

ARTICLE

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A few notes of acknowledgement for those who contributed to this issue.

Keywords: acknowledgements

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Competing Interests

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How to cite this article: Editorial Board. "Acknowledgements." *Philologia* 11, no. 1 (2019): pp. 1–3. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.21061/ph.178>

Submitted: 01 April 2019

Accepted: 01 April 2019

Published: 30 April 2019

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RESEARCH

The Importance of Universal Design on College Campuses

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"Go Hokies!" "This is Home," I exclaimed at the top of my lungs to the Virginia Tech Class of 2021. During the summer of 2018, wearing a maroon and orange polo and proudly representing the university during freshman orientation, I led groups of freshmen around campus and sought to teach them how to live life as Hokies. The Hokie Nation runs deep and it was an honor to help students transition into it. I truly believe that all eager students interested and committed to joining the Hokie community should be able to call Blacksburg home. Even as a former orientation leader, I realize that that is not always the reality due to the severe lack of universal design and accessibility on college campuses across the nation, including our beloved Virginia Tech. Everyone's experience at Virginia Tech might not be like it is initially portrayed. My knowledge as student with a Disability Studies minor has led me to identify a flaw in the design of college campuses across our nation. Students are hindered from joining spirited collegiate communities before they even step foot on campus due to the lack of universally designed features and amenities. Someone's identity as a Hokie does not mean they are not going to experience barriers. I wonder the types of students I could have met in my orientation groups if Virginia Tech's acceptance and accessibility standards were fully inclusive of all people, even those with disabilities. In order to attract people with disabilities to join the Hokie Nation, thus making our community more diverse, I call on the Virginia Tech administration and other collegiate administrations to take action in creating communities that are universally designed.

Keywords: universal; design; college; campuses; accessibility; disabilities; universal design

Introduction

"Go Hokies!" "This is Home," I exclaimed at the top of my lungs to the Virginia Tech Class of 2021. During the summer of 2018, wearing a maroon and orange polo and proudly representing the university during freshman orientation, I led groups of freshmen around campus and sought to teach them how to live life as Hokies. Pride and commitment to the Hokie Nation runs deep, and it was an honor to help students transition into it. I truly believe that all eager students and professionals interested and committed to joining the Hokie community should be able to call Blacksburg home. However, even as a former orientation leader, I realize that that is not always the reality due to the severe lack of universal design and accessibility on college campuses across the nation. My knowledge as Human Development student with a Disability Studies minor has led me to identify a flaw in the design of college campuses across our nation. Due to a lack of universally designed features and amenities, some students are hindered from joining spirited collegiate communities before they even step foot on campus.

Universal design is a design strategy that makes environments "useable by everyone without the need for adaptation or specialized design solutions" (Null, 2013, p. 4). It aims to integrate usability for broader markets to achieve safe, convenient, and appealing environments without experiencing barriers for people with various disabilities (D'Angelo & Catlin, 2018). I have taken several disabilities studies courses, including RED 4664 Universal Design and STS 3284 Technology and Disability, that have deepened my knowledge of assessing our environments for accessibility. Through reflections of other peoples' experiences, I have realized that everyone's experience at Virginia Tech might not be as it is initially portrayed; someone's identity as a Hokie does not mean that they are not going to experience barriers. In this paper, I will share my background and interest in universal design, barriers found with building assessments, and my views regarding how those barriers negatively impact students and professionals with disabilities.

A lack of universal design is a problem at college campuses across America and it is time to stop sugarcoating the issue and face reality. This is a significant issue worth discussing because disabilities exist in all populations, in all locations, and in all ages. Closer to home, Dr. Ashley Shew is a tenure-track faculty member at Virginia Tech in the Department of

Science, Technology, and Society. She is a member of the disabled community at Virginia Tech. When asked in an interview to describe universal design, she states that it is too often seen as an “extra or bonus, instead of the standard, which is a real problem” (Shew, Personal Interview, October 2018). In an online opinion piece from Inside Higher Ed, a degree-seeking student with a physical disability named Valerie Piro states that “nobody’s wheelchair should be a barrier to higher education. Their ability to attend should never be in question” (Piro, 2017). All people have an equal right to higher education, and it is time we stop ignoring the needs of people who would benefit the most from universal design. Therefore, in order to attract people with disabilities to join the Hokie Nation, thus making our community more diverse and our campus more inclusive, I call on the Virginia Tech central administration and other collegiate administrations to take action in creating communities that are universally designed. In order for us to continue inventing the future academically, we must invent a future in our infrastructure around campus that supports all students and faculty.

Background

My exploration of universal design on college campuses stems from a project I completed in STS 3284, Technology and Disability, in my spring 2018 semester. The course discusses various technologies and the experience of disability. I completed a project in this course titled “A Day Without Stairs at Virginia Tech” that challenged individuals to view life through the eyes of someone with limited mobility. I started this project because in my own observations, I noticed that not many people take daily notice of important accessibility features. Unless it has an impact on their way of travel, most nondisabled people do not look for accessible ramps, elevators, and entrances. I admit that I even fall into that category. For my project, I documented a typical day at Virginia Tech through video, but there was a catch: I could not use stairs, I could not open a door without using an automatic push button, and I could not cross the street without using a curb cut.

The difference between the amount of time it took me to walk the route I might normally choose compared to the amount of the time it took me to take the accessible route was appalling. For example, getting from New Classroom Building to Payne Hall, a trip that would normally take about thirteen minutes, took me 27 minutes and 40 seconds using the accessible route. During my journey from location to location, I also stumbled upon many broken automatic push buttons and confusing signage. I felt frustrated, disheartened, and defeated when reflecting on the lack of easily accessible routes at the school that I love.

The project opened my eyes to the barriers people face every single day at Virginia Tech and inspired me to take action. In fall 2018, I took RED 4664 Universal Design and had a chance to do further research on college campus accessibility. Through my future research on the subject, I hope to shed a light on the importance of universal design on college campuses and encourage universities to be inclusive for all students and faculty. To do this, I interviewed several community disability advocates, reviewed local newspapers, referenced online articles, and conducted a building assessment.

Why Should Universities Support Universal Design?

In my interview with Dr. Shew, I realized that the large prevalence of disabilities on college campuses is often forgotten or ignored. We must remember that disabilities can happen at any point in someone’s life and can be temporary or permanent; just because someone is able-bodied now does not mean they will remain disability-free throughout their lifetime. For instance, Dr. Shew became a Hokie first as a graduate student and then as a professor before becoming an amputee. After her surgery, Dr. Shew admits that Virginia Tech became shockingly different. She says, “I was not unaware. I knew that there were problems here, but I did not see them around every turn like I do now. There’s a daily stress of it all – not knowing if your body can get places. Being new and disabled here is like being in a different world” (Shew, Personal Interview, October 2018). Universal design serves people who currently live with disabilities and people that will in the future. Universities would greatly benefit from universal design’s promotion of lifespan-friendly and age-friendly environments.

We are influenced by the environments in which we visit and in which we live. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, “people with a disability are less likely to have completed a bachelor’s degree than people with no disability” (Fleishman, 2017). I believe that this is largely due to a lack of universal design and opportunities for people with disabilities to thrive on college campuses. Nonetheless, people with disabilities have an equal right under law to higher education as people who do not have disabilities do: “All schools have something in common: they cannot discriminate against anyone due to his or her disability” (Mobility International USA, 2018). Despite this, not all schools have the same services available and unfortunately, universal design often depends on the location of the school. Some schools are built in urban settings where universal design is valued and advancements in disability services are a core focus in the university’s operation. Regardless of urban or rural setting, according to ADA professionals from Facilities Net, John D’Angelo and John Caitlin, college is a time to inspire students to grow into future leaders that will one day change the world for the better: “Future leaders spend time on our campuses learning what is possible. What they see and experience in the environment will shape them” (D’Angelo & Catlin, 2018). If a student’s college of choice does not have an environment that supports them, then they might generalize that lack of support to the outside world too, feeling depleted and discouraged to graduate and work towards their goals. If colleges provided a more supportive learning and living environments for students, students’ quality of life would increase, and they would feel happier and more supported by their institution.

