity.²⁰ This is especially evident in the 1970 document *Foreign Policy for Canadians*, a publication by the Canadian Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs which details the outlook for foreign policy under Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau. The document is littered with references to the promotion of human rights and internationalism as a part of Canadian identity. Notably, the document claims that much of foreign policy can be oriented around larger, broader goals such as human rights “without unfavourable reaction from the Canadian public.”²¹ The document

goes on to reinforce this point, claiming that “peace in all its manifestations, economic and social progress, environmental control, the development of international law and institutions these are international goals which fall squarely into that category.”²² This clearly demonstrates that liberal ideas have long been supported in Canadian foreign policy formation. Other scholars of Canadian foreign policy have also pointed towards the influence of Canadian foreign policy on Canadian Identity. For instance, Costas Melakopides, a scholar of International Relations, claims that one of his key takeaways from his study of Canadian foreign policy was that “Canadian foreign policy may (...) provide an indirect but compelling answer to the perennial question of Canada's ‘identity,’” supporting the argument by Guitierrez-Haves that Canadian identity is, at least partially, made up of Canada’s human rights and human values approach to foreign policy.²³

The idea that the accomplishments of Canada’s liberal foreign policy approach influence citizens’ views on national identity are reinforced by contemporary views on what it means to be ‘Canadian’. For instance, peacekeeping is viewed by many Canadians as an object of pride and part of what makes Canada special. Professor of Defense Studies Walter Dorn wrote about this phenomenon, detailing the prominent place of peacekeeping in Canadian culture.²⁴ From the mid-80s to mid-90s, polls found that Canadians ranked peacekeeping as a more important priority for their armed forces than the protection of Canadian territory.²⁵ Similarly, many Canadians are proud of the human rights perspectives that are prominent in Canada’s foreign policy. For instance, a 2010 study by Environics found, many Canadians consider their humanitarian actions as one of the top reasons they are proud of being Canadian.²⁶

This trend of Canadian foreign policy reflecting the values that form part of Canadian identity has continued until the present day. The current Liberal government led by Trudeau has, since its election in 2015, been vocal that this approach has been guiding their foreign politics. Stephane Dion, Trudeau’s first Minister of Foreign Affairs, was very indicative of an identity-based approach to Canadian foreign policy when describing his role in 2016. This is reflected well in Dion’s statements on the objective Trudeau mandated for him, which included both an objective to increase Canada’s peacekeeping presence in the UN, and an objective to champion the values of “inclusive and accountable governance, peaceful pluralism and respect for diversity, and human rights, including the rights of women and refugees.”²⁷ Dion went on to state that “I think we can all agree that such a mandate reflects the values and convictions of a Liberal Canadian. But I believe that these objectives are also shared by a number of my fellow citizens whose political affiliations differ from my own.”²⁸ This last sentence is especially telling: Dion, as Minister of Foreign Affairs, believed that human rights values are universally enjoyed by all Canadians, regardless of political affiliation. This approach has been mirrored in statements made by Dion’s successor, Chrystia Freeland.²⁹

By analyzing the modern political history of Canada, it is possible to trace how Canada’s liberal foreign policy values became a part of the country’s national identity; with a particular cause being identifiable as a lack of a strong historic nationalist symbolism. As such, a tentative explanation for why Canada remains so committed to liberal value promotion

within their foreign policy emerges. Since Canada lacks many strong nationalist symbols or a collective sense of identity, politicians were able to present their foreign policy approaches and successes as part what it means to be Canadian – or, in other words, to turn Canadian foreign policy into part of Canadian identity. So, today, when Canadian ideas of human rights get confronted internationally, failing to promote ideas of human rights could cost Canada more than other states: there is a risk that failing to uphold human rights would damage Canadians’ self-perceptions and identity. This could lead to Canada being more willing to protect or promote liberal values, such as human rights, more so than any of their European or American allies.

Still, there has been notable tension over the direction of Canada’s foreign policy over the years. For example, political historian Jack Granatstein writes: “Sometimes, the Canadian people’s desire to press their values overrides their good sense to the point that we seem to believe Canada to be the moral superpower of the world (...) These are important, but we have not gone to war for such things.”³⁰ Granatstein untangles two key themes here: first, Canadians want to believe Canada is a ‘moral superpower,’ presumably emanating values like human rights abroad. Yet, secondly, scholars like Granatstein himself question whether these goals of focusing on identity should supersede more ‘realist’ concerns, noting that while identity is important, both military and economic power should remain central to any foreign policy. This challenge to a values-based conception of Canadian foreign policy was especially potent under Trudeau’s predecessor Harper, who actively sought to remove such a basis.

