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Dear *Epitaph* Readers,

It is with immense pride and excitement that we present to you the inaugural issue of *Epitaph*, Spring 2025. This milestone represents not just the culmination of months of dedicated work, but the birth of what we hope will become a cherished platform for undergraduate voices in the American Studies.

As we launch this first edition, we are struck by the remarkable caliber of scholarship that has emerged from student researchers who have chosen to dedicate themselves to the meticulous examination of concepts that illuminate America. The manuscripts featured in this issue traverse fascinating terrain—from examining American pseudoscientific theories and their cultural impact, to exploring creative expressions through poems and short stories, to conducting critical analyses through gender studies perspectives that illuminate power structures within American society.

The diversity of topics and approaches represented in these pages reflects the vibrant intellectual curiosity that characterizes today's undergraduate community studying American culture, society, and history. In our current moment. The social, political, and cultural forces that have shaped—and continue to shape—America's landscape demand our careful attention and critical analysis. From the colonial period through the present day, American development has been inextricably linked to broader questions of power, identity, and cultural exchange that define the American experience.

We invite you to engage with these works not merely as undergraduate accounts, but as vital contributions to our ongoing understanding of how America has been created, contested, and transformed.

Our heartfelt appreciation extends to the exceptional authors who entrusted us with their manuscripts and worked collaboratively with our editorial team to ensure their scholarship appeared in its finest form. We are equally grateful to our dedicated editorial staff, whose careful attention and scholarly rigor made this publication possible.

We must also acknowledge the invaluable contributions of Zeynep Durmuş, whose meticulous type editing ensured the clarity and precision of every page, and Ömer Şahin, whose thoughtful website design provides our journal with a digital home worthy of the scholarship it contains. Additionally, we extend our sincere thanks to all the professors in our department whose encouragement and belief in this project provided the foundation upon which *Epitaph* could flourish.

Finally, to our readers—thank you for joining us on this inaugural journey. We hope this first issue not only informs and challenges you but also inspires continued engagement with the American studies.

With gratitude and anticipation for the conversations these pages will inspire,

The Epitaph Team

contents

The Dilemma Between Self-Acceptance and Societal Norms: Toxic Masculinity as a Defense Mechanism in Mart Crowley's *The Boys in the Band* (1968)

Gamze Cantürk

Abstract:

Toxic masculinity is the male hegemony and destructive violence, both mental and physical, which comes out as a result of hypermasculine, overly stereotypical male behavior. Premiering a year before 1969 Stonewall uprising that catalyzed LGBTQ+ rights movement and created a strong wave of solidarity among the queer community, *Boys in the Band* continues to occupy a special place in queer cultural history by staging the underlying reasons behind toxic masculinity and bringing light into another dimension we lacked from seeing, which is, the indoctrination of heteronormative life. Mart Crowley, a gay playwright who tried to reflect his own experiences, presents masculinity both as a weapon of control and a deep wound caused by collective trauma. Emphasizing on Judith Butler's gender performativity theory and other main theories regarding queer identity & gender studies, this research is focused on the 1968 play *The Boys in the Band*, and how toxic masculinity functions as a defense mechanism for queer men while trying to claim life following their authentic identities in a society demanding hypermasculine, traditional norms.

Staged in 1968 for the first time, Mart Crowley's *The Boys in the Band* focuses on a group of nine acquaintances gathering for a birthday party in New York's Upper East Side, at an apartment. However, the narrative evolves into an exploration of internalized homophobia, the division between self-acceptance & societal norms and how this dilemma manifests itself into a defense mechanism while foregrounding toxic masculinity and psychological depth.

Toxic masculinity is the male hegemony and destructive violence, both mental and physical, which comes out as a result of hypermasculine, overly stereotypical male behavior. Given that the play is set in the 1960s, it is highly important to mark the social pressures experienced by queer people in the U.S, where homosexuality was still illegal in some states. The social pressures faced by gay men grew stronger in the context of the protest culture of the late sixties as overall activism of the age urged conservative ideas to emerge again.

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Staged a year before Stonewall uprising of 1969, the play emerged at a critical moment in LGBTQ+ rights history and ignited a surge of solidarity within the queer community, *The Boys in the Band* continues to occupy a significant position in contemporary queer cultural history by staging the underlying reasons behind toxic masculinity and bringing light into another dimension we lacked from seeing, which is, the perpetuation and indoctrination of heteronormative life. Thus, through the characters' internalized homophobia, self-cruelty, and aggression, Crowley exposes the psychological depth and debris of living under these cruel traditional norms of masculinity as well as heteronormativity.

Michael, our protagonist, serves as the clearest example of toxic masculinity as a defense system, masking his self-loathing with cruelty, sarcasm, and hate towards the people surrounding him. His behavior changes in an instant when Alan, thought to be a heterosexual old friend from Michael's student years, tries to reconnect with Michael, which, according to him, disrupts the fresh & light air of the party. The uneasiness starts here, we as the reader witness Michael's instability regarding the situations out of his control. Michael's decision, his order one might argue, to play a psychologically manipulative and forcing game in which every single person at the party must call someone they deeply loved highlights his tendency and urge to assert dominance and mitigate his inner pain by doing so. He states, "Show me a happy homosexual and I'll show you a gay corpse" (Crowley 72), revealing the depth and heaviness of his internalized self-pity regarding his sexuality. Judith Butler's theory of gender performativity provides us with a useful and reasonable perspective here: masculinity, for Michael, is not an authentic identity but a social mask for him to provide himself with a life in the social sphere. His cruel and toxic behaviors are performances intended to enable him to conform to heterosexual norms. As Judith Butler argues in *Gender Trouble*, gender is "an identity instituted through a stylized repetition of acts" (191), thus, Michael's toxic masculinity is exactly this forced chain, a repetition performed for social survival. Additionally, Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick's explanation of the "closet" as a shaping principle in queer identity and their lives, particularly in *Epistemology of the Closet*, explains the swiftly changing nature of Michael's reactions: His cruelty emerges from the stress of maintaining a well-organized identity under cultural observation. Sedgwick states that "the closet is the defining structure for gay oppression…" (71), and Michael's climactic break-

down: “If we could just not hate ourselves so much" (Crowley 85) lets out the heavy cost of living within that understanding and social structure, where masculinity becomes a mask dimming out the actual authenticity of individuals.

When it comes to Alan, as a kind of self-assertion and denial of his own identity, closeted or psychologically repressed people are likely to conform to toxic masculinity, as seen by his unresolved & unsure sexuality and unease in the friend group. Alan is uncomfortable as soon as he walks into the party, especially in the presence of more self-expressive men like Emory. His aggressive rejection of queer expression is evident in his physical attack on Emory, which was probably urged by his underlying repressed urges and sexuality. These acts support Leo Bersani's statement in *Homos*: "what is most 'homophobic' is often homosexual panic." (Bersani 125) Meaning that the same-sex desires of an individual, when repressed, can transform themselves into a subject obtaining an unstable identity, and this causes them to act aggressively. The ambiguity surrounding Alan’s sexuality increases the tension of the play, putting him into a position that the society surrounding him condemns, because they cannot accept his identity. Emory’s unapologetic remark, "That closet must be air-conditioned" (Crowley 78), points to Alan’s fragile nature in the name of masculinity and his inner battle between pretending to be someone he is not or accepting himself as who he is.

Despite his humor and emotional stability, Harold argues, another aspect of toxic masculinity: using indifference and detachment as a defense against social rejection and vulnerability. As Jack Halberstam states and argues in *The Queer Art of Failure*: "Failing to be a 'real man' becomes a strategy for not participating in the very regime that marginalizes you." (88) Harold, who embraces his physical and ethnic status as a “32-year-old, ugly, pockmarked Jew fairy…” (Crowley 83) uses sarcasm as a weapon as well as armor. He can avoid criticism by proudly, or insultingly, owning his ethnicity and appearance-based insecurities before others may use them as a weapon to hurt him. In a way, his humor conceals a deep sense of self-consciousness and scrutiny. Later in the previous line, Harold finally confesses: “and if it takes me a while to pull myself together… it’s because I’m ashamed." (Crowley 83) Even the most supposedly calm personalities bear the wound and trauma of social rejection, as Harold's detachment exposes his emotional repression promoted and indoctrinated by toxic masculinity.

