EPITAPH

american studies journal

SPRING

MMXXVI

ISSUE III

epitaph

Biannual Undergraduate American Studies Journal

The Hacettepe University Department of American Culture and Literature

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from the board…

We are proud to present the Spring 2026 edition of Epitaph: Biannual Undergraduate American Studies Journal. This issue gathers scholarship and creative work that moves across centuries and genres while sharing single preoccupation: how texts, objects, and bodies carry power far beyond their original moments of creation.

The academic contributions in this edition interrogate the long afterlives of meaning. Aarón Rodríguez opens the issue with a theoretically ambitious reading of the Book of Revelation through Actor-Network Theory, arguing that the text is an agential blueprint one whose eschatological logic finds disturbing new life in contemporary American political movements such as Turning Point USA. Anna Van Steenbergen turns to Harper Lee's *To Kill a Mockingbird* to examine the productive tension between narrator and focalizer, demonstrating how the gap between adult Scout and child Scout is the very architecture of the novel's moral development. Helin Eylül Polat reads William Faulkner's *As I Lay Dying* through Freud, Lacan, and Irigaray, tracing how Addie Bundren's rejection of patriarchally imposed femininity restructures the psychological formation of everyone around her, even and especially, after her death. Jones Bigliardi's historical analysis of the Zimmermann Telegram cuts through the surface absurdity of the gambit to reveal the strategic logic beneath: for Germany in 1917, American involvement was rather an inevitability to be managed than a risk to be avoided.

The creative work in this issue speaks with equal seriousness. The poems of Berenis Öztürk, Halide Zeynep Durmaz, and Yunus Eren Şenel confront betrayal, indifference, and the failure of the world to witness private grief. Şenel's "Indifference" in particular builds toward a formally striking finale that enacts, through sheer sonic accumulation, the pressure of a silence that demands to be broken.

Read together, these works ask what it means for a text, an image, or a body to outlast its context to keep acting on the world long after the conditions that produced it have changed. That question feels pressing now. In a political moment defined by the weaponization of historical narrative and the recycling of old anxieties through new platforms, American Studies may offer the tools to trace where these scripts come from.

We are grateful to our contributors for their rigor and courage, to our editorial team for their care, and to the Hacettepe University Department of American Culture and Literature for their unwavering support. To our readers: these pages were made for you. We hope they disturb you in the right ways.

Kind regards,

Berkay Kaan Kabadayı & İremsu Sak

Editors-in-Chief

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The Book of Revelation: Actant Agency, Textual Origins, Hermeneutics, and Political Reinterpretation in the U.S.

Aarón Rodríguez

University of Córdoba

Introduction

The Book of Revelation has long been approached primarily as a theological and exegetical text concerned with the symbolism, narrative structure, and doctrinal essence of Christian eschatology. While such approaches have yielded substantial insight into its literary and religious potential, considerably less scholarly attention has been devoted to Revelation as a material artefact whose historical production, transmission, and contemporary redeployment actively participate in shaping social imagination, as well as ontological, temporal, and political telos. Originating within an ordinary social landscape of late-antique Asia Minor, and continuing to circulate through diverse paradigms, Revelation persists as an object affecting agency whose effects extend beyond the sphere of theological claim alone.

This paper approaches Revelation as a materially mediated and materially mediating text whose agency unfolds across historically distinct yet structurally interconnected networks of actors, institutions, and artefacts. Drawing on Actor–Network Theory and hermeneutics, the study examines how Revelation's context, architecture, and transmission configure far more than doctrinal closure, temporal imminence and eschatological totality. By tracing Revelation's trajectory from its conditions of production in seclusion, through its contested manuscript and canonical history, to its contemporary political appropriation within movements such as Turning Point USA in the United States, the paper argues that Revelation functions not merely as a narrative of the end, but as an agential blueprint through which the end is repeatedly rendered imaginable and actionable beyond the limits of canonical narrative. Ultimately, this asks how the Book of Revelation can be understood through an actant-network perspective, as a non-human actor whose historical context, transmission, and contemporary political redeployment mediate historical closure from late antiquity to the present.

Revelation here, beyond its theological sense, is treated as an object affecting agency that also binds chronological, moral, political, societal, and individual expectations by shaping human relationships not only with the text but with the world at large. In this way, it is not human self-agency alone that can account for a book's overall impact and the reactive potential generated across authoritative actors and audiences; rather, the text's artefactual, agential-stimulatory potential is equally relevant within the context of broader conceptual transmissibility and semiotic stabilization[1].

For example, Latour would argue that a text, by its own means, has the power to influence human behavior through its inanimate, constitutive components, which stimulate intellectual contemplation first and physical action later, both of which would not exist in this case without artefactual mediation. In this sense, written material form itself operates as an active mediating interface rather than a neutral carrier of meaning.

Whether the objectual locus can remain independent outside social networks remains an ontological question and a matter of further discussion that this paper does not seek to answer. Nevertheless, there is little question regarding the potentiality of subject–object actant interdependency, as both appear to generate interacting networks of nodal mediation in connection with textual traditions.

Offering an additional academic angle, this study acknowledges that, within the wider academic study of religion, certain religious worldviews, including specific segments of Christianity, do not entertain the idea of developmental tension between society and objects, since such an ontological chasm is instead resolved through the gatekeeping of continuous divine intervention. The epistemological divide that follows can, however, arguably be salvaged through the Johannine logic of the concept of λόγος found in John 1:1, in that the Word (λόγος), God, and humans, the latter as its receptors, share a network of actant interdependency, which both social

[1] By *semiotic stabilization* I refer to the process through which symbolic forms, narrative patterns, and interpretive associations are rendered relatively lasting and reused through material inscription, transmission, and accepted use, thereby limiting interpretive uncertainty and enabling signs to operate as reliable means of meaning, authority, and action across social contexts (Latour 2005,.130; Law 1992, 386).

constructivism and religious orthodoxy can be read as accommodating analogously.

Against the backdrop of contrasting angles, this paper focuses on Latour's Actor–Network model, a theory that suggests society does not precede action but is continuously assembled through associations between interacting actors, both living and non-living. In this sense, humans' capacity to mediate meaning, telos, and action can also be attributed, especially, to their relation to objects. Artefacts thus become vessels of delegated agency, operating in human-like ways alongside human actors. In this sense, Revelation, as an artefact, is approached as a non-human actant, materially influencing agency through semiotic architecture, institutional authorization, textual transmission, and political redeployment.[2]

Revelation does not merely establish an end-times narrative at the level of interpretation, but actively intervenes in social reality by fixing "the end" across heterogeneous networks of actors and artefacts in place and time.[3] Within this framework, both the early manuscript tradition that sustains Revelation's canonical, eschatological claims and the contemporary political reframing of this book, for example within Turning Point USA today, are analytically treated as distinct yet interconnected mediating nodes within the same network of delegated agency, which continue to actualize.[4]

Book of Revelation, exile, and material location

The author of the Book of Revelation is believed to write from exile.[5] This conviction was meant for those promoting "superstition" in the Roman Empire. This hardship if true would consciously or unconsciously affect John's appeal to a marginalized, afflicted, and low-income milieu that could be experiencing similar

[2] Bruno Latour, *Reassembling the Social: An Introduction to Actor-network-theory* (Oxford University Press, 2005), 85, http://hdl.handle.net/2027/heb.32135; John Law, "Notes on the Theory of the Actor-network: Ordering, Strategy, and Heterogeneity," *Systemic Practice and Action Research* 5, no. 4 (August 1, 1992): 383, https://doi.org/10.1007/bf01059830.

[3] Latour, *Reassembling the Social: An Introduction to Actor-Network-Theory*, 132; David Morgan, *The Embodied Eye: Religious Visual Culture and the Social Life of Feeling* (University of California Press, 2012); Law, "Notes on the Theory of the Actor-Network: Ordering, Strategy, and Heterogeneity," 384.