When Harper’s Conservative government was initially elected in 2006, he set out to make changes to the practice of Canadian foreign policy, and ultimately caused what many labeled as “the most radical shift in foreign policy since the Second World War.”³¹ Observers noted that Harper’s foreign policy contrasted sharply with his Liberal predecessors, with Canada becoming less supportive of multilateralism and more critical of international institutions like the United Nations.³² In addition, while Canada remained committed to the promotion of human rights abroad under Harper, he did remove much of the language of human security language and initiatives which were prominent under his liberal predecessors.³³ Other critics noted that under Harper, economic diplomacy came before everything else, stating “in the Harper era, trade trumps everything.”³⁴ The proud lineage of Liberal foreign policies in Canada had seemingly ended.

Yet, the question arises of how exactly this challenge arose in Canadian politics. After all, previous Canadian conservative governments were content to follow the Canadian foreign policy approach popularized by Pearson and the elder Trudeau. Adam Chapnick, another professor of Defense Studies, describes how former Conservative Prime Minister Brian Mulroney, as well as many other prominent Conservatives, were supportive of the things Harper cut back on, such as multilateralism.³⁵ Chapnick argues that: “The clear pride that the Harper government has displayed in positioning “Canada first” is radical, even if not entirely unprecedented.”³⁶ To understand this shift, we can look to two factors. First, Harper’s rise to power in the Canadian Conservative party should be explored briefly. Stephen Harper rose to prominence as a Member of Parliament for the conservative Reform Party, which was separate from the mainstream Progressive Conservative party. This party largely sought to

represent more conservative values from western Canada from what they saw as an undue influence from the ‘liberal elites’ in Ontario and Quebec.³⁷ As such, when in 2003 the Reform Party merged with the more mainstream Progressive Conservative party, Harper came into the Conservative party with a different ideological background than many other Conservative politicians.

Harper’s distinct ideological background points us towards the second factor: Harper’s revisionist vision of what Canadian identity is. Throughout Harper’s tenure as Prime Minister, he frequently found himself embroiled in issues of multiculturalism and integration. These themes have been detailed well in John McCoy’s 2018 book *Protecting Multiculturalism: Muslims, Security, and Integration in Canada*. Following Pierre Trudeau’s embrace of multiculturalism in 1971, multiculturalism has been used by the state to craft an inclusive Canadian identity focused on uniting all Canadians through a common appreciation of rights and equality.³⁸ However, Harper took a different approach. McCoy writes: “the Harper government instituted a series of measures that altered multiculturalism policy and related policies associated with immigration and citizenship, all of which aimed to reshape ideas of Canadian identity and national belonging.”³⁹ McCoy argues that in place of a multicultural identity, Harper moved Canada towards a more “monoculturalist and assimilationist vision of Canada.”⁴⁰ Steps in this direction included a new emphasis on Canada’s military and colonial history, and an emphasis on a new national identity.⁴¹

This domestic debate on the identity of Canada had direct impacts on the direction of Canadian foreign policy. As we have seen, scholars like Gutierrez-Haces have argued that in the absence of a strong internal national identity, progressive and liberal Canadian foreign policy values like human rights have become part of Canadian identity. Given the focus on crafting a Canadian identity based on multiculturalism, it is no surprise that Canadian foreign policy reflected these liberal principles. After all, as McCoy argued, a Canadian identity based on multiculturalism is based not on national symbolism; instead, it is based on a universal respect for rights and equality.⁴² As such, if one were to attempt to shift the focus of Canadian identity from multiculturalism to a more monoculturalist identity, we should expect to see a similar move away from this global mindset in Canadian foreign policy. In the Harper era, we see both such moves happening: a domestic move away from multiculturalism and a simultaneous move towards a less internationalist foreign policy.

Ultimately, Harper’s governance came to an end. Plagued by various controversies throughout the 2015 campaign including several prominent immigration-related ones Harper’s conservatives finished second place to a resurgent Liberal party led by Trudeau, who managed to form a majority government.⁴³ In the succeeding years, Trudeau reinforced multiculturalism as part of Canadian identity and reintroduced Canada’s brand of liberal, internationalist foreign policy. Despite the challenges by the Harper Conservatives, Canada’s foreign policy returned to prominently reflecting the liberal values many Canadians identify with under Trudeau. As such, using a lens of identity to examine Canada’s foreign policy can be highly informative.

The August 2018 dispute between Canada and Saudi Arabia had lasting consequences for both nations. I now return to this incident, arguing that an identity-based analysis best

explains Canada's response to the crisis. Numerous scholars who have reflected on this incident point to one especially interesting observation: none of Canada's traditional liberal allies came to Canada's support during this conflict.⁴⁴ Thus, some scholars have noticed a trend where Canada is often 'alone in the world' when promoting liberal values to autocratic regimes. For instance, there have been several public critiques of China for human rights abuses as well as the Huawei controversy.⁴⁵ As political scientist Roland Paris writes: "Canada is one of a dwindling group of countries that continue to champion liberal values in the world, including human rights, the rule of law, and democratic governance."⁴⁶ So why, given the lack of support from their traditional allies, did Canada remain committed to a liberal and humanist approach to their foreign policy during the Saudi Arabia dispute?