The Boys in the Band is a seminal work not only for its reflection of its own time, but also for its candid depiction of how toxic masculinity functions within suppressed queer groups, particularly in the context of internalized homophobia and social marginalization. Mart Crowley, a gay playwright who reflects his own experiences, presents masculinity as both a weapon of control and a deep wound caused by collective trauma. His experiences as someone from the soil of all that hate gave the play an air of authenticity that resonated and stayed with spectators both in the late sixties and now. The characters in the play, mainly Michael and Harold, embody masculinities shaped by psychological trauma, revealing how heteronormative society oppresses individuals, due to the fear of being labelled "queer", to conform at any cost. Rather than demonizing or mocking his characters for their mental state, abusive language or self-hatred, Crowley uses these traits to bring out the heavy and hard realities of living in a world where the queer identity must always be hidden or violated merely to survive. Thus, the play serves as an example of the emotional survival responses and themes such as sarcasm, isolation, and at times aggression that queer identity was, and is still obliged to carry out in a culture constantly demanding invisibility. Behind the harsh words and defenses, lies not a villain but a human being longing to belong, the hope of ultimate self-acceptance.

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Testimonial and Hermeneutical Injustice in The Round House: The Silencing of Native American Women

Halide Zeynep Durmaz

"…this one is the one I'd abolish right this minute if I had the power of a movie shaman. *Oliphant v. Suquamish.* He shook the fork, and stink wafted to me. Took us from the right to prosecute non-Indians who commit crimes on our land…We try to press against the boundaries of what we are allowed, walk a step past our age. Our records will be scrutinized by Congress one day, and decisions on whether to enlarge our jurisdiction will be made. Some day. *We want the right to prosecute criminals of all races on all lands within our original boundaries* (Erdrich 229, 230)."

The Round House, a novel that serves as a pursuit of justice for Native Americans, specifically Native American women, in a system fully controlled by White Americans. It is about a Native American woman's sexual harassment and her son Joe's quest for justice, as well as the jurisdictional challenges they encounter in their search. In a world full of systemic injustices, where Native Americans have been limited to poorly conditioned reservations for decades, where lack of economic opportunity and scarcity of jobs created a community that shows no progress, where people have no access to healthcare, social services, and where violence and alcohol abuse have become a coping mechanism to deal with historical trauma (*Native American Living Conditions on Reservations Native American Aid*). The story takes place on an Ojibwe reservation in 1988, a real-life reservation in North Dakota, also known as the Turtle Mountain Indian reservation (BookBrowse). The breathtaking thriller serves as a revelation to take lessons from, as Erdrich states, the story is not based on a specific case, but many different cases, reports, and stories she has witnessed (Erdrich 321).

The novel's significance stem from that 84.3 % of Native American women have experienced violence, 56.1% sexual violence, and one in three Native American women have been raped in their lifetimes; according to the U.S. Department of Justice (*Statement of Associate Attorney General Thomas J. Perrelli Before The*). The book not only presents this urgency to ensure the protection and awareness for this crucial issue, since compared to other racial groups, these findings are 2.5 times higher than other racial groups, but also presents the outcome and complexity of life between Native Americans and White Americans (Singleton Schreiber, "Addressing Sexual Assault on Native American Reservations"). The trauma the victim Geraldine is faced with does not only arise from systematic injustice but also from silencing and discrediting her trauma, being testimonial injustice as well as lack

of societal acknowledgment of Native Women's traumas, being hermeneutical injustice. With this approach, the novel underlines a deeper societal gap in addressing historical and structural violence against Native American women.

Long before philosopher Miranda Fricker coined the term Epistemic Injustice in 2007, with its categories of testimonial and hermeneutical injustice, women were already experiencing epistemic injustice, even if it had not been defined yet. The early feminist movements, suffrage movements, and struggles of women from minority groups are exactly the injustices Fricker deals with. In her book *Epistemic Injustice: Powers and Ethics of Knowing,* she links epistemic injustice to feminist and anti-racist theory. She defines epistemic injustice as a "…wrong done to someone specifically in their capacity as a knower" (Fricker 1). She explains that the root cause of epistemic injustice is structures of unequal power and the systematic prejudices they generate, which correspond directly to the circumstances that this paper/presentation argues. Native American women's struggle in a White dominated system that deprives them of the acknowledgment of this critical concept, as well as silencing the victims by decreasing their credibility as their capacity as knowers. Fricker divides epistemic injustice into two categories, testimonial and hermeneutical injustice (1). According to Fricker, "testimonial injustice occurs when prejudice causes a hearer to give a deflated level of credibility to a speaker's word" (17), while "hermeneutical injustice occurs at a prior stage, when a gap in collective interpretive resources puts someone at an unfair disadvantage when it comes to making sense of their social experiences" (1). These types of injustices are evidentin Native American women's lives today. The community is limited in a place that still lacks the critical concept of awareness, preventing them from making sense of their own social experiences and failing to take necessary action in a quest for justice.

I. Testimonial Injustice in *The Round House*

In the story, Geraldine is raped and brutally assaulted. After she is rescued, she refuses to speak much, barely leaving her room due to her trauma. When she finally decides to open up and share information, she cannot precisely describe where she was assaulted, as the perpetrator kept a sack over her head. She cannot name the attacker, nor describe his features right away. Because the judicial process depends on precise evidence, such as where and by whom it happened, the system fails to take immediate action and treats Geraldine's uncertainty as a reason to wait. The system depends on knowing if the perpetrator is Native American or not. There is a legal barrier, Oliphant v. Suquamish, that prevents tribal courts from prosecuting White Americans who commit crimes on their boundaries (*Oliphant v. Suquamish Indian Tribe*). Notably, *The Round House* is a direct response of Erdrich to the testimonial injustice this legal barrier creates. Oliphant v. Squamish openly illustrates the lack of belief in the tribal court's authority over a white person. Even if a non-Native American person commits a crime on the reserva-

tion, to Native American women, the US justice system insists that only federal or state jurisdiction can prosecute non Native Americans, a case of immense restriction on tribal sovereignty. Not only the case itself is a "clear, real-world example?"of testimonial injustice; but also the fact that Geraldine cannot describe her attacker and the place where she was raped; creates a skepticism towards Geraldine by the authorities, and this also prevents Linden Lark, her rapist, from being arrested. Moreover, according to Amnesty International's report named "Maze of Injustice", in 86 percent of reported sexual harassment cases, the abusers are predominantly white, a crucial factor to take into account since it is seen that despite the testimonial injustice they are exposed to, these ratings render their biases invalid (Amnesty International).

II. Hermeneutical Injustice in *The Round House*

Fricker defines hermeneutical injustice as a collective lack of a critical concept, which in this case is sexual harassment, created by a gap that impinges unequally on different social groups. She clarifies that the members of the group that are most disadvantaged by the gap are hermeneutically marginalized, who are left ill-understood. Fricker highlights that to ensure clear communication, education, and support, the focus should be on how society's collective understanding can hinder certain groups from making sense of their victimhood (Fricker 6). In the novel, hermeneutical injustice is evident through Geraldine's struggle to express her trauma, pointing out that her silence is forced by a collective gap in recognizing her trauma. Compatible with Fricker's definition, Geraldine retreats into silence for a certain period, fails to find the right words, and isolates herself in her bedroom. Not just from fear, but for the fact that the US jurisdiction system fails to recognize Native American women's struggles, especially regarding sexual harassment, and fails to create a platform of legal protection, media representation, and political advocacy. The perpetrators are most often unpunished, meaning the US fails to even recognize the crimes, resulting in hermeneutical injustice. As mentioned previously, jurisdictional restrictions on tribal courts result from testimonial injustice; moreover, in this context, the outcome of this restriction results in a jurisdictional confusion where the authority is uncertain between the tribal court and the federal court. This confusion contributes to hermeneutical injustice, as there is no certain authority to sentence their perpetrator, and as the system renders Indigenous women unreliable, the victims are prevented from making sense of their traumas; therefore, their silence is encouraged.

Everything considered, Louise Erdrich's *The Round House* exposes and attacks testimonial and hermeneutical injustices in Native American women seeking justice through the character Geraldine. Erdrich reveals how Native Americans' voices are institutionally silenced, through testimonial injustice, by dismissing and discrediting Geraldine's voice because of her identity. Secondly, through hermeneutical injustice, Geraldine cannot find recognition of her trauma in society. The US government fails to recognize violence, particularly

sexual violence happening to Native American women, let alone attempting to prevent it. The issues of jurisdiction in the US result in both testimonial and hermeneutical injustice. The book handles both testimonial and hermeneutical injustice that Indigenous women face through Geraldine's trauma and her family's challenges in the process of capturing the perpetrator. Geraldine's notable silence represents all silenced Native American women who have been assaulted but faced disbelief, indifference, or blame (Amnesty International). Louise Erdrich exposes the collective gap and loopholes in the jurisdiction system to which Native American women are obligated. Her story's ending -Joe's murder of his mom's rapist- further implies the urgency to give a voice to Native American women, by rebuilding social and legal platforms.