[4] H.A.G. Houghton, David C. Parker, and Holger Strutwolf, *The New Testament in Antiquity and Byzantium: Traditional and Digital Approaches to its Texts and Editing. A Festschrift for Klaus Wachtel* (Walter de Gruyter GmbH & Co KG, 2019), 234, https://www.perlego.com/book/1358024; Latour, *Reassembling the Social: An Introduction to Actor-Network-Theory*, 133.

[5] Craig R. Koester, *Revelation and the End of All Things*, 2nd ed. (Eerdmans, 2018), 57, https://www.perlego.com/book/3044719.

situations,[6] which while important, may not have been his sole envisioned target group, as the academic consensus is that early Christianity was not restricted to the low strata of society.[7] These appeals are present throughout the text[8].

Moreover, John, or John the Seer, whose historical identity is not fully clear beyond his distinction from John the Apostle, and whose authorship of the final book of the canon may also be pseudonymous or pseudepigraphic,[9] writes from Patmos, in the modern-day Aegean region of Turkey. Patmos itself was an ordinary island in the Aegean Sea with a relatively small population, a setting that would have directly affected his literary production.

In Revelation, for example, the oppressed classes, in this case the uncompromising Christians defined as Saints, are finally exalted over the so-called corrupt ruling and dominant elites of Babylon within a narrative of systemic overturn. This class inversion could be read as a sociopsychological response to the severe mistreatment experienced by John, Christians in general without Roman citizenship, and by socially marginal populations under imperial structures within the Roman Empire, as well as by uncompromising Christians unwilling to undergo cultural adaptation within a pagan society.[10]

The underlying evidence of socioeconomic stratification and experienced, complex, systemic inequality also helps explain John's positioning of the eschaton[11] as taking place within his own generation. This is largely congruent with Second Temple Jewish apocalyptic expectations of that time. Such is corroborated by the Dead Sea Scrolls, and more specifically by the reconstruction of the worldview of communities from Qumran.[12]

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[6] Koester, *Revelation and the End of All Things*, 43–57.

[7] Paul Boyer, *When Time Shall Be No More: Prophecy Belief in Modern American Culture* (Harvard University Press, 1994), 55, https://www.perlego.com/book/1978645.

[8] **Revelation 7:14–16**: "These are they who have come out of the great ordeal… they will hunger no more, and thirst no more…"; "The fact that no mention is made of the economic poverty of the other six Christian communities suggests that the situation of this congregation is unusual" (Aune et al., 2017, pp.162).

[9] David Aune, *Revelation 1-5, Volume 52A*, ed. Glenn W. Barker, John D.W. Watts, and Ralph Martin (Zondervan Academic, 2017), xlix, https://www.perlego.com/book/558077.

[10] Steven J. Friesen, *Imperial Cults and the Apocalypse of John: Reading Revelation in the Ruins* (Oxford UP, 2001), 192; Aune, *Revelation 1-5, Volume 52A*, 162.

[11] A Greek term used in theological discourse to refer to the end or final consummation of the present world order.

[12] John J. Collins, "The Apocalyptic Genre," in *The Apocalyptic Imagination: An Introduction to Jewish Apocalyptic Literature* (Eerdmans, 2016), https://www.perlego.com/book/2015453; James C. VanderKam, *The Dead Sea Scrolls Today, Rev. Ed*

In addition, functionally, the author's isolative status and semi-peripheral or peripheral location depending on his reference point, are approached not as an external account, but as part of the biographical conditions shaping Revelation's semiotic architecture, its circulation potential, and the mediation of eschatological imminence. For example, Revelation 1:9[13] schematically operationalizes the author's lived positionality of social isolation by incorporating it into the storyline through the author's participation in the "tribulation." In this way, John's lived experience becomes structurally formative of how ultimate reality is configured within the text, circulating also as a testimony about the end of history on an individual level.

Qumran, Daniel, and Jewish apocalyptic inheritance

Revelation has been informed not only through authorial context but also through cosmological imagination. The theological imaginary of the Qumran community, often identified with the Essenes, was strongly shaped by the Book of Daniel and Enochic apocalypses such as the Book of Enoch.[14] However, the Book of Revelation's apocalyptic framework, with its long-recognized Jewish heritage,[15] does not draw on a single, uniform stream of Jewish tradition. Extra-canonical material, such as the Book of Enoch and the Damascus Document, further demonstrates the diversity of apocalyptic and related interpretative sources circulating in the period.[16] This suggests that John's apocalyptic motif is not simply inherited from Judaism in a singular doctrinal sense, but rather from a broader and more heterogeneous Jewish apocalyptic literary environment.

Also, interpretatively, it has been observed in the Qumran pesharim[17] that the treatment of these texts as scriptural mysteries concerning then-current times, rather than past events, reflects an interpretative style with roots in mantic wisdom[18] and divination in the ancient Near East, but also present in the Hellenistic milieu through, for example, the Demotic

(Eerdmans, 2010), 101, https://www.perlego.com/book/3556946.

[13] "I John, your brother, who share with you in Jesus the tribulation and the kingdom and the patient endurance, was on the island called Patmos on account of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus".

[14] Collins, "The Dead Sea Scrolls," in *The Apocalyptic Imagination: An Introduction to Jewish Apocalyptic Literature*.

[15] E. Hirsch, *Books and Readers in the Early Church*, 1st ed. (Yale University Press, 2015), 52, https://www.perlego.com/book/1089242/.

[16] Collins, "The Dead Sea Scrolls," in *The Apocalyptic Imagination: An Introduction to Jewish Apocalyptic Literature*.

[17] The biblical commentary found on the Dead Sea Scrolls.

[18] Knowledge obtained through divination.

Chronicle.[19] This thereby suggests a broader genealogical transmission of apocalyptic interpretative practices that likely influenced John, and which continue to shape the way the Book of Revelation is still understood today as relating to imminent or near-future events.[20]

At the same time, this apocalyptic imagination was not formed in isolation from the surrounding Greco-Roman literary world. It is highly likely that John, or whoever wrote under his title, was also both advertently or inadvertently shaped by the symbolic and narrative grammars of Mediterranean literary culture. One of the most notorious representatives of this wider cultural repertoire is Homeric works. Certain narrative patterns and symbolic oppositions found in the Book of Revelation, such as the portrayal of God's ultimate title "I am the One who is," can be read as interacting with long-standing Greco-Roman epic, mythological, and popular traditions, especially in relation to the phrase "Zeus was, Zeus is, Zeus shall be".[21]

The Greco-Roman influence in John's work is also explicit in his use of Greek, a language primarily used for cultural, commercial, and administrative exchange in the eastern Mediterranean. John's literacy in Greek, when literacy of this language itself was not universally mastered across Christians in the Palestine region of the time,[22] suggests access to a form of likely restricted intellectual and scribal infrastructure and circle, including the possibility of progressive intermingling with trained copyists and scribes with access to knowledge on professional writing.[23]

In addition, a combination of the private, official, and philosophical epistolary features found in New Testament books, including the Book of Revelation, can be taken as suggesting that the author (or authors) may not have fitted comfortably within the widely established literary elite of the Greco-Roman epistolary world, often described as belles lettres.[24] This also places it at some distance from the more formalized conventions of Greco-Roman literary genres,

[19] Collins, "The Dead Sea Scrolls," in *The Apocalyptic Imagination: An Introduction to Jewish Apocalyptic Literature*.
[20] Koester, *Revelation and the End of All Things*, 27.
[21] Aune, *Revelation 1-5, Volume 52A*, 31; Koester, *Revelation and the End of All Things*, 67.
[22] Hirsch, *Books and Readers in the Early Church*, 17.
[23] William V. Harris, *Ancient Literacy*, 1st Harvard University Press pbk. ed (Harvard University Press, 1991), 177; Hirsch, *Books and Readers in the Early Church*, 135.
[24] Hirsch, *Books and Readers in the Early Church*, 51.

including aspects of philosophical and rhetorical letter-writing traditions, given its distinctive combination of epistolary framing and apocalyptic disclosure rather than reliance on classical literary mediation such as the oracle.[25] Even so, this may point toward a different, perhaps even emergent, literary configuration, as Christian apocalypses become more focused on individual destiny than the collective, in contrast to many Jewish apocalyptic texts.[26] Given that Revelation also adopts an epistolary form, some scholars have even suggested that this type of writing may have been associated with a particular societal stratum, although such correlations remain interpretive rather than definitive.[27]

Furthermore, analytically, the Qumran community's reliance on Daniel, the circulation of extra-canonical apocalyptic texts such as 2 Ezra[28], and Revelation's resonance with Greco-Roman literature are approached not primarily as lines of intellectual influence, but as part of a shared network of interpretive authorization and material transmission through which the apocalypse as a thematic and teleological horizon became recognizable, legitimated, and pursued. At the level of textual inscription and semiotic architecture, Revelation's symbolic oppositions, narrative sequencing, and eschatological telos emerge within a heterogeneous literary environment in which Jewish apocalyptic repertoires and Mediterranean epics jointly structure how final closure is narratively stabilized and rearticulated over time.