A lack of universal design discourages bright, academically driven people from pursuing higher education opportunities. Dr. Shew works with students that have disabilities at Virginia Tech: she is the faculty advisor for the Virginia Tech Disability Caucus. Dr. Shew shared with me that after she formed the Caucus, she received several “soul-crushing emails” from people that came to Virginia Tech and had to leave because of accessibility struggles (Shew, Personal Interview, October 2018). Dr. Shew attributes their leaving to the large “threat of being discriminated against” in the Hokie community (Shew, Personal Interview, October 2018). This has had a devastating impact on potential Hokies. Our current accessibility standards have prevented students and professionals from coming to Virginia Tech; a lack of universal design at Virginia Tech also has caused people to leave Blacksburg to pursue schooling elsewhere. Therefore, prioritizing universal design is crucial when discussing admission and retention rates. We must improve in order to increase retention and admission rates for all Hokies.

Regarding my own admissions experience, I admit that it was a breeze for me. Nondisabled people often assume that every college can adjust to fit their needs. All I had to focus on was finding a school where I could thrive academically and be happy; I toured seven schools, extensively explored the websites of dozens of schools, but ended up choosing Virginia Tech because of the school spirit. From my research and reading personal stories of students with disabilities, I was shocked to learn how our experiences differed. Students with disabilities have to go above and beyond to find a college where they can even get from one building to the next; if colleges were universally designed in the first place to fit all types of students, we would not have that problem. Valerie Piro, a student with a physical disability requiring wheelchair use at the Harvard Graduate School of Education, shares her struggles of finding a college that fit both her academic needs and the needs of her physical impairment. She applied to many colleges but could only take an in-person tour at two colleges. Barriers she faced when trying to tour colleges included a lack of information online and features impossible for a wheelchair to navigate such as cobblestone pathways, elevators that are too small, and inadequate wooden ramps placed over stairs (Piro, 2017). Piro’s options for universities were limited because universities do not prioritize universal design.

When researching the process students with disabilities go through when choosing what college to attend, I found an advice article by U.S. News from 2011 titled “4 Tips for College Applicants, Students With Disabilities.” First, the article suggests that students should prepare early: look for support groups, look for adaptive sport clubs of interest, and start contacting college disability services. Second, U.S. News urges students to identify the schools that have accessible tours and visit if possible. Next, students with disabilities are told not to confuse high school with college: “just because your high school accommodates you does not mean your college will” (Wecker, 2011). The fourth tip includes advocating for yourself and standing up to professors to ensure they will be able to fully integrate the student, despite their disability, into the academic environment (Wecker, 2011). Meanwhile, most nondisabled students, including myself as I admitted earlier, can simply look up websites for colleges they are interested in and hit “apply.” Students without disabilities have an advantage because they have the opportunity to choose colleges based on the quality of education, dining halls, residence halls, social scene, etc. On the other hand, students with disabilities have to worry about their college experience well in advance and have to consider accessibility and universal design before other factors. Samantha Fleishman is a student wheelchair user. She shares in a blog post why she chose the college she did: “The covered walkways were why I came to Skidmore” (Fleishman, 2017). Students who are disabled and use wheelchairs deserve an education just as much as nondisabled students. It should not be this difficult for them to find a place where they can thrive.

Has Virginia Tech Supported Universal Design?

Recently, there have been public controversies regarding accessibility at Virginia Tech. A recent controversy covered by the *Roanoke Times* was a sit-out in May of 2017 protesting a new set of stairs between two Virginia Tech buildings, New Cadet Hall and Major Williams Hall (Korth, 2017). In construction of the staircase, ramped access was not built. Unfortunately, people with disabilities are not the only people negatively affected by the new set of elaborate Hokie stone stairs; the lack of a ramp nearby affects families with strollers, people who are temporarily injured, and bicycle users. Dr. Shew was involved in this peaceful protest and shared her experience in a letter she wrote to Virginia Tech’s student-run newspaper, *The Collegiate Times*:

We’re sick of the university’s inventing a future that fails to include families, the temporarily injured and disabled people as equal citizens on campus. We’re sick of taking longer routes. We’re sick of using the side entrances. We’re sick of master planning that takes away access. We’re sick of transportation plans that don’t acknowledge we exist and need to go places too. What we want is meaningful inclusion in every facet of campus life and planning. (Shew, 2017 May 4).

The goal of the sit-out was to promote awareness and require people to take the “long way around” to see what it would be like to access that area as someone who cannot use stairs.

Another recent event involved Burruss Hall, one of the most iconic and well-known buildings at Virginia Tech. A recent project led by the Virginia Tech Disability Caucus installed handrails on the sides of the stairs to the front entrance. Pamela Vickers, the director of ADA and accessibility services at Virginia Tech says, “this is a great step forward in our continuing efforts to be inclusive, accessible, and welcoming to all individuals who visit our campus” (Neff-Henderson, 2017). I agree that

this is moving forward; however, handrails still do not make the entrance into Burruss accessible for people who use wheelchairs or cannot use stairs. I also must note that the handrails were installed in 2017, while the building was built in 1936; it took 81 years to put in hand rails on the stairs to one of the most popular buildings at our university. To suggest better ways to Burruss Hall more accessible and universally designed, I decided to see where Burruss Hall stands in regard to universal design.

Located right off of the drillfield, Burruss Hall is home to many administrative offices, including that of the President, and a popular 3,003 seat auditorium. Many people are drawn to Burruss for concerts held in the large auditorium. Additionally, in front of Burruss Hall is a highly populated bus stop where students and faculty wait for buses to take them on and off campus. Virginia Tech's April 16th memorial site is located in front of Burruss. This building is used by undergraduate and graduate students, faculty members, Blacksburg residents, and out-of-town visitors; in fact, when high school students and their families tour Virginia Tech, the tour bus from the visitor center drops them off by the Burruss stairs. It can be assumed that people with various disabilities visit Burruss Hall each day. Since this area of campus hosts the President's office and many events yearly, the building's accessibility should ensure that all people feel welcomed and included. This means that all people should be able to access the facility in the same way. Unfortunately, that is not the case. After completing an accessibility assessment of Burruss Hall, I believe that Burruss Hall does not reach appropriate accessibility standards, specifically for people with physical disabilities.

I started my accessibility assessment of Burruss Hall outside of the building. Looking around, I noticed that Burruss Hall has appropriately sized handicap parking spots. The parking spots appear large enough for van accessibility and there is a clearly designated space in the street for pedestrian crossing. I then approached the building using the main concrete stairs in front of the populated bus stop. The stairs in front of Burruss Hall serve as the main entrance into the building; many people will take pictures on these front stairs when visiting Virginia Tech since the building is such a well-known and recognized landmark. As I mentioned earlier, the handrails on the side of the stairs that lead up to the main entrance were installed in 2017. However, there is no ramp in sight. There is no accessible entrance into the front of Burruss Hall. The only accessible entrance without stairs into Burruss Hall is through the tunnel near the back of the building. While there is appropriate blue signage leading to the accessible entrance, it still requires someone that uses a wheelchair or has mobility issues to go completely out of their way to enter the building. The lack of a ramp in front of Burruss Hall makes the main entrance inaccessible; this limits, separates, and inconveniences Virginia Tech visitors and community members who are disabled.

After taking the long way around and using the accessible entrance near the back of the building, I moved inside to take note of more accessibility features. The floor that someone would enter while using the accessible route is one level below the Burruss auditorium and many administrative offices. I headed up a ramp and quickly found the elevator that would take me to the auditorium and office areas; however, before continuing upstairs, I quickly noticed that there is no accessible entrance to the main lobby of Burruss Hall, even from the inside of the building. Two stairs leading downwards into the lobby create a huge and unavoidable barrier for people with limited mobility. A ramp would give access to people who cannot use stairs to an area of campus that many people enjoy.