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Mythological Allusions' Utilization in Poems

Ceyda Ece Saydamlı

Literary devices help poets to write well-developed poems. These devices, particularly mythological allusions, require a master usage in poems since poems are not as long as other types of literature. These allusions intensify the meaning of the poem and add depths to the poem. So, poets may prefer mythological allusions to push their readers to think and dive deeply into the underlying meaning of their poems. Mythological allusions also play a crucial role in setting up the poem's tone and mood. To exemplify, when Ares appears in a poem, the reader understands that the poem's topic includes war in some parts because Ares is the god of war. So, this allusion creates a substantial mood for the poem. Furthermore, poets may challenge or reinterpret traditional narratives by using mythological allusions. Some well-known traditional narratives, like a mythological story, can be reimagined by the poet. Poets use this new version of the traditional narrative to advocate to their readers that they should consider other perspectives, as well. Thus, the utilization of mythological allusions creates a sense of timelessness since mythology lies its roots in the very beginning of humankind. A good number of people still study mythology, a lot of children still grow up while listening to or reading mythological stories, and mythology still shapes popular culture all around the world. Mythological allusions can instill this timelessness into the poems in just a few words while attracting the attention of lots of people. In addition to these utilizations, mythological allusions create a powerful connection with the reader. Readers feel familiarity with the alluded mythological stories, they feel more empathy towards the story of the poem since they know these mythological stories. When poets like Edgar Allan Poe, T.S. Eliot, Muriel Rukeyser, and John Keats skillfully incorporate mythological allusions in their work, these allusions do not utilize solely as a flourishing element in poetry, instead; they become the most important element in their poems since they utilize as an enhancement of depth and complexity to the meaning of the poem, as an establishment of the tone of the poem and as a creation of a more forceful bond with the readers through the feeling of familiarity.

Mythological allusions are mainly utilized as an enhancement of depth and complexity to the meaning of the poem. These allusions add a multi-layered depth to the poem, which pushes the readers to explore numerous levels of interpretation and to uncover the profound insights contained within the mythological stories. Poets can make their poems more transcendent by reaching beyond the boundaries of ordinary language. Edgar Allan Poe's famous poem "The Raven" is a primary example of this utilization. The emotional strug-

gles faced by individuals within every phase of life, specifically the struggle to control the emotions of loss and sorrow, are explored in "The Raven." In this poem, the speaker tries to deal with the loss of a beloved one, Lenore. He is in great grief and a melodramatic mood, yet he tries to act logically. There is a repetitive knocking on the speaker's door. The speaker ignores the knocking at first. However, he cannot deal with the idea that Lenore might be back, so he opens the door. A raven flies into the chamber and "perched upon a bust of Pallas." Poe chose the raven rather than any other kind of bird because ravens are associated with tragic news, mostly death, and Pallas is a name used for Athena, the Greek goddess of wisdom. While little Athena was playing with her childhood friend Pallas, the daughter of Triton, she accidentally killed Pallas in a sparring match. Athena embraced the name Pallas for herself as an expression of her sorrow after what she had done. So, the raven perched upon the bust of Pallas is a sharp-witted allusion used by Poe. The raven is a symbol of death and the grief of the speaker, sitting on the bust of Pallas, on his wisdom and cunning. That means the speaker's great sorrow subdued his intelligence and rational thoughts. The speaker at first thinks that the raven is an omen sent by angels, but he understands that it is not true. Thus, in the seventeenth sestet, the speaker describes the raven as being from the "Night's Plutonian shore." It is a mythological allusion to Pluto (Roman name of Hades), the god of the Greek underworld. Hades is known for being the king of the dead and is often used as a symbol of death. According to Serrano Fernández,

In Greek cosmogony, a crucial element of the underworld is the Stygian river, which the dead had to go across in order to leave the realm of life. Consequently, the "Plutonian shore" is a clear reference to that idea of the underworld, which is therefore linked in this line to the figure of the raven (14).

The raven's origin (Night's Plutonian shore) shows that it is gloomy and evil. From this line, readers can sense that the speaker's mind has changed about the raven. It does not correlate with good omens, it only conveys harm to the speaker. This allusion infuses the poem with a sense of death, despair, darkness, and paranormal elements. Thus, the raven is only here to give him a dreary message since it answers the questions asked by the speaker with the same answer, "nevermore."

And the Raven, never flitting, still is sitting, still is sitting
On the pallid bust of Pallas just above my chamber door;
And his eyes have all the seeming of a demon's that is dreaming,
And the lamp-light o'er him streaming throws his shadow on the floor;
And my soul from out that shadow that lies floating on the floor
Shall be lifted—nevermore!

The poem ends with this final sentence , which emphasizes that the speaker will never be able to meet Lenore again – even in heaven. The raven

will always sit on the bust of Pallas; it will forever utter the word "nevermore." Furthermore, Poe uses several literary devices, like repetition and symbolism, to strengthen the meaning of the poem. However, the mythological allusions to Athena and Hades are the most powerful literary devices, since these allusions make the most contribution to the poem's depth and complexity by inserting additional layers to its meaning.

Moreover, mythological allusions are utilized as an establishment of the tone of the poem. Whenever a reader takes notice of a mythological allusion, he/she should be sunk into a certain mood. A poet can evoke a specific mood by making references to mythological figures, and this mood varies from one mythological story to another. For instance, an allusion to Artemis should evoke the feelings of empowerment, femininity, independence, or a connection to nature. T.S. Eliot's *The Waste Land* is a brilliant demonstration of this utilization of mythological allusions. In "The Waste Land," Eliot alludes to Sibyl in the epigraph. Sibyl of Cumae, a prophetess, is known for being Apollo's favorite. Apollo gave her immortality as she asked for it, but since she forgot to ask for eternal youth, she suffered and dispiritedly wanted to die. The epigraph, "Nam Sibyllam quidem Cumis ego ipse oculis meis vidi in ampulla pendere, et cum illi pueri dicerent: Sibylla ti theleis; respondebat illa: apothanein thelo." can be translated as "For with my own eyes I saw Sibyl hanging in a jar, and when the young boys asked her, 'Sibyl, what do you want?', she replied, 'I want to die.'" This epigraph radiates a specific energy of barrenness and gloominess while emplacing it in the poem. As Alkafaji and Marzoog state, "This allusion sets the tone of the poem, a prophet who can see the future, is seeking her death and leading the reader through "The Waste Land" (78). Eliot alludes to the Sibyl of Cumae because life without blessings is harsh and unbearable. For Sibyl, there was no reason to live without youth and beauty. With this deficiency, living became a brutal torture. And all she wanted was to surrender her soul to the sweet embrace of death. Moreover, Eliot touches upon many issues in "The Waste Land," and the most prominent issue is spirituality. This poem depicts a spiritual crisis, a sense of emptiness in a fractured and disheartened post-World War I world. Spiritual meaning is lost in modern society. In the first stanza, Eliot states that although spring is known for rebirth and rejuvenation, it is depicted as depressing and cruel in "The Waste Land."

April is the cruellest month, breeding.
Lilacs out of the dead land, mixing
Memory and desire, stirring
Dull roots with spring rain.

This world has lost its spiritual values. It is utterly unendurable. Even with the coming of spring, there cannot be a rebirth in this fragmented society. Besides, these lines can be interpreted variously. For example, it can be interpreted as an allusion to *The Canterbury Tales* by Geoffrey Chaucer, but it can also be interpreted as an allusion to Persephone, who was abducted by Hades. Persephone, the goddess of agriculture, was forced to stay in the

underworld, however, she was able to see her mother during spring and summer. Their reunion is the reason for the world to become heavenly and fertile again. This is the spiritual meaningfulness of life for them. However, the characters in "The Waste Land" are incapable of having such meanings. As Alkafaji and Marzoog state, "The Waste Land is the poetic equivalent of broken strings of glass windows, it is bits of culture broken up by war and reassembled into a new frame" (76). And readers can sense this brokenness through the characters of this poem. The characters are trying to deal with the spiritual void while going through disillusionment. World War I and life's brutality alienated people's souls with spiritual deadness. Yet, they still yearn to find a meaning in their miserable lives.

Additionally, mythological allusions serve as a challenge to the narrow-mindedness of the traditional narratives. Poets can use mythological allusions to change the traditional narrative by breaking or focusing on some social norms. These reinterpretations supply readers a unique perspective, and they raise a stronger voice for some issues like gender inequality, racism, or sexuality. Traditional narratives are made up of traditional thinking, so they might hold a lot of shortsightedness. By referring to the shortsightedness of the traditional narratives, poets can attract significant attention to the problem and make their readers rethink these traditional narratives differently. Muriel Rukeyser adroitly alludes to the story of Oedipus and Sphinx in her poem "Myth" published in her book *Breaking Open*. In this poem, Rukeyser reinterprets this mythological story as a feminist perspective Even though Oedipus thinks he correctly answered the riddle, he did not, as Sphinx states:

"When I asked, What walks on four legs in the morning,
two at noon, and three in the evening, you answered,
Man. You didn't say anything about women."