At the same time, John's use of Greek, together with its syntactic irregularities and the persistence of Semitic cognitive and discursive patterns, points to the infrastructural conditions of literacy, scribal mediation, and class-awareness educational networks that made writing and circulation possible in the first place. In this way, intertextual diversity, linguistic hybridity, and stylistic repetition function not merely as markers of cultural mixture, but as mediating conditions through which Revelation's apocalyptic expectations will continue to exist and even actualize.

Manuscripts, canon, and material transmission

[25] Hirsch, *Books and Readers in the Early Church*, 52.
[26] Hirsch, *Books and Readers in the Early Church*, 52.
[27] Harris, *Ancient Literacy*, 21; Hirsch, *Books and Readers in the Early Church*, 51.

[28] Also called 4 Ezra; **2 Ezra 4:26**: "Then answered he me, and said, the more thou searchest, the more thou shalt marvel; for the world hasteth fast to pass away".

Revelation's manuscript tradition is equally revealing of the eschatological worldview of the time, which was actualized across time. Compared with the Gospels and the major Pauline letters[29], the Book of Revelation survives in a notably smaller number of manuscripts.[30] This pattern is closely tied to its limited liturgical use, since Revelation was never part of the Greek lectionary[31] and therefore did not circulate through the same ecclesiastical reading practices that reinforced the canonical authority of other New Testament texts within early Christianity. Its broader history of uneven reception and use further shaped the conditions under which the text was copied and transmitted.[32]

Paradoxically, it is this lack of circulation that also offers affective suspense, partly enabling its survival through mystery, and, ironically, through its borderline non-existence. However, it is worth noting that an increase in Revelation's manuscripts occurs especially at pressing moments during the late Byzantine Empire, nearing its final phase in the face of threat posed by the Ottomans, who would later cause Byzantium's fall. This suggests a rise in the circulation of Revelation manuscripts in times of systemic collapse or inversion, on par with patterns of systemic finality found in Revelation's narrative.[33]

The manuscripts that have been preserved are often, especially in their earliest witnesses, fragmentary, although the broader tradition of Byzantine Christianity is represented by a substantial number of relatively complete and continuous-text manuscripts. It is precisely these diverse witnesses that form part of the basis of modern critical editions and translations.[34] Through eclectic critical methods, scholars attempt to reconstruct the text on a word-by-word basis by weighing variant readings across the manuscript tradition, in a process that differs significantly from early printed editions such as that of Erasmus, who, for example, worked with a Greek manuscript of the Book of Revelation that lacked its final leaf and therefore supplied the missing verses

[29] Romans, 1st Corinthians, 2nd Corinthians, Galatians, Philippians, 1 Thessalonians, and Philemon.
[30] Houghton, Parker, and Strutwolf, *The New Testament in Antiquity and Byzantium: Traditional and Digital Approaches to Its Texts and Editing. A Festschrift for Klaus Wachtel*, 64.
[31] Liturgical book, which contained the scriptural passages to be read in church gatherings, specially within Byzantine Christianity.
[32] Hirsch, *Books and Readers in the Early Church*, 215–17.
[33] Hirsch, *Books and Readers in the Early Church*, 233.
[34] Houghton, Parker, and Strutwolf, *The New Testament in Antiquity and Byzantium: Traditional and Digital Approaches to Its Texts and Editing. A Festschrift for Klaus Wachtel*, 227–28.

through retro-translation from the Latin tradition. Where the manuscript evidence is insufficient, which may not be as frequent as sometimes presumed, educated conjectures are occasionally proposed for readings that may originally have stood in the text.[35] These material observations are not merely technical; they reflect deeper historical processes of Christian identity formation and authority negotiation that continue to shape Christian culture.

Analytically, Revelation's manuscript tradition is not approached merely as a problem of textual survival, but as a marker of the contested infrastructures and circles through which the text circulates and continues to acquire an operational dimension.[36] Compared with the Gospels and major Pauline letters[37], the relative scarcity of surviving manuscripts of the Book of Revelation has often been associated with its more limited liturgical use and its comparatively unstable canonical status in some early Christian contexts, factors which shaped not only its canonical reception but also its transmission history.[38] The text's own implicit expectation of circulation and copying, together with the material reality of scribal transmission and its attendant hazards, already places it within a history of both intentional mediated transmission and unintentional alteration.[39]

The fragmentary state of surviving witnesses within the broader biblical textual tradition continues this trajectory, making the text recoverable only through critical processes of selection, contextualization, and reconstruction.[40] In this sense, Revelation's manuscript history not only materializes broader dynamics of Christian identity formation and textual negotiation across time, but also shows how apocalyptic closure is sustained not only through circulatory history, but through an ongoing process of textual reconstruction and contingent transmission. In short, due to Revelation's textual and interpretive malleability since its inception, an open field for interpretive reconfiguration continues to remain, allowing for new mediating nodes within its

[35] Houghton, Parker, and Strutwolf, *The New Testament in Antiquity and Byzantium: Traditional and Digital Approaches to Its Texts and Editing. A Festschrift for Klaus Wachtel*, 242–43.
[36] Houghton, Parker, and Strutwolf, *The New Testament in Antiquity and Byzantium: Traditional and Digital Approaches to Its Texts and Editing. A Festschrift for Klaus Wachtel*, 232–33.
[37] Romans, 1 Corinthians, 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Philippians, 1 Thessalonians, Philemon.
[38] Hirsch, *Books and Readers in the Early Church*, 215–217;
[39] Hirsch, *Books and Readers in the Early Church*, 104–6.
[40] Hirsch, *Books and Readers in the Early Church*.

broader network of transmission and reception.

Contemporary political apocalypticism and symbolic reuse in the USA

In this inviting modern interpretative context, movements such as Turning Point USA have emerged in contemporary political scenarios. Supporters of these movements frequently describe themselves as culturally displaced, politically silenced, and systemically victimized by what is functionally perceived as a new imperial order, a contemporary analogue to Babylon or Rome. Within this affective climate, Christian apocalyptic themes, many of which are deeply rooted in the Book of Revelation, resurface within contemporary media, organizational, and publishing infrastructures that enable their political recirculation and stabilization.[41]

More broadly, given that such phenomena occur during a period of perceived U.S. global hegemony, in which the resurgence of apocalyptic patterns has been widely noted, parallels with earlier imperial decline narratives, such as those associated with the Byzantine Empire, have occasionally been suggested, and the renewed circulation of "last things" rhetoric is at least analytically notable. This can be read, at a comparative level, as echoing the Qumranic mode of interpreting apocalyptic texts as mysteries refracted through present and anticipated historical conditions.