Moving past the lobby inaccessibility, I then traveled by elevator up to the second floor of the building. The elevator is wide enough to fit multiple people, it has braille on the floor buttons, and it has ample lighting. Upon exiting the elevator near the Burruss auditorium, the President's office is immediately to the left. The entrance into the President's office has an automatic push button on the door and signage is clear and appropriately distanced from the floor. I am happy to report that from the elevator, the entrance into the President's office appears to be accessible. I am glad that this office is accessible because all people should be able to go to the President's office to voice their concerns and talk to administration.

Nothing stood out from the elevator and entrance to President's office that might cause a barrier. However, I believe that the most important qualification is not met: there is no accessible front entrance to Burruss Hall and there is no accessible access to the front lobby. Both of those problems would be solved if the university prioritized universal design and did more than just install handrails. I assume that the handrails installed in 2017 did enable more people to access Burruss Hall through the front entrance. Nonetheless, the handrails are not enough. I challenge the installation of the handrails with a statement from a student with a disability at Skidmore College in Saratoga Springs, New York, named Samantha Fleishman: "No amount of smiling at a flight of stairs has ever made it turn into a ramp" (Fleishman, 2017). I urge Virginia Tech administrators working on the master plan to plan a ramp installation for the front of Burruss Hall. I am aware that installing a ramp into this area of campus would be expensive and take time, but I believe that it would be well worth it. A ramp in the front of the building would allow an entire community of people to simply coexist. Students, faculty, locals, and visitors would all be able to access Burruss Hall the same way. No one would have to make a special effort to enter one of the most iconic buildings on Virginia Tech's campus.

Response to Counter Arguments

Counter arguments to my promotion of universal design on college campuses might state that universal design is unfeasible in some geographic locations. Other people think that ramps near the front entrance of buildings are an eyesore; even the title of the article from Virginia Tech News discussing the new installation of handrails in front of

Burruss Hall implies simply that the handrails “change the look of Burruss Hall” (Neff-Henderson, 2017). I strongly, but respectfully, disagree with both of those claims. In response to the sit-out on the stairs in front of the upper quad, a Virginia Tech spokesperson at the *Roanoke Times* stated that the “new set of stairs is on too steep of an incline for a ramp” (Korth, 2017). Dr. Shew disagrees and believes that Virginia Tech has the ability to do much more saying, “They [Virginia Tech] moved entire buildings. I’m not convinced that they could not have put a ramp in their plans.” When asked if universal design is possible at Virginia Tech, the disability advocate remains positive, wanting to “see a lot more universal design projects” in Blacksburg (Shew, Personal Interview, October 2018). I am not saying we tear down all of the stairs on Virginia Tech’s campus. I am saying that in order to work toward a universally designed campus, we must start somewhere. Working towards a fully inclusive environment starts with planning. That planning might include an adjustment in the way Burruss Hall or other buildings look, but it is well worth it in order to be fully inclusive.

A Call to Action: Where Do We Go From Here?

In order to make our university and others around our nation more inclusive, we have to start somewhere. According to disability advocate Kristen Wells, implementing universal design “gives students more opportunities to succeed” and “with a little help, universal design is easy to implement” (Flynn, 2017). Wells advises that universities focus on infrastructure, outreach, and empowerment, suggesting that “talk of universal design can be weaved into conversations that are already happening” (Flynn, 2017). Since stairs are a large physical barrier to people with mobility challenges, one concrete way to carry out universal design in master planning is to create more sloping walkways or ramps. While sloping walkways might require extra planning, the time and effort to change the way spaces are designed is well worth it. Sloping walkways allow people to use entrances the same way and it reduces the stigma of a separate ramped entrance as “special” or “handicapped.” A Facilities Net article about universal design on college campuses describes the value of sloping walkways best with an imaginary scenario. Picture this: a nondisabled tour guide is showing a student that uses a wheelchair around campus. They enter the library using a gently sloping ramp and remain deep in conversation, without the awkward moment of changing their route to find the entrance without stairs (D’Angelo & Catlin, 2018). In that situation, the sloping walkway benefitted the tour guide and the student. A simple change such as sloping walkways instead of stairs in a university’s master planning eliminates separation.

The Hokie community can begin working toward universal design with small improvements. We have already improved tremendously with the creation of the Disability Caucus in 2014, a “space for disabled Virginia Tech community members and their allies to come together and engage in community buildings, mutual support, and disability activism” (Disability Alliance at Virginia Tech, 2018). The Disability Caucus works tirelessly towards making sure their voices are heard in the university’s master planning. Dr. Shew even told me that after the creation of the Disability Caucus, many former students at Virginia Tech contacted her and said, “I wish they had that when I was there” (Shew, Personal Interview, October 2018). Waving a magic wand and fixing all of the accessibility problems overnight is impossible but changing our attitudes around the situation is within our reach. I ended my interviews by asking, “What barrier is most often faced for people with physical disabilities at Virginia Tech?” Someone that is nondisabled might mention geography barriers or simply “stairs” when asked that question. On the contrary, when asked the same question, Dr. Shew answered almost immediately that the largest barrier faced is the “attitudes related to infrastructure and bias” (Shew, Personal Interview, October 2018).

As someone who is nondisabled and can never fully speak to the disabled community’s experience, I end with an excerpt from an article published by the University of Washington urging college campuses to step up and put universal design in their planning and goals:

We all have responsibilities for providing access and a welcoming environment for anyone on our campus. It is not an office responsibility; it is not just the disability services office or the disability services provider or the director or the coordinator that is responsible to making sure that access is provided for students with disabilities, or that their needs are being met. It is a university-wide responsibility. (University of Washington, 2018)

In order to implement universal design at universities across the nation, all students, faculty, and community members, nondisabled or disabled, need to support the disabled community in their efforts and raise our voices to see change. Specifically, at Virginia Tech, if we want to be competitive with other colleges in admissions and attract eager learners to Blacksburg, changes need to be made. Universal design is critical on college campuses in order to include all students and make sure that they, too, feel like “This is Home.”

Competing Interests

The author has no competing interests to declare.

The publisher is committed to transparent and bias-free research. To ensure that all publications are as open as possible all authors, reviewers and editors are required to declare any interests that could appear to compromise, conflict or influence the validity of the publication. This process is designed to reinforce the readers' trust in the research data.

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How to cite this article: Hart, Madelyn. "The Importance of Universal Design on College Campuses." *Philologia* 11, no. 1 (2019): pp. 6–12. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.21061/ph.176>

Submitted: 01 April 2019

Accepted: 01 April 2019

Published: 30 April 2019

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RESEARCH

Motherhood in the Workplace: A Sociological Exploration into the Negative Performance Standards and Evaluations of Full-Time Working Mothers

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This research, entitled "Motherhood in the Workplace: A Sociological Exploration into the Negative Performance Standards and Evaluations of Full-Time Working Mothers," examines the conscious and unconscious presumptions that are made regarding pregnancy, and, by extension, women and motherhood in the workplace. These presumptions, colloquially coined as "motherhood penalties" lead to biases about a woman's commitment to her occupation and the workplace as a whole. The penalties—whether they be immediate financial repercussions or distant career stagnation—are placed onto a woman's presumed responsibilities beyond her present occupation. They perpetuate negative judgments as well as different, and often unfair, standards that a woman must achieve for professional success.

For women, it is historically perceived that being "inside the home" is prioritized primarily and being "outside the home" is prioritized secondarily, producing the uncredited and unpaid "double burden" of responsibilities for today's full-time working mothers. Utilizing a theoretical framework of the status characteristics theory, the cultural tension between an "ideal worker" versus a "good mother," as well as the second shift theory, this research seeks to sociologically examine the implicit and explicit devaluation of motherhood in the workplace. The extensive, lifelong, and generational repercussions contribute to the larger interlocking structures of sexism, burdening working women, and by extension, penalizing contemporary womanhood. These conclusions can meaningfully add to a broader understanding of the gendered social barriers imposed on working women, and thus inform the meaningful cultural changes needed for a more equal and equitable labor workforce.