And that is what brought Oedipus' downfall in the traditional story. According to Terris, "The Oedipus myth offers Rukeyser an opportunity to express herself on the matter of feminist rhetoric in 'Myth.'" The riddle's answer is not man by reason of it excludes women, so it should not be taken as a synonym of human. The usage of men as humans is a misogynistic statement since it does not validate women. This statement is commonly used even though it may have various problematic meanings, like that women are not important enough to be considered a part of humans. Rukeyser draws attention to this troubled aspect of the traditional story of Sphinx's riddle while not changing the outcome of the *Oedipus Rex*. The story is almost the same, but a nuance changes everything while raising a forceful voice against misogyny.

Furthermore, poets can explore universal issues of human experience by using myths that have persisted through generations and across cultures. These allusions resonate with readers everywhere as they transcend historical or cultural barriers. By bridging the present with timeless stories from the

past, they evoke a sense of eternality. When poets confer universal themes with mythological allusions, they can transcend individual experiences by referring to shared difficulties, aspirations, and triumphs of people all around the world. John Keats' "Ode to a Nightingale" is a remarkable illustration of this utilization. The speaker in this poem is allured by the enchanting song of a nightingale. For the speaker, the nightingale and its mesmerizing song are immortal. However, death is inevitable, and life is filled with anxiety for humans. Yet, at the end of the poem, the nightingale flies away, and the speaker becomes lonely with his desire to run away from human "weariness" and "sickness" while questioning whether everything was a "waking dream" or not. He sees that everything, especially the good things in life, is finite. Every beauty will eventually "fade." Thus, this universal issue is addressed by Keats in this poem through four mythological allusions. The first mythological allusion is to Lethe, a river in the underworld, in the first stanza. According to Hamilton, "There are other rivers, alongside Acheron and Cocytus, that separate the underworld from the world above. Phlegethon, the river of fire; Styx, the river of the unbreakable oath by which the gods swear; and Lethe, the river of forgetfulness" (40). Even though there are five rivers in the underworld, Keats chose to reference Lethe. In Greek mythology, people were able to forget everything by drinking the water of Lethe. By bringing up this river, Keats addresses the desire to flee individuals' burdens and implies that the nightingale's song provides a momentary reprieve from the crushing facts of human experience. In the first stanza, the second allusion is to Dryad. Dryad is a tree nymph in Greek mythology who symbolizes the beautiful spirit of the earth. As Fogle states, "H. W. Garrod has remarked that the nightingale commences as a particular bird, but is imaginatively transformed to a myth in such phrases as 'light-winged Dryad of the trees'" (216). Keats presents the nightingale with a sense of enchantment and unearthly beauty by alluding to the Dryad. The nightingale is so bewitching that it makes the speaker "too happy" while resembling a Dryad. Nevertheless, the beauty vanishes as the nightingale flies away into the depths of the forest. It vanishes just like every other favorable and satisfying part of life. Another mythological allusion in the poem is to Hippocrene, a fountain in Ancient Greece. According to mythological stories, Hippocrene was the source of inspiration. This fountain was sacred to the Muses, goddesses of the arts. The speaker needs poetic inspiration to express his feelings in the hope of finding relief. So, the speaker needs to drink the water of Hippocrene to be able to breathe in this world, which is filled with miseries. Lastly, Keats alludes to Bacchus (Roman name for Dionysius), the god of wine, vegetation, and ecstasy. In the fourth stanza, the speaker approaches alcohol in distrust, knowing that he is not able to run away or hide from the difficulties of his life by drinking alcohol.

Away! away! for I will fly to thee,
Not charioted by Bacchus and his pards,

But on the viewless wings of Poesy,
Though the dull brain perplexes and retards:
Already with thee! tender is the night,
And haply the Queen-Moon is on her throne,
Clustered around by all her starry Fays;
But here there is no light,
Save what from heaven is with the breezes blown
Through verdurous glooms and winding mossy ways.

The speaker says he will follow the nightingale but not with the chariot of Bacchus or his leopards, the animals associated with Dionysus. These lines show that the speaker is aware that alcohol will never be a true escape for him. Therefore, he will follow the nightingale with the imperceptible wings of poesy. That means poetry is the vehicle to get a glimpse of the enchanted aspects of life.

As an ultimate point, mythological allusions are utilized as a creation of a more forceful bond with the readers by providing them with the feeling of familiarity. The utilization of mythological allusions builds a sturdy bridge between the poem and the reader. This utilization enhances the impact of the poem since readers feel more familiar with the poem's story thanks to the mythological allusions. Readers explore the poem's themes more deeply because they feel personal connections and recognition. Through mythological allusions, poets can promote a sense of kinship for their readers and lure them further into the poem's world. So, poets can create a more intimate relationship with their readers by referring to well-known mythological stories. All of the poems mentioned in this paper exemplify this utilization of mythological allusions resplendently. Readers can feel and connect to this powerful bond while reading "The Raven," "The Waste Land," "Myth," and "Ode to a Nightingale" because they are adroitly written. Thus, when their readers can grasp the mythological allusions of Athena, Hades, Sibyl, Persephone, Oedipus, Lethe, Dryad, Hippocrene, and Dionysus, it creates a sense of familiarity and a powerful bond between the work of literature and the reader.

In conclusion, mythological allusions are utilized by providing the poem's content greater depth and complexity, setting the poem's tone, challenging the traditional narratives, arousing a sense of timelessness and universality, and strengthening their connection with the readers by making them feel more acquainted. Since poems are shorter than other forms of literature, it takes skill and mastery to use these techniques, especially mythological allusions. All the poems mentioned in this paper are known worldwide, and their poets received overwhelming applause for their skillful work while getting prizes (like the Nobel prize T.S. Eliot got in 1948) in literature. So, this adroit usage of poets like Edgar Allan Poe, T.S. Eliot, Muriel Rukeyser, and John Keats is what makes mythological allusions' utilization more than just an embellishmentin the poem.

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The Loop of Becoming **by Lethe Eser**

This piece portrays life as a journey — not always linear or clear, but profoundly personal. Along this path, we often find ourselves caught in recurring loops, repeating emotional and mental patterns. The two figures represent different stages of the self: one entangled in the cycle, bound by invisible threads of habit and fear; the other pausing, observing, and beginning to rise above it. Transformation begins the moment we stop and reflect — asking ourselves, "Where am I repeating the same patterns?" Growth does not originate from external forces. It is a choice, an act of will, and a commitment we make to ourselves. People may come and go, circumstances may shift, but we remain with our soul — our truest and most enduring companion

The Concept of Frontier in the Construction of American Identity

Tan Berk Akı

Every great power in history creates its own national identity in its golden age and differentiates itself from the rest of the world. The case for the American national identity was no exception. After the end of the American Civil War in 1865, the country finally started to get centralized, and by the late 19th century, it started to take its place as a new great power in international relations. During this time period, many American intellectuals started to put up new ideas to create a meta-narrative that describes the American national identity while also creating a national myth for its people to believe in. In the field of history, Frederick Jackson Turner made his own attempt with the speech he gave in the meeting of the American Historical Association at the Great Columbian Exposition in Chicago, in 1893, by pointing out the influence of the frontier experience in American culture, which will be later known as "The Frontier Thesis".

by **Busenur Kılıç**

Before the Frontier Thesis of Turner, one of the dominant interpretations about the American history and American culture belonged to his mentor, Herbert Baxter Adams. As one of the first professional historians who got educated in Germany, Adams was arguing that all of the major American institutions were derived from European antecedents, hence the United States of America was just a mere extension of the European culture in his eye, particularly the British and German. The other dominant theory was the Germanic Germ Theory of History which argues that the developed political institutions of the Western world are products of innate racial qualities of the White Aryan race. However, as a person who grew up in the Midwest during the times of rapid urbanization and social change, Turner argued that the United States of America is not a mere extension of Europe, nor its characteristics are something that can be simply reduced to a race. For him, the American identity had to be something unique and dynamic. From the perspective of Turner, the United States has a continuously evolving culture that always moves forward which makes it distinct than the static Old World where stability is the key denominator in a rigid class society. In order to demonstrate this American exceptionalism, Turner focused on the frontier experience in the American history.

Due to the harsh conditions of the American frontiers, the settlers there faced lots of difficulties to survive. Nevertheless, this narrative argues that the obstacles

that the settlers confronted encouraged them to change in order to overcome the hardships of the wilderness in these frontier zones and slowly transform those places into urban ones. Thus, there was a reciprocal relationship between the settlers and the natural conditions of the frontiers. Also, it should be noted that these frontiers were not static. They keep expanding over time, and as the frontiers got expanded, the American civilization also expanded with them. As a result, we have a progressive country that is always on the move as it spreads civilization into the wilderness of the New World.