Hermeneutically, hence, apocalyptic and eschatological categories are thus systematically resignified to functionally serve political commentary in the face of perceived American reputational decline in the global stage and threats to America's hegemonism.[42] The symbolic figure of Babylon[43] becomes a representation of an allegedly corrupt political and cultural system that constantly seeks America's destruction,[44] while the counter-force that must disavow it once in for all is reimagined as a white-Christian nationalist state, rhetorically constructed as the avatar of "the Lamb's New heavens and Earth".[45] The resulting eschatological landscape paves the

[41] Andrew L. Whitehead and Samuel L. Perry, *Taking America Back for God : Christian Nationalism in the United States* (Oxford University Press, 2020); Boyer, *When Time Shall Be No More: Prophecy Belief in Modern American Culture*.
[42] Boyer, *When Time Shall Be No More: Prophecy Belief in Modern American Culture*, 253.
[43] In this paragraph, there is a new political resignification of Revelation 17:5: "And on her forehead was written a name of mystery: "Babylon the great, mother of harlots and of earth's abominations."
[44] Boyer, *When Time Shall Be No More: Prophecy Belief in Modern American Culture*, 253.
[45] Whitehead and Perry, *Taking America Back for God : Christian Nationalism in the United States*, 78.

way for moralizing cosmologies that especially arise under the impression of so-called oppressive and marginalizing systems, enabling both passive and active forms of resistance, for example, the sacralization of military prowess through proud enrollment in the armed forces.[46]

Functionally again, this ideological dynamic is sustained through contemporary political oral tradition that operates as anchors of popular collective identity. Within the Turning Point USA community, the political discourse often associated with the so-called "MAGA doctrine"[47], greatly circulated by the passing figure of Charlie Kirk, plays a central role. While it would be an exaggeration to treat such "doctrine" as equivalent to that of the Bible, especially given that contemporary political movements are far less book-centered than early Christian communities, the affective function of such discourses as mediating nodes of agency within an actant-network relationship remains comparable to the effect the Revelation's agential stimulation over believers.[48]

A typical paraphrase of the tenants of this contemporary political religion reads: a nation stands at a decisive and dangerous turning point; powerful hidden cultural and political forces are reshaping its identity; and a younger generation is called to awaken, recognize the threat, and actively defend the country's moral and constitutional foundations before they are permanently lost[49]. This appeal to urgency evokes a sense of irreversible catastrophe and constructs political action as a form of salvific responsibility. In this way, catastrophe is materially codified as something that can be either triggered or prevented through inevitable actions of supporters themselves, an interpretive logic that closely mirrors certain Christian theological traditions in which human agency is understood as participating in the realization of the apocalyptic end.[50]

[46] Boyer, *When Time Shall Be No More: Prophecy Belief in Modern American Culture*, 50; Whitehead and Perry, *Taking America Back for God : Christian Nationalism in the United States*, 78.

[47] In this paragraph, there is a new political resignification of Revelation 22:7: "And behold, I am coming soon. Blessed is he who keeps the words of the prophecy of this book".

[48] Katherine Stewart, *The Power Worshippers : Inside the Dangerous Rise of Religious Nationalism* (Bloomsbury Publishing, 2020), 270–71.

[49] In this paragraph, there is a new political resignification of Revelation 3:3: "Remember then what you received and heard; keep that, and repent. If you will not wake up, I will come like a thief, and you will not know at what hour I will come upon you".

[50] Boyer, *When Time Shall Be No More: Prophecy Belief in Modern American Culture*, 55.

Hermeneutically, thus, Charlie Kirk's role, particularly in diagnosing the present political moment as one of moral collapse and in exhorting audiences to side with the forces of so-called good, assumes the functional posture of an apocalyptic seer. In this sense, he can be read as a contemporary "John the Seer"[51]. This twenty-first-century figure constructs an ontological narrative grounded in a specific genre of Christian theology and a specific strand of conservative political ideology, which inform Christian nationalism.[52]

At the same time, this label remains deeply contested. Even within Christianity, many reject the idea that the essence of the faith can or should be articulated through historically contingent political projects. What is ultimately being asserted is a form of divine politics: a claim that a nation's political order, cultural identity, and institutional authority are to be organized under a presumed, preordained divine mandate. Such claims rely on politically motivated interpretations of biblical material and represent a contemporary reconfiguration of ancient apocalyptic frameworks within modern ideological struggle.[53]

Conclusion

In conclusion, Revelation as a book can mediate agency within an actant-network framework beyond its own important theological claims. The socioeconomic, sociopolitical, and sociopsychological conditions, as well as the textual and canonical tradition it emerged from, are important in laying the foundations to understand the author's motif, whose identity still remains uncertain. Despite some academic consensus regarding intentionality and historiography, the fact that, since its début, the last revelation has experienced manuscript fragmentation, unstable circulation, and uneven audience reception, unlike other books of the New Testament, has left its thematic finality unresolved, making it open to transtemporal cyclicality, frequently reconfiguring affect, telos, action, and contemporary political redeployment.

Affectively, it redeploys the expectation of redemption and justice, especially in contexts of perceived injustice. Teleologically, it brings about systemic

[51] In this paragraph, there is a new political resignification of Revelation 1:3: "Blessed is he who reads aloud the words of the prophecy, and blessed are those who hear, and who keep what is written therein; for the time is near".

[52] Whitehead and Perry, *Taking America Back for God : Christian Nationalism in the United States*, 80.
[53] Gorski, *American Covenant: A History of Civil Religion from the Puritans to the Present*, 153.

overturn, in which reality starts anew under the promise of a utopian state of affairs. Actively, it calls on the listener not to compromise with the status quo, but to resist concession until the end, functionally understood as the unavoidable telos of a "New Heaven and New Earth." Politically, it prompts contemporary politicians to make sense of a regime's decline as part of a cosmic plan, where even total collapse is interpreted as divinely ordained.

Hence, ontologically, Revelation's contingent agency is trans-substantial in that it exacerbates the subject's experience of containment within a specific matter, time, place, or worldview, becoming instead an enduring sociological mechanism through which systems can reimagine themselves beyond their original constraints. In other words, as an actant within an actant-network relationship, the Book of Revelation moves beyond its initial material boundaries to reorganize foundational concepts of matter, space, and time. In this sense, it remains an agency capable of continual political actualization and recycling for the sake of systemic survival.

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Through the Eyes of a Child: A Difference of Opinion between Narrator and Focalizer in Harper Lee's *To Kill a Mockingbird*

Anna Van Steenbergen

Ghent University

Abstract:

This paper examines the maturation of the protagonist Scout Finch in Harper Lee's *To Kill a Mockingbird*. Her coming-of-age trajectory is enhanced through the use of an autodiegetic narrator, in the first part of the novel, the distinction between narrator and focalizer is evident. In the second part of the novel, however, the overlay between narrator and focalizer gradually decreases suggesting an increasing alignment between the perspective of the narrator, who is much older than the focalizer, and the perspective of the child focalizer. Lee's narrative technique demonstrates the influence of social events on a young child's perspective of the world as well as the critical thinking a child can exhibit on her surroundings.

Any novel and its storyline are greatly influenced by its narrator and focalizer. These two literary devices play a distinct role in how the story is told (the narrator) and through whose perspective it is perceived (the focalizer), or simply put "who tells and who sees".[1] Throughout American literary history, authors have frequently employed child narrators, as in the famous American novel *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* written by Mark Twain.[2] Following this tradition, Harper Lee, author of *To Kill a Mockingbird*, chose to tell her story through the eyes and ears of the six-year-old child Scout Finch. The effect of using a young narrator is to present the reader the events of the storyline through the voice of a child, resulting in a less nuanced perspective on the racial and social injustice of Maycomb County.

However, Scout Finch is not only the narrator of the story; she is also its focalizer. This means that the story is guided by her

[1] Jürgen Pieters, *Leeskwesties* (Owl Press, 2020), 244.

[2] Mushtaq Abdulhaleem Mohammed Fattah and May Hayder Abd-Alhadi, "Child Narration in Harper Lee's 'To Kill a Mockingbird," *Majallat Jāmi'at Kūyah Lil-'ulūm Al-Insānīyah Wa-Alijtimā'īyah* 3, no. 1 (2020): 151.

thoughts on the events, as the definition goes "that what the person sees".[3] Holly Blackford, in her literary analysis, emphasizes that the use of first-person narration by a child reveals not only the child's simplification regarding the surrounding events, but also provides their own perspective and opinions on complex situations, thus the focalization.[4] It is therefore important to distinguish between the focalizer, six-year-old Scout, and the narrator, the older Scout looking back at the events, when reading *To Kill a Mockingbird*. This distinction mediates between the feelings of the insider (the six-year-old Scout) and the outsider (the older narrator).[5] However, it seems that previous scholars' analyses fail to emphasize the subjectivity of the narrator and her influence on the novel, mainly focusing on the unreliability of the focalizer. According to Maria Nikolajeva, the influence of the narrator's opinion has just as a great of an impact on the events of a novel.[6] This leads to the question if this distinction between the narrator's subjectivity and that of the focalizer is present in Lee's novel.