A more traditionally realist approach focusing on Canadian interests fails to satisfactorily explain Canadian actions. As evidenced by the rhetoric of conservative critics in Canada during the crisis, the more interest-oriented foreign policy approach under Harper would likely have seen Canada back down from the human rights rhetoric due to the damage to the Saudi Arabian-Canadian relationship. While some claim Canada's response was somewhat interest-based as Trudeau arguably balanced the favorable portrayal of Canada as an advocate for human rights and the perseverance of the \$15 billion Saudi arms contract, I contend that such thinking alone is not enough to explain Canada's response entirely.⁴⁷ After all, all of Canada's partners refused to join the country in critiquing Saudi Arabia, remaining suspiciously silent, demonstrating the response that would be expected in of a more interest-oriented state. However, despite the damage that this affair did to Canada's relationship with Saudi Arabia, Canada refused to give in to the relatively straightforward demand of an apology.⁴⁸ If Canada simply apologized or quietly asked Freeland to remove the tweets, the diplomatic fallout would likely have been prevented.

While the interest-based lens fails, I argue that an identity-based lens possesses explanatory value. As explored in this paper, Trudeau has, through both rhetoric and actions, demonstrated that he sees the promotion of human rights abroad as an essential part of what it means to be Canadian. This belief is especially prevalent when examining his statements surrounding the Saudi Arabia dispute, where he often equates human rights and liberal values with 'Canadian values.'⁴⁹ In addition, domestic policies prioritized by Trudeau, such as multiculturalism, strongly align with international values like human rights, as opposed to more nationalist values like state interests. Given this alignment, it should come as no surprise that Canadian foreign policy heavily promotes these international values. If Trudeau were to give in to Saudi demands, this would likely be seen by many in Canada as an abandonment of Canadian values. Perceptions of Canada's role and identity seemed to influence Trudeau's response much more than Canadian interests.

Such posturing by Trudeau to a more domestic audience or identity-constructing goals also did not escape the Saudi Arabians. For instance, in September 2018, Saudi Arabia's Foreign Minister Adel al-Jubair notably stated: "We don't want to be a political football in Canada's domestic politics. Find another ball to play with. It's very easy to fix. Apologize and say you made a mistake," indicating that he saw Canada's fixation on this issue as primarily

arising from domestic politics and not international or foreign policy.⁵⁰ While this may be Saudi Arabia deflecting responsibility from the crisis, the fact that they could reasonably connect Canada's foreign policy moves to domestic political moves is telling.⁵¹ As highlighted by this analysis of the Saudi Arabia-Canada diplomatic dispute of August 2018, there is clear evidence that an identity-based lens is more useful in analyzing the motivations of Canada in this dispute than an interests-based lens. As such, researchers analyzing Canadian foreign policy actions should recognize the value of using an identity-centric lens when drawing conclusions about Canadian actions.

Notes

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² *Ibid.*, 26.

³ Roland Paris, "Alone in the World?: Making Sense of Canada's disputes with Saudi Arabia and China," *International Journal* 74, 1 (2019): 152.

⁴ Chyrstia Freeland (@cafreeland), Twitter, August 2, 2018, <https://twitter.com/cafreeland/status/1025030172624515072>.

⁵ Foreign Policy Canada (@CanadaFP), Twitter, August 3, 2018, <https://twitter.com/CanadaFP/status/10253883326960549889>.

⁶ Canadian Embassy in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (@CanEmbSA), Twitter, August 5, 2018, <https://twitter.com/CanEmbSA/status/1026049114088333313>.

⁷ "Saudi Arabia: Two More Women Human Rights Activists Arrested in Unrelenting Crackdown," Amnesty International, August 1, 2018, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2018/08/saudi-arabia-two-more-women-human-rights-activists-arrested-in-unrelenting-crackdown/>.

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⁹ Foreign Ministry of Saudi Arabia (@KSAmofaEN), Twitter, August 5, 2018, <https://twitter.com/KSAmofaEN/status/1026241364604932096>.

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¹² *Ibid.*

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¹⁶ See Jean-Phillipe Therien and Gordon Mace, "Identity and Foreign Policy: Canada as a Nation of the Americas," in *Latin American Politics & Society* (June 2013); Denis Stairs, "The Political Culture of Canadian Foreign Policy," in *Canadian Journal of Political Science*, 15.4 (Dec. 1982).

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¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 235.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 236.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 238.