The expansion of the frontiers in this narrative also means the victory of the common man which defines the American characteristics. The harsh conditions of the wilderness in the American frontiers forced the settlers to be self-reliant in order to ensure their survival. This emphasis on self-reliance created a distinct culture of individualism in the United States which is the basis of the American culture and the idea of American democracy. In this mentality, everybody is equal under the same conditions and solely responsible for themselves. This ideology strengthens the idea of social mobility where everybody achieves their own place according to their own labor that they put. Therefore, a very competitive mindset dominates the American mentality as pragmatism dominates the American philosophy. Unlike the Old World, there is no rigid classes such as aristocracy or peasantry in this utopian republic, there are only citizens. In this country of ordinary citizens, it is believed that the government should solely follow the interests of the will of the people, which flourished the idea of American democracy as well as populism. The victory of the common man also dominates the American culture and arts as popular culture is highly valued in the United States instead of a sophisticated high culture. For an example, when we talk about performative arts in the United States, the most popular form of performative arts is the musical theatres such as Broadway musicals, instead of the ones that belongs to the high arts such as ballet or opera in Europe that is directly related with the aesthetic values of the European aristocracy. When we talk about American cultural industry, Hollywood directly comes to our mind with its profit seeking movies that aim at general audience. In conclusion, the challenging characteristics of the American frontiers created a dynamic and competitive culture in the New World that practically erased the class difference and other social hierarchies while promoting individualism and civil liberties.

Like many of the meta-narratives, the Frontier Thesis of Frederick Jackson Turner is also heavily critiqued and deconstructed many times in the postmodern era. The Turner Thesis tries to create an all-encompassing and all-explanatory meta-narrative, but it only tells a story from the perspective of White male settlers. The roles of women, as well as indigenous Americans and non-White immigrants are ignored in this narrative. Moreover, this narrative romanticizes the violent conquest of the native lands that once belonged to the indigenous peoples of America, hence it is actually a problematic approach that justifies the colonial violence, forced assimilation and genocide against the native population of the land. Nonetheless, the Frontier Thesis of Turner still contains some truth in it which is the United States of America is a utopian colonial project that values the common people over elites and individuals over collective identities. All of these cultural characteristics of the United States clearly make the American identity distinct than the European ones, although it is hard to say that it is exceptional.

O Captain! My Captain! — The Transcendental Legacy in *Dead Poets Society*

Aleyna Gedik

In an age shaped by the relentless tide of public opinion, forging an authentic identity without succumbing to life's harsh truths has become a formidable challenge. Yet this struggle is far from new — where there have been humans, there has been suffering. Dead Poets Society (1989), directed by Peter Weir, explores this timeless conflict within the walls of Welton Academy, a traditional preparatory school for boys in Vermont. There, a group of students finds their lives altered by John Keating (Robin Williams), an unconventional English teacher whose unorthodox methods awaken their spirits and compel them to seek meaning . Dead Poets Society vividly brings to life the transcendentalist ideals of Walt Whitman and Ralph Waldo Emerson, echoing their calls for self-reliance, individuality, and the celebration of the human spirit. Through the teachings of John Keating, the boys at Welton Academy are urged to challenge conformity and find their paths. The film becomes a modern ode to transcendentalism, reminding viewers that true freedom lies in daring to think, feel, and live authentically.

The echoes of Emerson and Walt Whitman resonate visually and thematically throughout Dead Poets Society. In the opening scene, as the students meet John Keating, their new literature teacher, a portrait of Whitman looms atop the classroom wall — a subtle yet potent symbol of transcendentalist ideals. The moment when Keating gathers the boys before the glassy eyes of Welton's graduates is particularly striking. "Seize the day, boys. Make your lives extraordinary," he urges, his words a vivid echo of Emerson's call to trust oneself in Self-Reliance: "Trust thyself: every heart vibrates to that iron string." Keating's command to seize the day compels the boys to listen to the whispers of their souls, to defy the suffocating norms of conformity, and to walk paths forged by their convictions. The spectral faces in the old photographs, frozen in time, remind them — and us — of life's ephemeral nature, reinforcing Emerson's plea to live deliberately, to act with purpose, and to shun the passive drift toward mediocrity.

Early in the film, Keating invites the students to address him as "O Captain! My Captain!" — a nod to Whitman that casts him as both a mentor and a navigator, steering them away from the restrictive currents of tradition toward the uncharted waters of intellectual and personal liberation. Yet, in true Whitmanian fashion, Keating does not ask for unquestioning loyalty; instead, he urges students to think for themselves, to trust their voices and act upon their convictions, for life is too brief to be lost by self-doubt. He urges the celebration of both body and soul, suggesting that while life's practi-

calities — careers, responsibilities — are necessary, the true elixir for the soul is found in love, poetry, and human connection. "We don't read and write poetry because it's cute. We read and write poetry because we are members of the human race," Keating declares, reminding them that life's richness lies not in mere survival but in the pursuit of meaning, beauty, and expression.

His message aligns seamlessly with Emerson's conviction in the transformative power of literature and original thought, urging the boys to reject the passive, mechanical lives their parents and society have mapped out for them and instead to seek out their own verses, their own truths — for to live without doing so would be to exist without truly living.

However, after being molded and constrained by institutions — schools, laws, parents — making one's voice heard in a world governed by the rigid conventions of propriety is a hard task, especially for those like Todd Anderson, portrayed by Ethan Hawke. Todd is hesitant

about Keating's poetry homework, writing "Carpe Diem" (Seize the Day) several times and tearing the pages, refusing to get out of his comfort zone. At the outset, Todd s a boy paralyzed by timidity, his words silenced beneath the overwhelming burden of expectation. Yet, under Keating's guidance, he undergoes a Whitman-like awakening, a stirring of the soul reminiscent of Whitman's call to embrace the self and speak one's truth boldly. "Uttering his "Barbaric Yawp", Todd's journey from voicelessness to self-expression mirrors Whitman's celebration of the primal cry of the human spirit, an original freed from the conventions of the society, of what is suitable — a transformation that underscores the film's insistence that life's true poetry is found not in conformity, but in the fearless declaration of one's verse. "That you are here—that life exists and identity, That the powerful play goes on, and you may contribute a verse."— Whitman, Leaves of Grass ("O Me! O Life!" 1892 edition).

Charlie Dalton, played by Gale Hansen, embodies the ultimate nonconformist in Dead Poets Society, echoing Emerson's Self-Reliance. Boldly rejecting Welton's rigid regulations, he asserts his individuality without fear. From the prank "phone call from God" to his daring demand to admit girls to the school, Charlie declines to conform, choosing instead to live by his own rules. His rebellion is impulsive, loud, and unapologetic — a vivid reflection of Emerson's belief that "Whoso would be a man must be a nonconformist." When Keating encourages the boys to walk in a "free" manner during a class on the schoolyard, Charlie chooses not to walk at all, stating, "I'm exercising the right not to walk." In this simple act, Charlie refuses to conform to the expected rules and regulations, standing firm in his belief that true freedom lies in the rejection of societal expectations. The very first line of Charlie in the movie is "I failed literature", unaware he will undergothe biggest transformation. Whitman's Leaves of Grass urges, "Re-examine all you have been told at school or church or in any book, dismiss whatever insults your own

soul." Charlie Dalton does not simply reject what he has been told; rather, he questions, challenges, and redefines the truths imposed upon him. He does not conform to what others deem right but instead creates his own truth, living according to it. In doing so, Charlie forges a new identity — a unique synthesis of who he was, who he is now, and who he will become. As Whitman says in section 51 of "Song of Myself":

"The past and present wilt — I have filled them,
emptied them,
And proceed to fill my next fold of the future."
"Do I contradict myself?
Very well then I contradict myself,
(I am large, I contain multitudes.)"

Neil Perry, portrayed by Robert Sean Leonard, represents the tragic transcendentalist, torn between societal expectations and the pursuit of his true passion. When Neil declares, "For the first time in my life, I know what I want to do! And for the first time, I'm gonna do it! Whether my father wants me to or not!" he decides to do something for his own sakefor the first time, deciding to be himself in a world that is constantly trying to make him something else. Neil's decision to pursue acting in A Midsummer Night's Dream, despite his father's vehement opposition, embodies the transcendentalist ideal of trusting one's desires and breaking free from the chains of parental and societal expectations. Later, when Neil joyfully exclaims, "I was good. I was really good," after his performance, his short but striking moment of triumph, he embodies both Emerson and Whitman's ideals — living fully and passionately, even if it means defying the world around him. Tragically, however, Neil's pursuit of selfhood leads him to a devastating end, revealing the dark side of a struggle for independence in a world that demands conformity. He opens the Dead Poets Society and ends it too. Tragically, the opening lines of the poetry gathering in the cave by Henry David Thoreau, narrated by Neil, "I went to the woods because I wished to live deliberately, to front only the essential facts of life, and see if I could not learn what it had to teach, and not, when I came to die, discover that I had not lived," becomes his last words, foreshadowing his death from the very beginning.