Therefore, in this paper, I argue that in *To Kill a Mockingbird* Harper Lee combines an autodiegetic narrator, meaning the narrator is the protagonist of the story, with a child focalizer. This allows her to not only describe racial injustice in the 1930s through a child's eyes but enables her as well to demonstrate their different understanding regarding the events that occur in the novel between the grown-up narrator and the child focalizer. This emphasizes the age and maturity gap between the narrator and focalizer, indicating the bildungsroman genre to which *To Kill a Mockingbird* belongs.

In this paper, the methodology will be a close reading of three pivotal moments in the novel that demonstrate a shift between the narrator and the focalizer, as well as their different views on certain events. The moments that were chosen are based on Jochem Riesthuis's analysis, which states that in the novel they have symbolic significance for Scout's childhood.[7] The first

[3] Pieters, *Leeskwesties*, 244.
[4] Holly Blackford, "Uncle Tom Melodrama with a Modern Point of View," in *Telling Children's Stories: Narrative Theory and Children's Literature* (University of Nebraska Press, 2010), 165–67.
[5] Blackford, "Uncle Tom Melodrama with a Modern Point of View," 184.
[6] Maria Nikolajeva, "The Identification Fallacy: Perspective and Subjectivity in Children's Literature," in *Telling Children's Stories: Narrative Theory and Children's Literature* (University of Nebraska Press, 2010), 200–202.
[7] Jochem Riesthuis, "Symbolic Justice: Reading Symbolism in Harper Lee's To Kill a Mockingbird," in *Harper Lee's To Kill a Mockingbird: New Essays* (Scarecrow Press, 2010), 189–204.

fragment is found in the opening pages of the novel that set the stage for the impending events.[8] The second is the confrontation between Atticus Finch and a rabid dog, which is also discussed by Riesthuis.[9] The third is the confrontation with Mr. Raymond and her aunt Alexandra.[10] All three cases demonstrate a different understanding of the current events between the narrator and the focalizer, where the narrator has more knowledge concerning the aftereffects of the event. The argument of the shift between narrator and focalizer is based on the linguistic evidence of the shift in verbal tense; whereas the focalizer speaks in the past tense, the narrator's reflections are revealed through statements in the present tense. The perspective of the focalizer gradually coincides throughout the novel with the perspective of the narrator, based on the decline of present tense verbs, that would indicate the presence of the narrator. This analysis emphasizes the gradual development of maturity of the focalizer, which according to Nataša Ninčetović is a prominent element in a bildungsroman.[11]

The first passages I analyze will be the opening pages in Lee's novel.[12] This immediately emphasizes the two different characters in the novel: the narrator, mature Scout, and the focalizer, six-year-old Scout. For example, the section where Scout proclaims that "[they] sometimes discussed the events leading to his accident. [She] maintain[s] that the Ewells…"[13] This sentence indicates a shift between the narrator and the focalizer, when Scout speaks in the present tense and shares her thoughts about the events from her childhood. Perhaps most importantly, these opening pages introduce the novel's style, in which there are two different Scouts: the young, curious six-year-old focalizer and the older reflective narrator. Blackford notes that this technique causes the reader to simultaneously feel sympathy and take a critical, detached view of the novel.[14] Thus, these opening pages clearly demonstrate how the novel is written and how the level of maturity differs between the narrator and the focalizer, emphasizing that the focalizer is coming of age.

[8] Harper Lee, *To Kill a Mockingbird* (Arrow Books, 1997), 3–5.
[9] Lee, *To Kill a Mockingbird*, 105–8.
[10] Lee, *To Kill a Mockingbird*, 220–27; 140–48.
[11] Nataša Ninčetović, "Harper Lee's To Kill a Mockingbird as a Bildungsroman," *British and American Studies* 30 (May 30, 2024): 52, https://doi.org/10.35923/bas.30.05.
[12] Lee, *To Kill a Mockingbird*, 3–5.
[13] Lee, *To Kill a Mockingbird*, 3.
[14] Blackford, "Uncle Tom Melodrama with a Modern Point of View," 170.

The second pivotal scene that defines Scout's youth and her perception of the world in the novel is chosen by Riesthuis as indicative for her coming-of-age development.[15] The scene begins with a depiction of Atticus Finch, the protagonist's father. She characterizes him as "feeble, he was fifty", "our father didn't do anything", "he was nearly blind in his left eye."[16] These portrayals leave the impression of a tired and weary old man who fails to project a sense of excitement for his young children. However, the significance of this scene lies in the shift in perspective that the focalizer undergoes throughout this chapter, accompanied by the foreshadowing of the narrator. The narrator's foreshadowing is introduced in the immediate aftermath of the bland description of Atticus Finch, as indicated by the following sentence: "With these attributes, however, he would not remain as inconspicuous as we wished him to."[17] It is important to note that this sentence is not uttered by the focalizer; rather it represents the thoughts of the narrator as is evident with the use of the present tense. This results in the reader inferring a discrepancy in opinions of the father between the narrator and focalizer. The focalizer perceives her father as bland and boring, while the narrator, cognizant of this depiction, hints at an imminent change of this image of her father, having the knowledge of the oncoming events. According to Riesthuis, this moment in the novel marks a shift in the focalizer's perspective on her father, that eventually converges with that of the narrator when the focalizer possesses of the same knowledge as the narrator.[18] This demonstrates not only the intricacies of perspectives on a single individual, but also Lee's emphasis on Scout's maturing process through these pivotal moments by letting the subsequent viewpoint emerge. Simultaneously, this underscores Scout's growth towards comprehension of social constructions in her county, which according to Ninčetović shows the "reconciliation between the problematic individual and her surroundings", underlining the progress in the bildungsroman.[19]

In the second part of the novel, it becomes notable that the presence of the narrator recedes into the background and

[15] Riesthuis, "Symbolic Justice: Reading Symbolism in Harper Lee's To Kill a Mockingbird," 191.
[16] Lee, *To Kill a Mockingbird*, 98–99.
[17] Lee, *To Kill a Mockingbird*, 99.
[18] Riesthuis, "Symbolic Justice: Reading Symbolism in Harper Lee's To Kill a Mockingbird," 191–92.
[19] Ninčetović, "Harper Lee's To Kill a Mockingbird as a Bildungsroman," 52.

adopts an almost neutral and objective stance, akin to that of an observer. This is evident in a pivotal scene between Scout and Mr. Dolphus Raymond.[20] This confrontation between Scout, now as a nine-year-old, and the man who is shunned by Maycomb society due to his interracial marriage, is significant in her development because it exemplifies the notion that initial impressions are not always accurate, such as of her father.[21] Mr. Raymond is seen as the alcoholic icon of the town, yet Scout comes to realize that this façade is a means so he "can live the life he wants to live, and be left alone by the village folk."[22] As mentioned, in this chapter the commentary of the narrator is absent. Blackford describes this as a merger between narrator and focalizer.[23] The sole contributions of the narrator are interjections between moments of ignorance of the now nine-year-old Scout, hinting at the narrator's own omniscience. For example, before the meeting between Scout and Mr. Raymond, when her aunt Alexandra comes to live with her, Alexandra endeavors to install a sort of "lady-like" manner in Scout's behavior.[24] However, she is unable to convince Scout in the matters of her manners and thus sends Atticus to teach her "correct" manners. Unfortunately, Atticus fails to complete the task and relinquishes his efforts to provide an explanation for Aunt Alexandra's expectations regarding Scout's conduct. This chapter concludes with the following remark of the narrator, that is notable due to the use of the present tense: "I know now what he was trying to do, but Atticus is only a man. It takes a woman to do that kind of job."[25] Henceforth the narrator's commentary is absent from the remainder of the second part of the novel, including the final chapter. This suggests a progression in the maturity of the nine-year-old Scout, who, as a result, approaches the age of the older narrator. Consequently, the impression is given that the bildungsroman has reached its conclusion, as Scout has grown-up in proximity to the ending. Lee even states in the last chapter that Scout "felt very old, but when I looked at the tip of my nose, I could see misty beads, but looking cross-eyed made me dizzy so I quit."[26] This phrase appears to imply that the period between six and nine years was a significant catalyst in Scout's life