Keywords: Motherhood penalty; employment; workplace; inequity; gender

In the domain of employment, conscious and unconscious presumptions are made regarding the nature of pregnancy and by extension about women and motherhood. These presumptions, colloquially coined as "motherhood penalties," lead to biases about a woman's commitment to her individual occupation and the workplace as a whole. Whether it be immediate financial repercussions or future career stagnation, there are a range of unconscious and conscious penalties placed onto a woman's presumed responsibilities beyond her present occupation. These consequences, which contribute to the systemic structure of sexism, burden all working women and, by extension, penalize womanhood.

The realm of preconceptions about motherhood can have a multitude of adverse, rippling effects onto a woman's short and long-term career (Ali). The perception of pregnancy—or even the possibility of a future pregnancy—can influence the trajectory of her initial hiring and prospective employment. For example, in the landmark federal case *Back v. Hasting on Hudson Union Free School District* in April of 2004, a ruling was made concerning pregnancy discrimination in the workplace. Winning the lawsuit, Elana Back, an employee of the school, disputed that the school's decision not to grant her tenure following her three-month parental leave was due to her employer's assumption that she would not succeed in her position while being a mother of young children. Furthermore, once the woman has been hired, this motherhood penalty can continue to perpetuate negative consequences on her long-term career. A recent study concluded that employed mothers had a lower recommended starting salary and suffered a 'per-child wage penalty' of approximately 5% on average (Correll 1297). Even after adjusting for common variables that influence wages (like human capital and occupational factors), the pay gap between mothers and non-mothers was measured to be larger than the pay gap between men and women. But these disadvantages are not exclusively restricted to wages, pay, or salary.

There are additional evaluative repercussions that tend to be founded upon premature assessments of a woman's general capabilities, competency, and capacity to succeed as a female presenting and/or identifying individual of child-bearing age. A recent study concluded that by even being distinguished as mothers, the employees were evaluated as less competent and poorly motivated to succeed than when described as not having any children. Women who were described as having children or who were visibly pregnant were judged as "less committed to their jobs, less dependable, less authoritative, but warmer, more emotional, and more irrational" than women who were not (Correll 1298). In the workplace, a woman's parental status—or even the perception of one—can lead to discrimination and disparities in hiring, promotion, and salary decisions.

In workplace performance expectations and evaluations, motherhood is a "status characteristic." Defined by the theory of the same name, a status characteristic is a "categorical distinction among people such as a personal attribute (e.g., race, gender) or a role (e.g., motherhood, manager), that has attached to it widely held beliefs in the culture that associate greater status worthiness and competence with one category of the distinction than with others" (Correll 1301). This individual attribute becomes noticeable when it either visibly differentiates those in the same setting or it is perceived as directly relevant to the completion of the task at hand. In essence, the status characteristics theory details that there are stricter ability standards for those with a devalued status characteristic. Those with a devalued status characteristic, as stated by the theory, are designated and described as "lower-status actors." Good performances conflict with the expectations for a lower-status actor; when "lower-status actors perform well at a task, their performances are critically scrutinized" (Correll 1302). In comparison, good performances do not conflict with the expectations for a higher-status actor; so, when "higher-status actors perform equally as well, their performances are consistent with expectations and are therefore less scrutinized" (Correll 1302). Generally, if motherhood is a devalued status characteristic in a workplace setting, mothers are judged by a harsher standard in which to work, and ultimately to succeed, than non-mothers.

Becoming a mother, or taking on the mother role, does not literally affect an individual woman's intrinsic competencies or capabilities. However, contemporary cultural attitudes reinforce the opposite: societal beliefs associate motherhood with a lessening of capacity. "Work devotion" and "family devotion" are conceived of as conflicting and incompatible with one another. The "ideal worker" is defined and characterized as an employee that works at least forty hours a week year-round and demonstrates commitment by forfeiting all other responsibilities outside of work. An example would be one's willingness to devote intensive and extensive hours to "face time" at work. While it has been proved that "face time" is not necessarily associated with actual performance or productivity, it "functions as a cultural sign of the effort component of performance capacity in the contemporary organization of work" (Correll 1306). The "good mother" functions similarly. There is a normative expectation for mothers to prioritize the needs of their dependent children above other responsibilities, supposing that they can, will, and more importantly, should, engage in an "intensive" mothering without any regard for limits or restrictions. The norm that mothers should always "be on call" for their children and the norm that workers should "always be there" for the employer, while similar in the prioritization of responsibilities, cannot coincide with each other. In essence, the cultural role of a mother is placed in opposition to the cultural role of a worker (Correll 1306, Williams 208).

There is cultural tension between the normative conceptions of the "ideal worker," which embodies the role of a committed worker, and the "good mother," which embodies the role of a committed mother. This ideal-worker norm is "framed around the traditional life patterns of men because it excludes most mothers of childbearing age" (Williams 207). A recent study concluded this "catch-22" position that women are caught between: if women were the ideal workers, then they were viewed as irresponsible mothers; but if women conformed to the norm of maternal care, then they were condemned as bad or inefficient workers (Vitelli). The very presence of non-domestic involvement for mothers is often regarded as a violation of social norms for motherhood. A mother's occupational participation and accompanying contribution is regarded as a kind of negligence of and failure in the care of her children (Vitelli). The perception and existence of this family-work conflict is directly associated with the working mothers, and by extension, women. It is this perceived cultural tension between these two roles that suggests that motherhood is a devalued status in workplace settings.

These unfavorable attitudes towards a woman's overlapping and simultaneous responsibilities are not new. In a traditional two-partner household, child care obligations have predominantly been carried out by the woman. Women are socially expected to act as the primary caregiver for the child and/or children, and they have been largely responsible for a majority of household duties. And historically, because a woman's role has been inside the home, her engagement outside the house is often regarded as extraneous and unnecessary. Joan Riviere, in her paper titled "Womanliness as a Masquerade" asserted that it is considered for women's "complete feminine development" to be "excellent wives and mothers, [and] capable housewives" (146). But, fulfilling perhaps more 'masculine' interests (such as the duties of a profession) can be done and performed "at the same time" (146). For women, non-domestic work is othered (Saunders 568). It is supplementary and secondary to her primary female and feminine occupation.

This sense of household obligations continues to be the persistent reality for full-time working mothers. Even in instances where women work more hours or longer hours than their male counterparts, the domestic expectation (of childcare, or household duties, or both) still remains. And as a result, to perform and fulfill the principal role of domestic

duties in addition to shouldering personal career responsibilities, working mothers tend to experience a variety of family-related career interruptions (Parker). Naeima Al-Hadad, in her debut book entitled *Working Women and their Rights in the Workplace: International Human Rights* emphasizes that the present household duties directly impact and influence a woman's "access (career initiation), maintenance and promotion (where the higher the level of responsibility, the lower the proportion of women may be found)" (190). Al-Hadad continues, stating that, in general, "the higher the level of responsibility at home, the lower is the workplace participation by women; and no matter her level of education or workload outside the home, a woman shoulders 'the lion's share' of the household duties" (Al-Hadad 190). Working mothers—by being physically and figuratively "inside" and "outside" the home—embody the overlap of domestic and non-domestic spheres.

The combined burden of domestic labor and non-domestic labor is a reality for many full-time working women. This established phenomenon has been coined as a "double burden" to characterize the gendered division of labor between men and women. Women who are employed as paid, non-domestic labor often are also responsible for unpaid, domestic labor at home. This portrayal of the "second shift" for women originated from Arlie Hochschild's book of the same name (Schulte). Historically, traditional gender ideologies—that situate men "outside the home" and women "inside the home"—have constructed and continued to perpetuate restrictive attitudes towards public and private labor. Betty Friedan asserts in the chapter "The Problem That Has No Name" from her book *The Feminine Mystique* that in order to achieve a kind of "feminine fulfillment," women should not want to be "poets or physicists or presidents" or, more generally, not want to have "careers, higher education, [or] political rights" (172). With this historical trajectory, it is not so much of a stretch to consider occupations with preferences for "masculine" characteristics.