John Keating, enabling students to find their voices along with their place in the world, just like Whitman does in "Song of Myself," holds their waist with his right hand while showing the path to walk on with the other one. His decision to stand atop his desk and declare, "I stand upon my desk to remind myself that we must constantly look at things differently," powerfully echoes Emerson's "To the attentive eye, each moment of the year has its own beauty." Keating encourages his students to challenge conventional thinking and view the world through new eyes. He urges his students to stand up for the outcasts — the ones who feel too much, the ones who sit quietly, the ones who hide behind a smile — reminding them that each is human and worthy of being seen. Yet, to be open and authentic is to be vulnerable in a world ruled by those who wear masks of conformity. In the end, Keating becomes the sca-

pegoat for Neil's tragic death, taking the blame for a system that pressures parents and crushes those who dare to defy its rigid expectations.

In the film's final, unforgettable scene, the students rise to their desks and call out, "O Captain! My Captain!", a powerful homage to Whitman's poem, symbolizing their unwavering loyalty and respect for Keating's teachings. As Keating is forced to leave, Todd and the others take a bold, Emersonian stand against the oppressive forces that have silenced them, embodying the very principles of self-reliance and free thought that Keating championed. In that defiant moment, they reject conformity and reclaim their voices, reminding themselves — and each other — that true courage lies in standing up for what they believe , even when the world demands silence. Despite the absence of Charlie and Neil and the impending loss of Mr. Keating, the remaining boys rise in a final act of defiance, embodying the enduring spirit of those who dare to think differently. In that moment, they become a living testament to the idea that, despite an unjust and cruel world, those who celebrate what are now called "odd" things — poetry, love, romance — have existed, and will continue to exist. Their act of standing up is not just for Keating — it is a declaration that voices like theirs will not be silenced.

Dead Poets Society is a compelling, modern portrayal of transcendentalist ideals, delivering powerful messages to those who struggle to find their voice, who are afraid to take the first step, who hesitate to kiss the ones they love, who feel too much, and those who fear disappointing their parents. It speaks to those who feel they don't belong, who feel trapped like Neil, who are afraid to utter their barbaric yawp, and who live only to please others, not themselves. Most importantly, it is a film for those who remain unaware of their genius, urging them to seize the day and make their lives extraordinary – before life slips through their fingers.

Pseudoscience and Racial Oppression: The Misuse of Science to Justify Racism in the American South

Berkay Kaan Kabadayı

Introduction

Throughout American history, scientific theories were abused to rationalize and reinforce racial hierarchies, particularly in the South. In the post-civil war South, religious justifications for slavery lost power and led Southern elites to come up with new "scientific" solutions to maintain the oppression. This paper examines how pseudoscientific theories, including phrenology and eugenics, were used to justify racism in the American South. The misuse of scientific theories fueled the racial discrimination that seems to be built on biological determinism, which influenced Southern laws, institutions, and medicine.

Historical Context

The economic system of the American South was heavily dependent on slave labor, which continued in a different form in the "sharecropping system." As the exploitation of labor attracted more criticism, the Southern elites or plantation owners sought new ways to justify the existing racial hierarchy. Science offered a powerful tool for supporting misconceptions in a seemingly objective way.

The 19th century was a prominent time and crucial in this sense of supposedly scientific theories. As historian James Brewer Stewart notes, "The cultural authority of science grew dramatically in the nineteenth century, offering new ways to conceptualize human difference at precisely the moment when older justifications were under attack" (Stewart 87).

This attack was especially effective as it used scientific 'objectivity' to present deeply biased views as neutral facts. This wasn't a simple individual prejudice, but the construction of an entire framework that institutionalized racism in a data-driven way. As Barbara Fields argues, "Race is neither natural nor transhistorical but must be continually reproduced through social practices" (Fields 152). In the post-Civil War South, science became the primary mechanism for this reproduction.

Phrenology as a Racial Science

One of the earliest pseudoscientific theories to gain traction was phrenology, developed by Franz Joseph Gall in the late 1700s and popularized in America by practitioners like Samuel Morton and Josiah Nott. Phrenology claimed that the measurement of skull shapes could reveal intellectual capacity. The fundamental premise was that the brain consisted of distinct "organs" res-

ponsible for different traits and that the size of these organs indicated their strength or weakness.

Samuel Morton, often described as the father of American scientific racism, collected hundreds of skulls from different races and published works like *Crania Americana* in 1839. Morton measured the capability of the brains by filling skulls with mustard seeds and later lead shot, claiming these measurements revealed objective racial hierarchies in intelligence. His findings placed Europeans at the top and Africans at the bottom of the hierarchy. However, as Stephen Jay Gould later demonstrated in his reanalysis of Morton's work, "Unconscious manipulation of data may be a scientific norm" (Gould 54). Morton's methodology was inevitably biased and flawed.

Another Southern scientist was Josiah Nott who adapted phrenological principles to defend slavery. Nott's influential work, Types of Mankind, claimed that skull measurements proved Africans were inferior. As Nott wrote, "The brain of a Negro, compared with that of the European, is smaller by a tenth... and the intellect is correspondingly inferior" (Nott and Gliddon 189).

Southern phrenologists claimed that people of African descent had specific cranial features that indicated lower intellectual capacity but stronger "animal propensities." These supposed findings aligned with stereotypes: the claim that enslaved people were intellectually incapable of independence but physically suited for plantation labor.

Furthermore, Samuel Cartwright invented fictional medical conditions like "Drapetomania," a disease causing enslaved people to flee captivity, which is, of course, associated with Blacks and their cranial features. This shows how phrenology wasn't merely an academic theory but had real-world applications in controlling the enslaved population. As Todd Savitt explains, "Medical theories about Black inferiority helped justify plantation discipline and the denial of basic human rights" (Savitt 76). These ideas were taught in Southern medical schools and published in respected medical journals.

The Eugenics Movement in the South

By the late 19th century, phrenology was giving way to eugenics, which applied misinterpretations of Darwinian evolution to human societies. The term "eugenics," meaning "well-born," was coined by Francis Galton, Darwin's cousin, in 1883. Eugenics proposed improving humanity's genetic stock by controlling reproduction and "desirable" traits and preventing "undesirable" ones.

The American eugenics movement gained momentum in the early 1900s, with institutions like the Eugenics Record Office at Cold Spring Harbor Laboratory founded in 1910. Charles Davenport, its director, collected thousands of family pedigrees to track traits he believed were simply inherited—not just physical characteristics but

complex social behaviors like criminality, poverty, and "feeble-mindedness."

Southern eugenicists were particularly focused on maintaining what they called "racial purity" and preventing what they termed "race mixing." As historian Edward Larson documents, "Southern eugenicists placed racial integrity at the center of their program, linking it explicitly to the maintenance of white supremacy in ways that Northern eugenicists sometimes avoided" (Larson 92).

Virginia became a center of Southern eugenics, passing the Racial Integrity Act in 1924, which prohibited interracial marriage and created the bureaucratic category of "white person" as someone with "no trace whatsoever of any blood other than Caucasian." The same year, Virginia passed sterilization legislation that became a model for other Southern states. The Supreme Court's decision in *Buck v. Bell* (1927) favored the constitutionality of Virginia's sterilization law, with Justice Oliver Wendell Holmes infamously declaring, "Three generations of imbeciles are enough" (Buck v. Bell).

Dr. Walter Plecker, Virginia's register of vital statistics, used eugenic theories to create a program of racial classification, changing birth certificates and creating lists of families he suspected of hiding African ancestry. This shows how eugenic "science" became a tool of administrative racial control. Between 1924 and 1972, over 7,000 Virginians were sterilized under eugenic laws, disproportionately targeting African Americans, poor women, and those deemed "mentally deficient" (Lombardo 116). Mississippi's eugenic program explicitly linked race and mental fitness, with one state report noting that "Negro blood and mental defectiveness go hand in hand" (Mississippi State Board of Health 1928).

Scientific Racism in Southern Medicine

Dr. Samuel Cartwright, mentioned earlier for his phrenological theories, described what he called "Negro diseases" in the respected *New Orleans Medical and Surgical Journal*. He claimed that Black people had different lung capacities, blood composition, and nervous systems—to justify unequal medical treatment. As Cartwright wrote, "It is this defective hematosis, or atmospherization of the blood, conjoined with a deficiency of cerebral matter in the cranium... that is the true cause of that debasement of mind, which has rendered the people of Africa unable to take care of themselves" (Cartwright 65). These pseudoscientific claims directly influenced how medicine was practiced in the South.