[20] Lee, *To Kill a Mockingbird*, 220–27.
[21] Riesthuis, "Symbolic Justice: Reading Symbolism in Harper Lee's To Kill a Mockingbird," 203–4.
[22] Lee, *To Kill a Mockingbird*, 221.
[23] Blackford, "Uncle Tom Melodrama with a Modern Point of View," 181–82.
[24] Lee, *To Kill a Mockingbird*, 140–48.
[25] Lee, *To Kill a Mockingbird*, 248.
[26] Lee, *To Kill a Mockingbird*, 308.

for the transformation of her perspective on her own private world.

In conclusion, this novel underscores the disparities in the understanding of events, such as the racial injustice, between the narrator and the focalizer with respect to Scout's childhood adventures. This facilitates the reader's ability to discern the divergent characteristics of the narrator and the focalizer. This reading of the novel reveals that the choice Harper Lee made to narrate a story about racial injustice in the 1930s through the eyes of a child provides the reader a more layered and nuanced perspective on pivotal events. These pivotal moments in the novel demonstrate that it functions not only as a bildungsroman but also as a social commentary, as evidenced by the more explicit comments of the narrator. Consequently, the narrative provides insights not only from the perspective of a six-year-old and eventually nine-year-old child, but also from that of an older individual reflecting on her own childhood. The juxtaposition of the narrator and focalizer perspectives as well emphasizes the maturation of the protagonist, who exhibits a marked progression towards her older self, akin to the character of the narrator. This novel establishes the influence of societal events on a young child's perspective of the world as well as the critical awareness that a child can develop toward her surroundings, while still inhabiting her world of adventures and tales, where the events such as the tale of Boo Radley are as significant as the rape trial of Tom Robinson resulting in his unjustified death.

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Presence, Absence, and the Symbolic Order in William Faulkner's *As I Lay Dying*

Helin Eylül Polat

Ege University

Addie Bundren embodies a challenge to a patriarchally structured system, both with her mind and body. Even though her actions are not consciously framed as acts of feminist resistance, her rejection of conventional definitions of motherhood, language, and femininity positions her as a figure who destabilizes patriarchal structures and fixed categories of identities.

According to Freud, men develop a mode of thinking in which women are perceived in one of two ways, either saints or as whores, as he suggests in the "Madonna-Whore Complex."[1] Similarly, in *This Sex Which Is Not One*, Irigaray identifies three socially constructed roles—mother, virgin, and prostitute—and she writes, "neither as mother nor as virgin nor as prostitute has woman any right to her own pleasure."[2] She also suggests "mimicry": "One must deliberately assume the feminine role. Which means already to convert a form of subordination into an affirmation and thus to begin to thwart it."[3] Addie Bundren, who resembles a femme fatale figure, simultaneously performs and destabilizes Freud's binary categories and Irigaray's social roles through mimicry, as she forms her identity through her body, playing both the role of the saint (mother) and the whore, while simultaneously rejecting the meanings traditionally attached to those roles. This paper draws on Freud's theories of loss and substitution, Lacan's concepts of the Imaginary and the Symbolic Order, and Irigaray's feminist critique of motherhood to examine how Addie's rebellion against patriarchally structured conceptions of the womanhood shapes both her own identity and the psychological formation of her children.

Before examining Addie's role as

[1] Sigmund Freud, "Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality," in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, trans. James Strachey, vol. 7 (Hogarth Press, 1953), 123–246.

[2] Luce Irigaray, *This Sex Which Is Not One*, trans. Catherine Porter and Carolyn Burke (Cornell University Press, 1985).

[3] Irigaray, *This Sex Which Is Not One*.

both mother and woman, another theoretical framework must first be clarified. In *Totem and Taboo*, Freud introduces a hypothetical "primal horde," in which early human groups' sons get together and kill the father to gain access to women; and subsequently, out of guilt, establish prohibitions against incest relationships and create taboos.[4] Freud then connects this story to the Oedipus complex. However, as Margaret Homans suggests in *Bearing the Word: Language and Female Experience in Nineteenth-Century Women's Writings*, Freud overlooks one crucial element, quoting Luce Irigaray: "[Freud] forgets a more ancient murder, that of the mother-woman (femme-mère), a murder necessary to the establishment of civilization."[5]

Furthermore, it is worth noting that in *The Odyssey*, the murder of Agamemnon is briefly described: to avenge her daughter's death, Agamemnon is murdered by his wife, Clytemnestra, who is later killed by her own son. The Furies drive Orestes mad because of his act, and it is written that "the matricidal son must be rescued from madness in order to institute patriarchal order."[6] Although Faulkner does not directly create a parallel with the myth, Addie resembles Clytemnestra in the sense that even in her absence, that is, after her death, her influence continues to disrupt patriarchal order. Therefore, the Bundren children's fragmented identities and obsessive attachments can be interpreted as consequences of a symbolic maternal absence that the family cannot fully overcome.

Moreover, as Zeynep Asya Altuğ states in "An Unusual Sublimation of the Female: Maternal Power over Paternal Repression in William Faulkner's *As I Lay Dying*," traditional psychoanalytic theories view the mother's role in the pre-Oedipal stage as a threat to the child's development, as it endangers the establishment of individualism within the Symbolic Order.[7] Object-relations theory and feminist psychoanalytic criticism challenge the exclusion of the mother and suggest that

[4] Sigmund Freud, "Totem and Taboo," in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, trans. James Strachey, vol. 13 (Hogarth Press, 1955), vii–162.
[5] Margaret Homans, *Bearing the Word: Language and Female Experience in Nineteenth-century Women's Writing* (Heinemann Educational Publishers, 1989).
[6] Homans, *Bearing the Word: Language and Female Experience in Nineteenth-Century Women's Writing*.
[7] Zeynep Asya Altuğ, "An Unusual Sublimation of the Female: Maternal Power Over Paternal Repression in William Faulkner's *As I Lay Dying*," *RumeliDE Dil Ve Edebiyat AraşTırmaları Dergisi :/RumeliDe Dil Ve Edebiyat AraşTırmaları Dergisi*, no. 31 (December 21, 2022): 1311–28.

maternal connection is crucial throughout the infant's life. Therefore, through Addie's embodiment as an excluded maternal figure in the story, it can be said that she challenges paternal repression and, by extension, the Symbolic Order.

As a person, Addie feels unimportant and disconnected from her environment. She hates her father "for having ever planted" her.[8] She validates pain to validate her own self. Her marriage—"So I took Anse"—is her way of trying to create a connection, only to feel even more disconnected: "Not even by Anse in the nights," her aloneness "had never been violated."[9] Only when she gives birth to her first child does she state that her loneliness has been violated.

digital artwork by **Busenur Kılıç**

In "Feminine Rebellion and Mimicry in Faulkner's *As I Lay Dying*," Amy Louise Wood explains:

> "It is as if her sense of personal wholeness is disrupted by the primal connection of nursing, but at the same time that physical intrusion by another is what enables her to experience an integrated sense of self."[10]

Thus, Addie finds motherhood as an attack on her individual wholeness and lacks the traditional belief that mothers ought to be selfless. This challenge is further shown through her reflections on language. When her son is born, she realizes that "motherhood was invented by someone who had to have a word for it,"[11] and that love itself is no different: "just a shape to fill a lack."[12]

Her corpse becomes a literal burden throughout the funeral journey. As Doreen Fowler suggests, the funeral journey reverses women's subordination within language; by making others "bear the word," Addie turns

[8] William Faulkner, *As I Lay Dying* (Vintage, 1991).
[9] Faulkner, *As I Lay Dying*.
[10] Amy Louise Wood, "Feminine Rebellion and Mimicry in Faulkner's 'As I Lay Dying.,'" *Faulkner Journal* 9, no. 1/2 (1993).
[11] Faulkner, *As I Lay Dying*.
[12] Faulkner, *As I Lay Dying*.

the order upside down.[13] Addie's adultery with Minister Whitfield is another act of rebellion against patriarchy. Her saying "I would think of the sin as garments…"[14] demonstrates how Addie embracing her sexuality grants her psychological power.