In the workplace, these notions of gender roles perpetuate negative judgments as well as different, and often unfair, measures to which a woman can, and have the ability to, achieve success. The standards of performance for women, especially working mothers, are strict, and at times nearly impossible to uphold. The conscious and unconscious negative evaluations of those taking on the role of motherhood is a part of a systematic structure that produces significant inequalities in the workplace. For women, it is perceived that being "inside the home" is prioritized primarily and being "outside the home" is prioritized secondarily, which brings about a "double burden" for full-time working mothers. Considering a theoretical comprehension of the status characteristics theory, the underlying cultural tension between a "good mother" and an "ideal worker," as well as the second shift theory, there is an explicit devaluation of motherhood in the workplace. These conclusions can add to the broader understanding of the social barriers imposed on working women that lead to the perpetuation of gendered inequalities in the workplace, and thus inform the meaningful cultural changes needed for a more equal and equitable labor workforce.

Competing Interests

The author, Michelle Corinaldi, sits on the editorial board of *Philologia* as managing editor and served as an associate editor last year.

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How to cite this article: Corinaldi, Michelle. "Motherhood in the Workplace: A Sociological Exploration into the Negative Performance Standards and Evaluations of Full-Time Working Mothers." *Philologia* 11, no. 1 (2019): pp. 12–16. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.21061/ph.172>

Submitted: 01 April 2019

Accepted: 01 April 2019

Published: 30 April 2019

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RESEARCH

Paintings in the Year Without a Summer

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The world of art changed in 1816. Paintings representing the brightest of skies of the European landscape now revealed the dark sun that seemed to take heat away from the world. Artist of this time did not understand why, but the atmosphere they were trying to depict was darker than that of the past. The dawns and sunsets that were the main focal points of their art and provided light and hope became redder and darker. A sense of perpetual darkness is shown, even with the light of the sun or the shine of the moon depicted in the skies above. Regardless, artists still looked to the heavens for inspiration, and their depictions have become snapshots of history in this "year without a summer," showing that life, though hard, continued under a depressing atmosphere. With resilience and hard work, Europeans were able to live through this time, once again seeing the warmth of summer years later. The art created by J.M.W. Turner, John Crome, Caspar David Friedrich, and many other artists showed the changes in the atmosphere but also revealed how the lives of people were forced to continue in the face of darkness. Through their landscape paintings, common themes emerge, such as agriculture, religion, and shipping that will later have significant meaning to the people of these cold times in northern Europe.

Keywords: Volcano; Art; Paintings; Survival; Atmosphere; Global Cooling

The world of art changed in the year 1816. Before, artists filled their skies with the light of the sun to capture the beauty of the land. The sun gave an explosion of color, warmth, and protection to the people of the world; artists used the sun to convey feelings of joy and safety throughout the world. But during 1816 and for years after, the sun was engulfed in a constant red haze that kept the daylight from penetrating to the Earth's surface. This haze came from the eruption of Mount Tambora, located on the island of Sumbawa in the Dutch East Indies, off the coast of Indonesia. In April of 1815, this massive mountain exploded in an apocalyptic fashion, losing most of its height and killing almost everyone on or near the island. Huge amounts of ash, dust, and chemicals shot straight into the stratosphere near the equator, quickly covering the Northern Hemisphere and the rest of the planet. The ash and gasses reflected much needed sunlight away from the planet, causing the climate to cool. This cooling then caused disastrous effects on all life on the planet; it would be years before these clouds of ash and sulfur dissipated from the atmosphere, warming the Earth once again.¹ This coverage influenced paintings, as the haze introduced new red hues to the atmospheres of paintings that were not present before Tambora's ash cloud covered the Earth. The haze created a filter of sorts across the sky, and not all artists knew from where the darkness came, fearing its emergence as a sign that their worlds were coming to an end.

Paintings of the coast of England that had once represented the brightest of skies now featured a dark sun that seemed to take the heat from the world instead of providing it. The dawns and sunsets that usually provided light and hope became redder, darker, and more foreboding. The art seemed to be in perpetual darkness, even with the light of the sun or the shine of the moon depicted in the skies above. Caspar David Friedrich was one of many artists to give us a record of such a drastic change. His painting *Landscape with Rainbow* (1810) (**Figure 1**), as the name suggests, depicts a large field with contrasting shades of green, a dusky sky, and a faded rainbow across the canvas.² Completed in 1810, Friedrich's work gives the viewer the idea of optimism in the view of danger, with bright greens and colorful rainbows contrasted against a dark sky. Although the clouds are dark, the bright colors seem to escape from the possible danger, giving the viewer a sense of calm although the sky appears ready to storm at any time. The calmness would not last, as it would be replaced with anxiety in fewer than seven years.

¹ Gillen D'Arcy Wood, *Tambora: The Eruption That Changed the World* (New Jersey: Princeton Univ. Press, 2015).

² Caspar David Friedrich, *Landschaft mit Regenbogen*, 1810, oil and canvas, 59 × 84, missing since 1945, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Caspar_David_Friedrich_027.jpg.



Figure 1: *Landschaft mit Regenbogen* or *Landscape with Rainbow*, 1810.



Figure 2: *Zwei Männer am Meer* or *Two Men by the Sea*, 1817.

In 1817, Caspar David Friedrich created another painting called *Zwei Männer am Meer* or *Two Men by the Sea* (**Figure 2**), depicting two men in the center on a dark, sandy beach watching the sky.³ The bright optimism that was a sign of a greater future in *Landscape with Rainbow* was replaced by signs of dread, confusion, and uncertainty. The atmosphere was now dominated by a dark haze that covered everything, distorting the bright light of the sun into something murky that no one could understand or comprehend. Regardless of the darker trends in their art, artists still looked to the heavens for

³ Caspar David Friedrich, *Zwei Männer am Meer*, 1817, oil and canvas, 51 × 61 cm, Alte Nationalgalerie, Berlin, Germany, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Caspar_David_Friedrich_\(5\)Two_Men_by_the_Sea.JPG](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Caspar_David_Friedrich_(5)Two_Men_by_the_Sea.JPG).

inspiration. Their artwork became snapshots of history under the Mount Tambora sun, depicting that life was hard, but not impossible in the “year without a summer.” With resilience and hard work, Europeans of this time lived through the cold, knowing they would see the warmth of summer again in years to come. The artworks created by J.M.W. Turner, John Crome, Caspar David Friedrich, and many others show the changes in the atmosphere and reveal how people adapted to survive in the face of darkness. Through their landscape paintings, common themes emerge, such as agriculture, religion, and the shipping industry, representing either the hope or despair of the people of these cold times in northern Europe.

Through their work, artists of the time tended to display their surroundings as naturalistically as possible. This realism gives the viewer a better account of what the land looked like to the artist at the time the painting was created and what the world seemed like to the people of 1816. Since artists had been painting what they saw around them before and after the explosion, a timeline of sorts can be created from the art to better understand the explosion of Mount Tambora. Because of this, these paintings were later used as scientific data on volcanoes of the past to help understand how these gasses traveled and dispersed over time through firsthand accounts. Physicist and meteorologist Christos S. Zerefos studied the reddening of the atmosphere and published his results in “Atmospheric Effects of Volcanic Eruptions as Seen by Famous Artists and Depicted in Their Paintings.”⁴ His study showed how pollution traveled around the planet through gaseous form, like the ash that Mount Tambora released. These gases, mostly sulfur, were ejected out of volcanoes and wreaked havoc on the atmosphere. Called “volcanic aerosols,” these gasses in high enough concentrations caused the red sky that artists saw at sunset and dawn. Using past scales as references, such as the Dust Veil Index (DVI), the Volcanic Explosivity Index (VEI), and the ice core index, Zerefos created a theoretical scale of aerosol concentrations using the artist’s depiction of the sun. By selecting paintings from the 1500s to the 1900s that featured sunsets or sunrises, Zerefos studied the paintings’ connections with significant eruptions like Tambora by checking the amount of red hue that is needed to replicate the landscape accurately. Through this method, he correlated the amounts of red hue present in paintings and the frequency and quality of volcanic eruptions. This method provides valuable information to scientists and historians for periods when scarce to no data exist on these explosions and the ash clouds followed.⁵

To do this, Zerefos checked the red to green ratio of paintings, measured on digitized versions of the pictures. He also tested the height and angle of the sun to show the distortions that the gasses made to the atmosphere. These tests showed that light was affected by the gasses released by volcanoes, and their effects usually lasted for years. These gases slowly dissipated until the next explosion sent more ash to darken the skies once again. The conclusion of this experiment provides a new scale that could be used to find more information on ash clouds of past eruptions. Zerefos’s study thus opened new scholarly opportunities to see natural phenomena through the eyes of artists who lived at the time of eruptions. The artists in this study depict the sky accurately enough for historians and scientists to understand atmospheric and human living conditions in 1816.