These theories had deadly consequences. The infamous Tuskegee Syphilis Study, which ran from 1932 to 1972 in Alabama, deliberately withheld treatment from hundreds of African American men with syphilis to observe the disease's "natural progression" in Black bodies. As medical historian Susan Reverby notes, "The study

depended on a belief in racial difference that made Black bodies suitable for experimentation in ways white bodies were not" (Reverby 189).

Moreover, Harriet Washington's research demonstrates how "scientific racism in medicine created a self-reinforcing cycle: presumed biological differences led to different treatment protocols, and the resulting health disparities were then cited as evidence of inherent racial differences" (Washington 112). This corrupted logic helped deepen the racial hierarchies in the medical practices.

Impact on Laws, Policies, and Culture

These pseudoscientific theories directly shaped Southern laws and institutions. The Supreme Court's *Plessy v. Ferguson* decision, upholding segregation in 1896, was influenced by scientific arguments about natural racial differences. Justice Henry Brown's majority opinion reflected scientific thought on the "physical differences" between races, demonstrating how these theories influenced the highest levels of jurisprudence. Anti-miscegenation laws existed in all Southern states and remained in place until the Supreme Court's *Loving v. Virginia* decision in 1967. These laws claimed to prevent what eugenicists called "hybrid degeneracy" in mixed-race offspring. As legal historian Peggy Pascoe argues, "Anti-miscegenation law represented the most powerful expression of the link between scientific racism and state power" (Pascoe 131).

Scientific racism permeated Southern literature and popular culture as well. Thomas Dixon's novel *The Clansman*, which became the basis for D.W. Griffith's influential film *Birth of a Nation*, drew heavily on eugenic ideas about racial degeneration and the biological dangers of race mixing. Popular magazines and newspapers regularly featured articles about racial science, making these ideas accessible to ordinary citizens. Children's textbooks included sections on racial hierarchies presented as scientific fact, ensuring these beliefs were transmitted to new generations. As cultural historian Grace Elizabeth Hale notes, "Scientific racism provided a vocabulary and conceptual framework that shaped popular understanding of race well beyond academic circles" (Hale 203).

Even William Faulkner's novels, while complex in their treatment of race, reflect the devastating influence of racial science in their descriptions of inherited traits and "blood." Museums and public exhibitions featured displays on eugenics and racial difference, often using visual charts, photographs, and models to give scientific legitimacy to racial stereotypes. These cultural expressions helped normalize scientific racism in everyday thinking.

Resistance and Decline

Despite the overwhelming influence of scientific racism, there were also important voices of resistance, particularly from Black scholars and institutions. W.E.B. Du Bois, trained at Harvard, directly challenged the scientific foundations of

racial theories in works like *The Conservation of Races* (1897) and *The Health and Physique of the Negro American* (1906). As Du Bois wrote, "The evidence of race inferiority is not sufficient to justify the policy of granting to Negroes an inferior place in society, nor of refusing them equal educational opportunities" (Du Bois 12).

Historically Black colleges and universities produced research challenging dominant racial science. Howard University's medical school and journal published studies refuting claims about racial disease differences. Anthropologist Franz Boas of Columbia University also provided crucial scientific opposition, demonstrating that cranial features were influenced by the environment, not race.

After WWII , the horrors of Nazi Germany, which had a disturbingly close approach with American eugenics, created a widespread reaction toward eugenic practices. Moreover, UNESCO's issued statements in 1950 and 1951 rejected the scientific validity of race as a biological category. The Civil Rights Movement also directly challenged the social structures built on scientific racism.

Conclusion

The history of scientific racism in the American South offers important lessons about the relationship between science and society. Science prominently reflects and sometimes reinforces the values and power structures of its time and place. Understanding this history helps us recognize similar patterns when they appear in contemporary contexts.

This historiography also reminds us that scientific claims require meticulous research, especially when they align too neatly with existing social hierarchies or economic interests. As philosopher of science Sandra Harding argues, "The greatest scientific discoveries have often come from those willing to question dominant paradigms, especially when those paradigms serve existing power structures" (Harding 178).

The legacy of scientific racism remains with us today. Recent controversies, like the publication of *The Bell Curve* in 1994 arguing for genetic bases to racial IQ differences, show how elements of scientific racism periodically reemerge in new forms. However, the Human Genome Project has demonstrated that race has no meaningful genetic basis for intellect.

Finally, this history underscores the importance of diversity in scientific communities. As we face contemporary challenges requiring scientific solutions, from climate change to pandemic response, this history offers a cautionary tale about the misuse of science.

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Story of a Soldier

Ulyana İrem Somalp

Once upon a time, there lived a soldier. He was not the most hardworking or efficient, but fulfilled given orders. One day, during dinner, a messenger climbed up the platform in the dining hall. The messenger delivered, "A member of the royal family has been kidnapped. A brave soul is needed to retrieve their highness. The hero will be honored and greatly rewarded!" Interested, the soldier murmured, "greatly rewarded..."

Having decided to try to save the royalty, the soldier set out. The journey was anything but pleasing; valleys moist as eyes, mountains cold enough to numb the mind, deserts drying up the tongue... Feet swollen, back bent, eyes red, and lips dry, the soldier followed the way to the royal. The soldier could not help thinking, "Why bother abducting when it is so bothersome?" Fair riddle to perplex one. Indeed, why would someone hold another against their will?}

"Greatly rewarded," murmured the soldier.

On the way, the soldier came across a she-wolf. Only skin wrapping the body, she nursed a well-fed cub. The cub, blessed with innocence, sweetly consumed the mother. She held no power to scare away the intruder, and the soldier had no wish to be fanged to death. Farewell.

Moving forward, the soldier came across a snake. The snake had a long, slender body that hung between branches. It hissed, "You don't see me until the light goes out. I'm the ceiling." Finding it frank that a ceiling may talk, the soldier asked, "What is your name?" The snake was puzzled. "Name? What must that be?" The soldier patiently explained, "A sound by which you are called." Snake lowered its head in wonder, confusion adorned with nostalgia, "Ah, that! I was called once. Just before light was not needed anymore, I was called. An intricate and peculiar sound, I can say. But one does not notice the ceiling until the light is needed but delivers not." It went back to the higher branches. "The lights haven't gone out of order, not even once yet." The soldier continued the adventure.

On the way, the soldier noticed a spider caressing its prey on a deathbed. Spider whispered, "Beloved, fear no more. Shall you rest in my arms," and adored the prey with a deadly kiss. Astonished, the soldier asked, "Why talk so gently to one you wish bad?" Spider, in great shock, "Wish bad? This wasp struggled just to

remain on my fragile web!" "For sure, one would not stay silent when accused of such an awful charge.}"

The soldier reached the last point before the final destination where the royal was to await the so-called rescue. Wiping off the sweat, which that feeble act had failed to remove, the soldier was dumbstruck. How does one liberate the royal without touching them?! The soldier knew: if even once allowed to touch a body, these dirty hands that held back not to dirty anything, anyone—anyone—a maddening curse will spread to the body and it will strip all remaining reason away. The soldier would no longer think of being greatly rewarded, nor of saving a poor soul, nor about that unfortunate body withheld from freedom: the soldier will consume the being. The scales on the back, gills on the neck, fangs hanging from the mouth, and the claws that cling to never let go will destroy the life of all others.

As expected – or perhaps not–, the soldier was thoughtful. Such things could not be allowed. The abducted was left behind and the soldier returned to the once-deserted post. s Things had now turned back to normal. The soldier on duty, a royal member in need of help, and the abductor is the biggest enemy of all. And now it all was normal. And now?

A Knock on the Door

Furkan Buğra Kumaş

I heard a knock on the door. It was five in the morning, and everyone was asleep. The streets, the house, everything was asleep. The dawn hadn't shown its bluish face yet, and the darkness was the only one to conquer the sphere. There were some raindrops on the windows. I didn't know whether it really knocked or not, but I had a strange feeling in my gut. At first, I thought it was just another moment in which I confused the reality and the dream. Yet not even a minute later, it knocked again. It was real. I quickly got out of bed, but I couldn't see much if anybody was there . I heard the thunder outside rambling the windows. I got anxious. I didn't know what to do. I walked around the room. Cars were passing on the wet road, and the blowing wind could be heard. Then, I moved out of my room to get a knife to protect myself lest anything happens. It looked familiar somehow, but I was too occupied to think of it. I waited in the darkness, and then came another tapping.

Thud, thud, thud.

It was echoing in my head nonstop as if it would never knock again. Why was someone at my door at this time of day? Did I do something wrong? Then, I saw a shadow behind me. A tall man with a long coat. He had a cowboy hat – unnecessarily. With a quick dash forward, I turned around, and there was nothing. There was just a street light flickering without a reason. Then my cat hopped onto the plate I had left after dinner. It fell on the ground with a hop, scattering little pieces around. I was stuck there for about a minute after going through two incidents at once. My heart was pounding, and as if it could be heard from outside, there came another tapping on the door.