²¹ Mitchell Sharp. *Foreign Policy for Canadians* (Ottawa: Queen's Printer for Canada, 1970), 11.

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²⁴ Walter A. Dorn, "Canadian Peacekeeping: Proud Tradition, Strong Future?" *Canadian Foreign Policy* 12.2 (2005): 7.

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- ³⁴ Ibbitson, "How Harper Transformed Canada's Foreign Policy."
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- ³⁷ Duane, "Stephen Harper and the Transformation of Canadian Foreign Policy," 493.
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Book Review

The Last Slave Ships: New York and the End of the Middle Passage

John Harris (Yale University Press, 2020)

Marcella Schute | Roosevelt Institute for American Studies / Leiden University

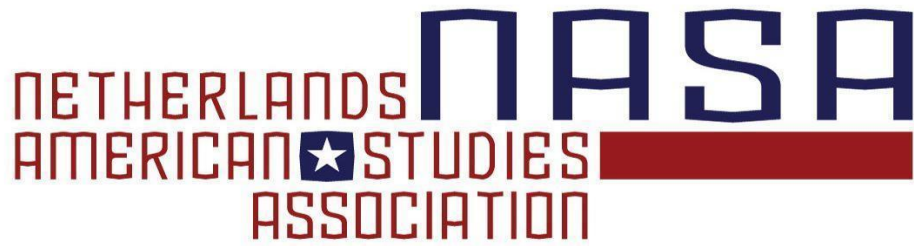
This book review was written independently for the Netherlands American Studies Review during Schute's PhD in American Studies

Between 1853 and 1867, long after the United States government had outlawed the transatlantic slave trade, approximately 474 ships sailed along the United States–Africa–Cuba triangular route to transport African captives across the Atlantic. Around 200,000 men, women, and children were secretly taken onboard these ships, with tens of thousands dying along the way. In *The Last Slave Ships: New York and the End of the Middle Passage* (2020), John Harris retells the troubling history of US involvement in this illegal slave trade.

Harris explores how, especially after 1850, the US played a crucial role in the trade. Although he is not the first historian to make this claim – W.E.B. Du Bois being his most famous predecessor with *The Suppression of the African Slave Trade to the United States of America, 1638-1870* (1896) – Harris places this story in a broader context of slavery and capitalism. He compellingly argues that slave traders were able to conduct a large illegal trade due to the position of the ruling pro-slavery Democratic Party, which had little interest in suppressing US involvement in the trade to Cuba at the time.

Beginning in 1808 with the ban on the transatlantic slave trade, Harris carefully traces the relevant actions of the US government until 1867. The government went from ignoring anti-slave trade laws, to actively participating in the illegal trade, to eventually shutting it down completely. The pinnacle of the book is the striking story of how New York – an abolitionist Northern city – turned into a key hub for slave traffickers after 1850. In the fifteen years that followed, the powerful United States–Africa–Cuba nexus became the slave trade's final triangle, with Lower Manhattan at the center. In the end, not the US government but a British spying network became most successful in combatting the illegal trade. Suppression efforts by the American government only became effective after the election of Republican President Abraham Lincoln.

The Last Slave Ships is both complex and clear. Harris reconstructs complicated parts of international diplomatic history and successfully connects them, creating an illuminating narrative. Although the book is sometimes difficult to follow because of an unnecessary number of details, like the names of irrelevant slave traders and government officials, it remains a page-turner. *The Last Slave Ships* changes our understanding of the impact of the illegal trade, the politics of slavery across the Atlantic World, and even of New York City specifically – all a troubling reminder that appearances can be deceiving.



Call for Papers

The Netherlands American Studies Review is the student journal of the Netherlands American Studies Association (NASA). First published in the Spring of 2020, the Netherlands American Studies Review aims to showcase excellent student work from Dutch universities related to North American history, politics, literature, and society.

Submission Guidelines

We welcome papers written by bachelor's, master's, and PhD students from Dutch universities. Students do not have to be enrolled in an American Studies program, but submissions must be relevant to at least one of the (sub)fields mentioned above. Recent graduates can send in work written in the last two years.

Students can submit either **book reviews (350-400 words)** or **papers (2000-5000 words)**. Papers may be based on a thesis, as long as they are shortened to meet the word limit.

All submissions must meet the following requirements:

- Submissions must include the author's **name, university, the title of the course and program** it was written for (specifying BA/MA/PhD), and the **semester** it was written in.
- Texts must meet the **word count** mentioned above, references included.
- All authors must use **Chicago Style with endnotes (not footnotes)** for citations. If you are unfamiliar with this style, please consult www.chicagomanualofstyle.org.
- Documents must be submitted in Word format (**.doc or .docx**).
- Texts must be written in **American English**. Please check your text for spelling and grammar before submitting.

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