The paintings in Zerefos’s study included many great artists of the time, some of whom even lived through multiple periods of volcanic activity. Zerefos divided the paintings into two categories, calling landscapes created during volcanic events such as Tambora “volcanic paintings,” and paintings before or after the atmosphere no longer contained volcanic material “non-volcanic paintings.”⁶ An example of a non-volcanic painting is Joseph Mallord William Turner’s *The Lake, Petworth, Sunset* (1827–1828) (**Figure 3**).⁷ Containing an abundance of white light, the brightness of the picture is almost overwhelming. With a sky less affected by volcanic sulfates, a non-volcanic atmosphere is shown, with all the hues of a traditional sky. This scene contrasts strongly with Turner’s later work, *Sunset* (1830–1835) (**Figure 4**), where the atmosphere is dense in red, almost to the point that no different colors are visible.⁸ Even though this was painted years later during another volcanic event following Zerefos’s analysis, the redness shows an atmosphere filled to the brim with volcanic dust, darkening the sky due to a distant volcanic eruption just like Tambora, only on a smaller scale.

The usefulness of these paintings and the great detail of the world they display represents a new style of art that was made during this time. Known as Romanticism, this type of art put nature as the main character in most art pieces. Running from 1790 to 1850, this period of the arts was known for its emphasis on “transient and dramatic effects of light, atmosphere, and color to portray a dynamic natural world capable of evoking awe and grandeur.”⁹ There are also connections to

⁴ C.S. Zerefos, V.T. Gerogiannis, D. Balis, S. C. Zerefos and A. Kazantzidis, “Atmospheric Effects of Volcanic Eruption as Seen by Famous Artists and Depicted in Their Paintings,” *Atmospheric Chemistry and Physics* 7, no. 15 (2007), pp. 4027–4042.

⁵ C.S. Zerefos, V.T. Gerogiannis, D. Balis, S. C. Zerefos and A. Kazantzidis, “Atmospheric Effects of Volcanic Eruption as Seen by Famous Artists and Depicted in Their Paintings,” pp. 4027–4042.

⁶ Zerefos, Gerogiannis, Balis, Zerefos and Kazantzidis, “Atmospheric Effects of Volcanic Eruption as Seen by Famous Artists and Depicted in Their Paintings,” 4027–4042.

⁷ Joseph Mallord William Turner, *The Lake, Petworth, Sunset*, 1827–1828, oil on canvas, 63.5 × 138.7 cm, Tate-Britain, London, United Kingdom, <http://www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/turner-the-lake-petworth-sunset-sample-study-n02701>.

⁸ Joseph Mallord William Turner, *Sunset*, 1830–1835, oil on canvas, 66.7 × 81.9 cm, Tate-Britain, London, United Kingdom, <http://www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/turner-sunset-n01876>.

⁹ The Editors of Encyclopedia Britannica, “Romanticism,” Encyclopedia Britannica, 2017, accessed March 1, 2018, <https://www.britannica.com/art/Romanticism>.



Figure 3: *The Lake, Petworth, Sunset*, c. 1827–1828.



Figure 4: *Sunset*, c. 1830–1835.

history within the art, as most images deliberately show the past, giving an idea that even the most recent painting seemed to be constructed in the era of the events depicted. This age of art was also characterized by its use of nature, since new developments in science were beginning to be understood and used in the arts to acquire a more meaningful depiction of landscapes and people that lived within in them. J.M.W. Turner, Caspar David Friedrich, and John Crome all showed great prowess in this genre and were able to convey to the viewer their interpretation of the light and the meaning they derive from it, be it feelings of depression or hope.

By comparing non-volcanic Romantic art to the art from 1816, we as the interpreter can see how these pictures portrayed the lives of the people who lived during the cold days of summer. For example, in Caspar David Friedrich's early painting *The Summer or Der Sommer (Landschaft mit Liebespaar)* (1807) (**Figure 5**), the viewer can see non-volcanic nature on display through rolling green hills, a distant river in the background, and land tilled for farming in the middle of the painting.¹⁰ There is some humanity located in the picture as well, with a couple embracing under a tree and some flowers on what

¹⁰ Caspar David Friedrich, *Der Sommer (Landschaft mit Liebespaar)*, 1807, oil and canvas, 71.4 × 103.6 cm, Neue Pinakothek, Munich, Germany, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Caspar_David_Friedrich_-_Der_Sommer_\(Landschaft_mit_Liebespaar\).jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Caspar_David_Friedrich_-_Der_Sommer_(Landschaft_mit_Liebespaar).jpg).



Figure 5: *Der Sommer (Landschaft mit Liebespaar)* or, *The Summer*, 1807.



Figure 6: *The Shipwreck*, 1805.

looks to be a warm, sunny day with blue skies and gentle clouds. By minimizing the human element, artists asserted the dominant forces of nature within the work, illustrating that no one has control of the world. The people depicted are small in comparison to everything else, showing our insignificance, implying that even though we as humans can do so much to our planet, we are still at the mercy of the natural world.

In a more somber painting, J.M.W. Turner shows the world through a lens of terror and destruction. In his painting, *The Shipwreck* (1805) (**Figure 6**), the power of nature is on full display.¹¹ In this work, dark clouds and raging seas cover the world as the sailor tries desperately to survive the storm. Barely visible through the waves' intensity, the ship that challenged

¹¹ Joseph Mallord William Turner, *The Shipwreck*, 1805, oil on canvas, 170.5 × 241.6 cm, Tate-Britain, London, United Kingdom, <http://www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/turner-the-shipwreck-n00476>.

nature has capsized and is quickly sinking. For if it were not for the lifeboats, these men surely would have found themselves in dire straits as their lives were under the control of the ocean's might. The viewer can take away many concepts from this painting's story, one of which is that even human-made objects designed to circumnavigate the barriers of the world are still not strong enough to withstand the power of nature. For the viewer, the wrath of the ocean is frightening within the painting and implies that the ocean is as dangerous as the air above.

Though not as dark, but massive in scale, John Crome's *Slate Quarries* (1805) (**Figure 7**) again shows just how small humans are to the natural world.¹² Crome depicts what appears to be two men looking at a mountain in the distance, one climbing a small hill, the other sitting alone looking towards the valley. They are minuscule in comparison to the great mountain in the distance and the dark waters of the river in the valley below. The dark browns and size of the mountain give way to wonder, as most of the light in the valley is shaded by the mountain. The clouds are dark grey, almost as if a storm may strike, with the mountain scrubbing them as they pass by. While showing the majesty of such a large mountain, the painting also shows the power and the respect the mountain demands. For the viewer, the title of the painting helps to understand the art. These men may be miners, using the mountain for resources. Though they use the mountain for their own gain, Crome shows through his artwork that we as people are still no match for the mountains or nature, as both tower above us and constantly dictate our passage through life. Humans are dependent on nature, including the weather, for survival, if we do not respect this and adapt to it, we as a species will not survive. But these men show we can adapt, and through persistence and strength, can live through troubling times.