Thus, by turning stereotypical ways of life upside down, Addie Bundren establishes her own identity through her body and the roles imposed on her. Faulkner splendidly portrays this resistance as both liberating yet destructive: Addie rejects patriarchal definitions of femininity, but the emotional void created by her refusal of traditional motherhood becomes the structure in which her children experience grief, desire, and identity crisis. With establishing Addie Bundren's resistance to patriarchal defining of womanhood through her language and embodiment, this analysis now will be focused on psychoanalytic structure in which she disrupts. Through Freud's theory of pre-Oedipal loss, Lacan's concepts of the Imaginary and the Symbolic Order, and Irigaray's feminist intervention into psychoanalysis, this paper argues that both presence and absence of Addie shape the structure of the formation of identity and meaning in *As I Lay Dying* characters.

The loss of pre-Oedipal theory and its place in the Symbolic Order plays a vital role in Freud's and Lacan's theories. With the death of the mother, the child experiences a transition from unity and "totality" to a feeling of "lack" and incompleteness, thus entering the Symbolic Order, as Lacan suggests.[15] The Symbolic Order refers to the structure of language, law, and social meaning into which the child enters after separation from the mother, while the Imaginary represents the pre-linguistic state of being unified as the mother and the child before difference and identity are being formed. Lacan also suggests that the Symbolic Order is structured by language, and he excludes women, stating, "A woman can but be excluded by the nature of things, which is the nature of words."[16] Rather than accepting this exclusion as the absolute truth, feminist critics such as Irigaray reinterpret it as evidence of the patriarchal limitations embedded within language itself. Women, as

[13] Doreen Fowler, "Matricide and the Mother's Revenge: 'As I Lay Dying," *Faulkner Journal* 4, no. 1/2 (1988): 113–25.
[14] Faulkner, *As I Lay Dying*.
[15] Jacques Lacan, *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psycho-analysis*, ed. Jacques-Alain Miller, trans. Alan Sheridan (W. W. Norton, 1978).
[16] Jacques Lacan, *On Feminine Sexuality the Limits of Love and Knowledge: The Seminar Of Jacques Lacan Book Xx Encore*, trans. Bruce Fink (W. W. Norton & Company, 1999).

maternal figures, symbolize the pre-symbolic, a pre-linguistic state connected to the Imaginary realm. According to Lacan, all future desires of the child are attempts to fill the void left by the mother's absence. For the child to enter the Symbolic Order and become a "speaking subject," the desire for the mother must be acknowledged as prohibited by the Law of the Father, forcing the child to find permissible substitutes.[17] Object petit a refers to these substitute objects that replace the mother and fill the void created by her absence.

In *As I Lay Dying*, each character goes through this process, having lost the mother and attempting to replace her lack in different ways. The children's substitute objects result from their inability to make sense of Addie's emotional distance in life with her physical absence in death, therefore connecting Addie's feminist rejection of motherhood to the psychoanalytic structure of lack that her children go through. Characters such as Jewel, Cash, and Vardaman replace their mother with substitutes such as a horse, a coffin, or a fish. Jewel replaces his mother with a horse—"Jewel's mother is a horse"[18]—allowing him to project his mixed feelings toward his mother onto the animal, caressing it and then beating it into submission as a way of mastering loss. Cash replaces the mother through building her coffin "to her measure and weight,"[19] carefully calculating physical forces to keep it balanced. Vardaman, the youngest, deals with the loss by finding a permissible substitute within the limits of his childlike understanding, replacing his mother with a fish, saying "My mother is a fish."[20]

To understand this act, Freud's observation of his grandson playing the fort/da game can be referenced. Freud observes that the child throws a spool out of sight while saying fort (gone) and retrieves it while saying da (there), symbolically mastering anxiety over the mother's absence.[21] Similarly, Vardaman symbolically replaces his mother with a fish and drills holes in her coffin so she can breathe, unable to comprehend her absence and attempting to maintain a connection. As a result, he remains between pre-Oedipal unity and the Symbolic Order. Only when he kills the fish does a sign of becoming a speaking subject

[17] Fowler, "Matricide and the Mother's Revenge: 'As I Lay Dying."
[18] Faulkner, *As I Lay Dying*.
[19] Faulkner, *As I Lay Dying*.
[20] Faulkner, *As I Lay Dying*.
[21] Sigmund Freud, "Beyond the Pleasure Principle," in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, trans. James Strachey, vol. 18 (Hogarth Press, 1955), 1–64.

emerge, as this act represents control over loss, paralleling Freud's example.

Doreen Fowler describes the Imaginary "in terms of what it is not" in *Faulkner: The Return of the Repressed*.[22] She suggests that because the Imaginary represents unity, there are no differences, no separation, and no lack; therefore, the child does not exist as a subject. She further states, "For the child to acquire language, to acquire a separate identity, the child must become aware of difference. Identity and meaning come about only as a result of difference."[23] Thus, identity is constructed through contrast and negation—through what one is not.

In the light of all this, it becomes clear how Faulkner demonstrates this process through the characters' construction of identity. Darl's identity is shaped by his detachment from the family; he perceives the world differently and is "gifted with meticulous precision in recording the world around him," as Hussam Assaad states.[24] This intellectual difference sets him apart and defines his sense of self. Jewel's identity is similarly rooted in opposition, as he is not Anse's biological son. His independence, emotional detachment, and exclusive bond with Addie separate him from the family and shape his identity. In contrast, Dewey Dell's identity is defined by lack—specifically, her lack of agency as an unmarried pregnant woman within a patriarchal structure. Vardaman's identity remains shaped by his inability to acknowledge his mother's death.

Finally, Addie herself is the clearest example of Fowler's claim. Rejecting the traditional roles of mother and wife as meaningless, her identity is defined by what she refuses. Her desire to exist beyond language—words she finds insufficient to define reality—positions her as what she is not. Even in death, her body becomes a medium through which family members project their anxieties and define themselves through her absence.

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Rationale Behind the Zimmermann Telegram

Jones Bigliardi

The University of Texas at San Antonio

At the surface, the Zimmermann Telegram comes off as a high risk, low reward gambit, where the best-case scenario was getting a war-torn Mexico to attack a neutral United States on the other side of the Atlantic. Even this ideal outcome did not come to pass, with the main impact of the Telegram being the entry of the United States into the war against Germany. Why was this where the United States drew the line, and not the earlier sinking of the Lusitania? What made Germany assess the risks and decide that sending the Telegram was a worthwhile endeavor? The Telegram, while a brash maneuver, was one year in the making, with its roots in preexisting German relations to both Mexico and the United States, and the trigger being pulled as a result of German beliefs about the direction of the war. Germany saw cutting off the UK's access to overseas suppliers as the only way to change the course of the war, knew that this escalation would have almost certainly involved the United States, and hoped a Mexican front could delay US involvement long enough for Germany to win.