Thud, thud, thud.

This time, my body wholly reacted. I was feeling my skin was stretched out, my hand was trembling, my lungs were not filling. I was feeling dizzy, and my gut had a different feeling which I cannot describe with words of this pitiful world. I cleaned the sweat off my head. The cat was purring and licking its feet, indifferent to the situation. I should have adopted a dog instead of him, though she was a good companion. I tried to get to my room, trying not to touch the plate's shattered pieces. I took my phone and opened my flashlight and watched the door. My phone's battery died the minute I took it in my hand, but the door was there, in front of me, and there came another tapping. Who was behind the door, and why was it harassing me at that time of night?

Thud, thud, thud.

It was getting uneasy. I wasn't able to answer the questions in my head. Who was that behind the door? Was it some kind of killer? Was it a joke being played on me? There might be a couple of reasons. First, I was a very annoying man with no filter. I could have hurt someone with my words, and one of them might have come to kill me and

dump me in a forest until someone finds my decayed body. Another reason is that I had a couple of students who did not take my classes seriously, and I gave them an F1. The intruder might have ended up on my door to kill me or pull some kind of a scary joke on me. With the flickering light of the street, I slowly walked to the door, and there came another knocking on the door. Without a relent, the intruder, behind the door, was tapping.

Thud, thud, thud.

I was afraid to look through the peephole. It was dangerous anyway. The intruder might have a gun and shoot me in the eye, and I would die behind the doors instantly. It was too much of a risk to take. I was also thinking while slowly going to the door, what if it wasn't here to kill me but to talk? What if? The idea of talking soothed me a little bit. I was longing for a talk for a long time. There came another tapping on the door, but this time, it was more different.

Thud. Thud. Thud. Thud. Thud.

Was the intruder trying to give a signal? Was he a friend of mine, and was it our code of friendship? I wasn't sure. I had never been sure my whole life. What should I have done? I was getting more and more anxious, and I went to the door and found to courage to ask who it was. I asked, and no answer was given except a slightly lesser tapping on the door. I realized that it might be a drunkard. Maybe… Maybe it was only a stupid drunkard who forgot the address of his house. Maybe it was the end for me. The only thing that I had to do was open the door and face the truth, but it was not that easy. I loved to be alive. I asked again and nothing… I gently touched the door handle without any options to take and then came a squeak. I opened the door, echoing in the building, and, luckily, there was no one at the door. I looked around and I was not able to see anybody. It was just the scent of perfume left in the corridor of the building. It was sugary sweet and was definitely a woman's perfume. I closed the door with a huge relief. I took a deep breath and I got to bed with the knife in my hand. The minute I put my head on the pillow, my alarm clock rang. It was time to go to work. Thank God, no one came and found the dead bodies in my bathtub.

photo by **Çisemnaz Çil**

SUNSET LOON

Zeynep Özge İlhan

Dragged myself into the cold,

Stepping down to reach the so-called freedom.

At every step,

Asking heavens to grant me some reason

To understand reality,

Even after leaving the fight of the brute —

Why so much heated melody?

Right then, the ink began to boil,

Helplessly trying to cling to the Reason,

Even though left in the untouched pot

After years of sorrow,

A copy of me came to be,

With the first lights of Sunset Loon.

As I recall the ghost I was forced to be,

Now facing the light that will flood my heart soon.

photo by **Çisemnaz Çil**

UNDER THE MASK

Zeynep Özge İlhan

The first time I saw the reflection
Of a disguised vex,
I thought it was the Process
Of building my fake reflex.
After my ears burst
At that man eating grass – oh!
My heart, wrecked
It was the hardest
Not to forget.
The Process I longed for – with
A fervent heartbeat,
Unmasked the secret –
a beast greater than I'd known,
Waiting for me to pace
Slowly, through the never ending coal,
Eventually granting me relief
Without even letting me know,
That I was no longer a victim
Of a naked king's comedy anymore.

by **Lethe Eser**

Epitaph 43

***Growth Within the Spiral* by Lethe Eser**

We often wait for a helping hand to lift us out of chaos, hoping for rescue from above. Yet life—unpredictable and ever-turning—follows its own rhythm. This artwork explores the idea that, even without external intervention, we are continuously shaped by the very forces we fear. The spirals symbolize the unpredictable twists of existence; they both entangle and elevate. Sometimes, it is not the hand that reaches out to save us, but the growth that emerges from within the struggle. In its quiet persistence, life teaches, nurtures, and ultimately reclaims us.

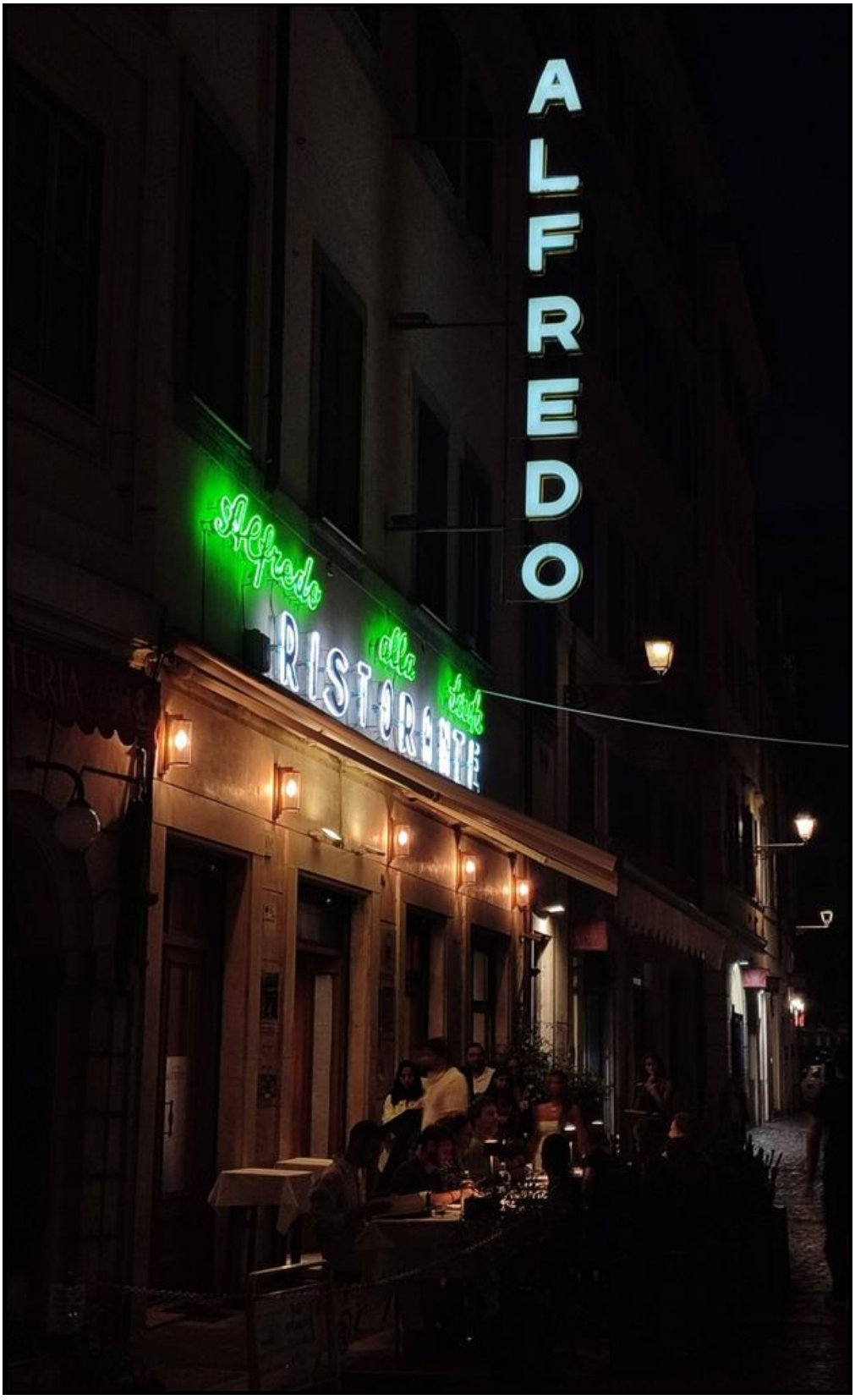

photo by **Çisemnaz Çil**

GAMZE CANTÜRK

HALIDE ZEYNEP DURMAZ

CEYDA ECE SAYDAMLI

TAN BERK AKI

ALEYNA GEDIK

BERKAY KAAN KABADAYI

ULYANA İREM SOMALP

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ZEYNEP ÖZGE İLHAN

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