The paintings discussed depict the sky as it was before the Tambora eruption, giving a view of the atmosphere before it was filled with ash. For the paintings during and following the explosion, a scale of the sky's darkness and the views of the artist's world is on display in many paintings. Artists' views of humanity changed much like the sky above their heads, as people were forced to deal with the darkness and cold, re-emerging once again into the light. Looking at the time when Tambora's eruption happened to when the atmosphere returned to normal, these artists again showed their view of nature. For historians and scientists, this was a great time to have such a revolution in art. It is this love of nature and self-interpretation expressed by artists that allowed the creation of Zerefos's study. The meanings behind the paintings give us an idea of how these Europeans saw the world after Tambora. Through art, artists can communicate their ideas of the world around them, which places more focus on the artists' interpretation rather than the world itself. Opening a direct communication from the artist to the viewer, the viewer is transported to the world of the artist's choosing. Even though artwork displays a view of the material world, the artists use paintings to convey their perception of the world.



Figure 7: *Slate Quarries*, 1805.

¹² John Crome, *Slate Quarries*, 1805, oil on canvas, 123.8 × 158.7 cm, Tate-Britain, London, United Kingdom, <http://www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/crome-slate-quarries-n01037>.

Artists showed the dark skies around them as the people of Europe struggled with the cold. As Zerefos focused on how the ash influenced paintings, the atmosphere also caused strange weather and climate change in Europe in 1816, heightening the fear of the unknown. William K. and Nicholas P. Klingaman, authors of *The Year without Summer*, discuss this time of great disturbance as the ash of Tambora covered the entire world, altering the light reaching the surface and making the planet colder than in the recent past. The abnormal weather phenomena that began because of this drastic change in temperature strained the Europeans and the rest of the world even further than they already were. The climate almost seemed to go against the natural order, as summer acted like winter and winter became even colder throughout Europe. All over the world, the seasonal weather was interrupted as temperatures dropped due to the ash cloud, providing fewer crops for the nations of Europe and causing many to die of starvation. Focusing on 1815–1820, themes like this and others that were significant to Europe's suffering can be seen throughout the list of paintings used by Zerefos in his study. These paintings communicate common ideas of farming, religion, the shipping industry, and how Europeans would defiantly live through Tambora's wrath.¹³

Food was and is one of the most essential necessities of humanity's survival, but under Tambora's sky, food was more difficult to find. Europe in 1816, like the rest of the world, suffered from starvation. Constant winter caused massive crop loss across the globe, making the people of northern Europe desperate for food.¹⁴ With a seemingly eternal winter, painters still depicted the countryside of farms that were actively growing food in such drastic conditions. John Crome, a landscape artist from Norwich, England, created scenes like this in his paintings. He made a name for himself through his great ability to depict the separation between the earth from the heavens.

Crome's attention to the skies allowed him to give an accurate view of the "year without a summer" in his painting, *A Windmill near Norwich* (c.1816) (**Figure 8**).¹⁵ Within this work, the view is blocked by a lingering darkness. The sky is unquestionably dim and heavy with haze. The volcanic sulfates surrounding the world at this time obstructed the view. Looking at the art as it is now, an observer will notice that not only is the sky dark, but the entire picture is bleak. Crome illustrates a dismal time with the darkness of starvation, poverty, and lingering death, instilling a feeling of dread in the viewer. The browns



Figure 8: *A Windmill near Norwich*, 1816.

¹³ William K. Klingaman and Nicholas P. Klingaman, *The Year without Summer: 1816 and the Volcano That Darkened the World and Changed History*, (New York: St. Martins Griffin, 2014).

¹⁴ Wood, *Tambora: The Eruption That Changed the World*.

¹⁵ John Crome, *A Windmill near Norwich*, 1816, oil on oak, 111.1 × 91.4 cm, Tate-Britain, London, United Kingdom, <http://www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/crome-a-windmill-near-norwich-n00926>.

and blacks of this painting culminate in the atmospheric conditions, contrasting against the brightness of the times before Tambora. Here, the volcanic paintings are seen as becoming naturally darker, as affirmed by Zerefos. As paintings are artists' expressions of the moments of their creation, Crome masterfully shows what he sees while viewing the sun's domain. But with this darkness, there is still light. The animals viewed in the foreground are still able to eat the grass growing in the field, showing that even the land itself was still finding ways to combat the cold and continue life, much like the rest of world at this time. Through perseverance, humans and nature seemed to find ways to survive in the cold days of 1815–1820, as idealized through Crome's art.

Caspar David Friedrich also shows an excellent understanding of nature and how humans are part of something greater, even though humans are small in comparison to the rest of the world. Through the painting *Frau vor untergehender Sonne* (*Sonnenuntergang, Sonnenaufgang, Frau in der Morgensonne*) or *Woman before the Setting Sun* (1819) (**Figure 9**), Friedrich presents nature's vastness and power.¹⁶ In the foreground, browns depict the dead grass and crops from years of severe weather, along with paths used for travel for centuries. Yet the woman looks into the distance where she can see hope in the hills and valleys that are still covered in green as life slowly comes back and the atmosphere returns to what it was. The sky still has a reddish tint, ordinary for paintings during volcanic eruptions, but life seems to be recovering in the areas where it was once struggling to survive. The woman in the forefront of the artwork appears to be in amazement of the beauty on display, as light adds color once again to the valley and mountains around her. Her presence shows just how small humans are to the landscape and how little control we have, but at the same time, in the context of Tambora's explosion, she shows resilience to the cold and darkness of the past and the optimism of a future where summer may return. Through the act of standing in awe of nature, one can see that the people who survived, though wary of the environment, were able to stand in the light of the sun and bask in its beauty as life comes back to the planet once again.

The ash cloud produced by Tambora not only affected the sky during the day but also caused the moon to be hazy and dark in appearance. The moon acted as a mirror for the sun, directing its light to the earth and illuminating the night. The night was affected by the distortion of light as the day was. In John Crome's *Moonrise on the Yare* (c.1811–6) (**Figure 10**) the moon is visible through the clouds just behind the buildings in the middle of the painting.¹⁷ The minimal amount of light that is produced still lights the night, giving the landscape a small amount of color and accenting the objects that are usually visible during the day, such as the ships and the windmill. Most importantly, in the bottom left corner, we see a person working on a small boat. Even in darkness, the person is still required to do what needs to be done to survive, even in the face of uncertain conditions caused by Tambora.



Figure 9: *Frau vor untergehender Sonne* (*Sonnenuntergang, Sonnenaufgang, Frau in der Morgensonne*) or *Woman before the Setting Sun* (*Woman before the Setting Sun*), 1818.

¹⁶ Caspar David Friedrich, *Frau vor untergehender Sonne* (*Sonnenuntergang, Sonnenaufgang, Frau in der Morgensonne*), 1819, oil on canvas, 22 × 30 cm, Museum Folkwang, Essen, Germany, https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Frau_vor_der_untergehenden_Sonne.

¹⁷ John Crome, *Moonrise on the Yare*, 1811–1816, oil on canvas, 71.1 × 111.1 cm, Tate-Britain, London, United Kingdom, <http://www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/crome-moonrise-on-the-yare-n02645>.



Figure 10: *Moonrise on the Yare*, 1811–1816.



Figure 11: *Greifswald im Mondschein* or *Greifswald in Moonlight*, 1817.

Even in other paintings, such as Casper David Friedrich's *Greifswald im Mondschein* or *Greifswald in Moonlight* (1817) (**Figure 11**), finished a year after Crome's *Moonrise*, the haziness still existed long after Tambora's eruption. With the sulfates taking time to dissipate, it forced Europeans and the rest of the world to adapt for an extended period of abnormal atmospheric conditions.¹⁸ In Friedrich's depiction of Greifswald, the view shows the city in the background with boats and a possible fishing area to help supply food for the people. All is still visible and not as dark as Crome's depictions, as the gasses of Tambora have had enough time to dissipate within the atmosphere. However, the appearance of the fog-like glow

¹⁸ Caspar David Friedrich, *Greifswald im Mondschein*, 1817, oil and canvas, 22 × 30.5 cm, National Gallery, Oslo, Norway, <https://www.wikiart.org/en/caspar-david-friedrich/greifswald-in-moonlight>.

around the city shows that the ash was still in high enough concentrations to affect the world, interfering with crop growth and people's lives for years to come.