From the start, Wilson had little desire to get the United States involved in the ensuing conflict. Though there was little desire among the public for US involvement in 1914, there was a certain sympathy towards the Allies with the UK's intertwined history with the United States, and American merchants did frequently sell weaponry to the United Kingdom. At the start, Wilson was particularly concerned with the Allied blockade of Germany and how it impacted the business interests of the US, but concerns came to be more with Germany following the sinking of the Lusitania.[1]

The development of unrestricted submarine warfare as Germany policy was rather disorganized, and very quickly ran into difficulty distinguishing between the ships of enemy combatants and neutral parties. A number of dubious justifications were used to this end: acquiescence to the Allied blockade

[1] Bernadotte E. Schmitt, "American Neutrality, 1914-1917," *The Journal of Modern History* 8, no. 2 (1936): 202.

of Germany meant such parties were no longer neutral, British merchants were using American flags and passing themselves off as neutral ships. Though orders were given to only attack enemy ships, they acknowledged that mistakes were bound to happen with the policy eventually, as it did with the sinking of the Lusitania and its 1,195 civilian passengers. Tensions were only resolved for the time being after a full year of negotiations, and for the time being, the ceasing of U-boat attacks on neutral ships.[2] Continued noninvolvement was a major foreign policy win for Wilson, whose 1916 re-election campaign won on a slogan of "He kept us out of the war."[3]

In the decades preceding the Zimmermann Telegram, the German Empire and Mexico had drawn somewhat close, with Germany becoming a key source of weaponry for the Diaz government upon the outbreak of the Mexican Revolution, some parts of the German government viewing Mexico as a potential ally as early as 1914, and sporadic ties between German intelligence and Mexican revolutionaries, particularly associates of Pancho Villa, in the years leading up to the Telegram.[4]

Despite the turmoil in Mexico proper, there was reason to believe that the Constitutionalists would have been able to inflict some level of damage on the United States, on account of Pancho Villa's past endeavors. Following a raid into New Mexico, he successfully evaded pursuit from several thousand US soldiers whose expedition was ultimately forced to retreat.[5] In addition to demonstrating that Mexican forces could pose a serious disruption to their neighbor to the north even years into a bloody civil war, this also demonstrated some level of continuing desire in Mexico for conflict with the United States.

This sentiment was not entirely one-sided. Even before Pancho Villa's raid, the United States had become heavily concerned with assets and citizens who lived in the country coming under threat from the turmoil, alongside frustration with the fall of the US-backed Diaz government. However, in a summit which contemporary William H. Short described as "[speaking] volumes of

[2] Isabel V Hull, "Unrestricted Submarine Warfare," in *A Scrap of Paper: Breaking and Making International Law during the Great War* (Cornell University Press, 2014), 257.

[3] Robert Dallek, "Woodrow Wilson, Politician," *Wilson Quarterly* 15, no. 4 (season-03 1991): 106.

[4] Michael C. Meyer, "The Mexican-German Conspiracy of 1915," *The Americas a Quarterly Review of Latin American History* 23, no. 1 (July 1, 1966): 76–89.

[5] Friedrich Katz, "Pancho Villa and the Attack on Columbus, New Mexico," *The American Historical Review* 83, no. 1 (February 1, 1978): 101.

the modern peace movement",[6] the rift in US-Mexico relations was settled diplomatically, at least for the moment.

Between prior German intelligence ties to revolutionaries in Mexico and tensions between Mexico and its neighbor to the north, it is very likely that plans of this variety had been discussed in some capacity for years leading up to this point, as a failsafe for if the United States was ultimately involved in the war. However, as we now know, plans for "Mexico...to reconquer the lost territory in Texas, New Mexico, and Arizona"[7] in a Central Powers-aligned invasion of the United States did not pan out in practice, as the main impact of the Zimmermann Telegram was ultimately US involvement in the Great War and not a Mexican invasion of the United States. If not for the Telegram, these plans would have merely been another bizarre hypothetical in a world filled with many of those. So, why did Germany attempt to pull the trigger?

The initial German plan was to facilitate a UK withdrawal from the war, allowing them to focus on France, but it became increasingly clear as World War I entered 1917 that this was not going to happen with the direction the war was going in. As the war dragged into its fourth year, many in the German government, first military leaders, and then Kaiser Wilhelm II himself, came to the conclusion that in order for Germany to win, the United Kingdom needed to be cut off from their supplies. To this end, the discontinued policy of unrestricted submarine warfare returned. Knowing that the United States would almost certainly get involved in the war upon the resumption of unrestricted submarine warfare, it was resumed with the hopes that the UK would surrender before the US was be able to bring troops to Europe.[8]

Considering that German leadership viewed the only path to victory as being one where the United States became involved in the war, the thinking behind the Telegram being sent becomes clearer. Rather than assessing war with the United States as a risk of its backfiring, war with the United States was assessed as an inevitability, something that happened with the resumption of the U-

[6] William H. Short, "The Mediation Conference at Niagara Falls," *The Advocate of Peace (1894-1920)* 76, no. 8 (1914): 188.

[7] Decoded Zimmermann Telegram, 1917; Decimal File, 1910-1929, 862.20212/69, General Records of the Department of State; Record Group 59; National Archives

[8] David C. Gompert, Hans Binnendijk, and Bonny Lin, "Germany's Decision to Conduct Unrestricted U-Boat Warfare, 1916," in *Blinders, Blunders, and Wars: What America and China Can Learn* (RAND Corporation, 2014), 68.

boat campaign regardless of how the Telegram went. With this in mind, the gamble becomes something closer to a potential benefit of bogging their expectant combatant down with its southern border, even if Pancho Villa was not quite as influential as in his heyday by this point, and the worst possible outcome simply being a war with the United States that the German Empire already intended to wage.

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POEM

Berenis Öztürk

sometimes

sometimes i cant think about you words

stuck in my jaw forever your

name on my desk im working

on it all the time and

sometimes i read your letter about how

we used to be best

friends and play

mates we

played and played all night one day

there were orange sheets and candies

i held tomatoes in my hand and they dyed

my hair blue and you said i

do not like your hair like this but

you still played and played

i never knew why you played with

my hands and hair and tomatoes and dogs because you

never really cared about me your stoic look

was gazing up and down on me to keep

things vague at all times but i played and played and you

watched me play with the colors, shapes and i

danced a lot, you never did with

me at least now you

dont have a best friend and a playmate but now you can

play and dance all night long with someone else

who was my disciple

your buddy

our ally

whose bed was

under me one day when i cried because you didnt play

with me anymore you

frowned at my bare existence naked

on her bed and this makes me so so sad because

her bed was intimate, and so were we we always laughed the

three of us talked and played and now when you play with

her dont you ever think of my tomatoes

me juggling and my dyed hair blue and orange

sheets and the smells we shared

the poetry i read

the things i dread

do you ever think of me the way

you used to

do or did you never cared to begin

with?

POEM

Halide Zeynep Durmaz

a catch of a breath beneath th’ unsettl’d soil,

worms devouring her eternal home

the pelting rain goes on

hoping to explore

the sun

the favorite son

his tendency of the perception

the subservient,the good-for-nothing

without a light nowhere to be found

dust hops into the air - air always finding its way

bulls collide each other as if their roots

share different grounds

in an attempt for happiness

caught amidst cattiness

INDIFFERENCE

Yunus Eren Şenel

The nightingale hymns not to ease my plight

The sun rises and sets for its own sake

The tree is not there for me to write

And winds no longer grant a handshake

The ocean waits patiently to swallow me whole

The blossoming flower is only there to torment

The words are redundant so I toss them into a hole

And heaven with its hound is oblivious to my lament

Life remains as only a labyrinth full of despair

It is soothing to think that spring will appear

But how can I live when autumn is always there

And why do you always face me with a sneer

Quite an experience living in a universe so ignorant

Daisy dagger dashed daringly damaging daybreak

Deaf dealer decried defenseless decayed deities

Hallowed halls halts hunting hollow hounds

Holy hoax harbor hauls honing horrid howls

Zinc zenith zone zooms zagging zaniest zombies

Zealous zitherist zinged zero zeal zippering zogos

Remnants of your records remain making me indurate

Quite an experience breathing you into my life

Quite an experience when absence stabs me with a knife

Quite an experience, an experience so quiet

Please, speak to me, I cannot bear this quiet.

AARÓN RODRÍGUEZ
ANNA VAN STEENBERGEN
HELİN EYLÜL POLAT
JONES BIGLIARDI
BERENİS ÖZTÜRK
HALİDE ZEYNEP DURMAZ
YUNUS EREN ŞENEL

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