With empty stomachs, some Europeans looked to their God for salvation. They looked to the sky for signs of God's love and mercy only to find it filled with the darkness of ash. For many, the dark sky indicated to many that God was displeased with the world, calling for its destruction. Religion was still a vast and central part of European life. Although broken into different denominations, Christianity still found its way into the art throughout this period. Religious ideas sometimes were clearly noticeable in paintings, such as religious scenes deliberately painted, while others were subtle in their depictions, such as having the massive clock towers of churches seen in the cityscape. All of these paintings still used the same dark lighting of the era from the explosion's effects, even though the artists were painting scenes depicting the Lord. It was a struggle within art and the world, as many people felt abandoned by the heavens above, which were thought to be filled with such anger.

Historian and author Cosmo W. Monkhouse described this struggle with loneliness within famous artist J.M.W Turner in his book *Joseph Mallord William Turner*. According to Monkhouse, Turner chose to show how the darker skies influenced his art and his thoughts of loneliness in the world.¹⁹ Born on April 23, 1775, Turner was believed to have had a lonely childhood, later showing this through his actions as an adult as a recluse known for being intensively private. His art career started when he was nine years old by drawing the buildings around his local church. His talents were recognized by the elite painters of London in 1789. Enrolled in the Royal Academy of the Arts, Turner learned how to be a professional. At 21, he received the honor to display some of his work in the prestigious school of art, officially kicking off his career as an artist. Turner then opened a gallery in 1804, showing and selling his paintings to the elites of London. At the same time, he became the professor of perspective at the Academy until 1828. Sadly, his brilliance slowly faded towards the end of his life. After the death of his father, he began to lose himself in seclusion and died on December 19, 1851. Throughout his life, his artwork depicted grand scenes of nature, a medium that seemed to quell his loneliness both as a child and as an adult.²⁰

Some of his paintings depicted great scenes of religious importance, such as *St. Peter's and the Vatican from the Gardens of the Villa Barberini, Rome* (1819) (**Figure 12**) that showed St. Peter's Basilica from atop a hill in Turner's landscape style.²¹ The sun, shown on the left side, is bright but still contains interference from the atmosphere that was plaguing the time. The buildings and the people Turner depicts on the canvas shows the distortion of light of the volcanic atmosphere through darker hues. St. Peter's seems to be in a fog, almost as if what was known and expected of the time was no longer the way it should be. It was as if the person sees a certain amount of confusion as God allowed the light to be distorted, destroying the crops around the world, forcing thousands in Europe to die. The people of this time were forced to wonder why their



Figure 12: *St. Peter's and the Vatican from the Gardens of the Villa Barberini, Rome*, 1819.

¹⁹ Cosmo W. Monkhouse, *Joseph Mallord William Turner* (London: Sampson Low Marston, 1929).

²⁰ Cosmo W. Monkhouse. *Joseph Mallord William Turner* (London: Sampson Low Marston, 1929).

²¹ Joseph Mallord William Turner, *St. Peter's and the Vatican from the Gardens of the Villa Barberini, Rome*, 1819, gouache, graphite and watercolor on paper, 23 × 37 cm, Tate Britain, London, United Kingdom, <http://www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/turner-st-peters-and-the-vatican-from-the-gardens-of-the-villa-barberini-rome-d16347>.

God allowed something like this to happen, even going as far as suggesting that this is how the apocalypse was going to begin.²² Turner, however, depicts people who do not look worried. They seem to be enjoying each other's company as they look at the valley with the Vatican below. It appears these outsiders are not concerned about the events nearby, that through years of survival in the shadow had hardened their resolve to the events around them. Instead of wavering in their faith, which may have happened in the past, these people were going about their days as if everything were normal. By this time, the effects of Tambora were dissipating to the point that the ash and gasses were no longer such a threat to the lives of Europeans.²³ With the atmosphere clearing, a newfound confidence in life began to show itself in these people, as they returned to a pace of life that existed before Tambora and in turn responded to their faith once again.

While some paintings emphasize resilience under darkened skies, others highlight the desperate circumstances, such as drought, famine, and extreme cold that Europeans endured. In Turner's earlier paintings, such as *The Decline of the Carthaginian Empire* (1817) (**Figure 13**), a battlescape is filled with death, shadowed by a red sky and murky sun.²⁴ This lighting, although bright, highlights the destruction and beauty of a beaten city desperately trying to protect itself. Compared to Turner's painting of St. Peter's Basilica, which shows the light of humanity, this painting shows more of the uncertainty humans had. As religious faith became less trusted, Europeans' fear of the unknown began to control them, forcing them to find ways to survive no matter what it would take. The warring parties and the destruction they brought with them can be a representation of how the people of the world saw the darkness as war on humanity. The dead man in the bottom left section of the painting is depicted holding not a weapon, but an instrument, showing the fact that not even the innocent, holding an instrument rather than a weapon, could get away from death in this world. Broken vases, statues, columns, and other items that were of great value can be found thrown on the ground at the bottom of the painting, giving the idea that the city itself was being torn apart as people fought for their lives, and in turn, destroyed what they had and loved in the process. The city's beautiful classical architecture disappears among the ugliness of the warring parties, showing the desperate struggle the people of the Carthaginian Empire experienced up until its collapse. This could be interpreted as Turner's view of Europe and the rest of the world as the planet seemed to strangle its inhabitants. This depiction gives a glimpse of how desperate Europeans were in 1817. Divides became more and more common, and the people, lacking in resources, were forced to do what was necessary to survive. In the end, nature took its course, and gradually the weather went back to the way it was before. No longer did Europeans have to fear the wrath of their God, and most praised him for allowing them to survive such hard time.



Figure 13: *The Decline of the Carthaginian Empire*, 1817.

²² Klingaman and Klingaman, *The Year without Summer: 1816 and the Volcano That Darkened the World and Changed History*.

²³ Wood, *Tambora: The Eruption That Changed the World*.

²⁴ Joseph Mallord William Turner, *The Decline of the Carthaginian Empire*, 1817, oil on canvas, 170.2 × 238.8 cm, Tate Britain, London, United Kingdom, <http://www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/turner-the-decline-of-the-carthaginian-empire-n00499>.

Struggling with the idea of religion at this time, many people may have felt that they were out of place. For many centuries, Europeans had many different faiths. Conflicting views sometimes reached boiling points with each other, and the weather from Tambora did not help this. Caspar David Friedrich's *Neubrandenburg* (1816–1817) (**Figure 14**) features a high tower of a local church above a town with mountains in the background and two people in the front.²⁵ The colors of the sky are brighter around the city, possibly showing brightness coming from the church. Above the sunny skies, darkness is visible, seemingly held at bay by the field of light. With a view like this, it seems that the church in the city is holding back the darkness. It is through the city's devotion to religion that people felt protected from darkness and experienced light. For the religiously devout, this painting gives hope for faith, that even though their God seemed angry at his creation, they are protected within the walls as they have not angered him. The two men seem to be walking away from the city, raising the question: why leave the protection of the Lord that is so substantially on display? Different ideas on religion gave different interpretations of the world. These men could have been of a different sect or viewpoint, causing them to think of the world differently. If this is the case, then instead of seeing salvation they may see the fires of hell, with light not depicting protection, but instead depicting the yellow flames of damnation. Whatever the viewer's interpretation, it comes down to what people believe and whether what they see is salvation or the end of the world as they know it.

Turner's other paintings reversed these thoughts of separation from God and showed light coming back to the world. *The Roman Campagna from Monte Testaccio, Sunset* (1819) (**Figure 15**), gives another depiction of light coming back to the world.²⁶ The atmosphere here is clean, with white clouds and a sun that is bright in the sky. The land is green, with a river crossing the middle of the painting. The people within the painting are in the process of building along old fortifications, possibly showing that the loneliness began to fade from the world when people were forced to work together.

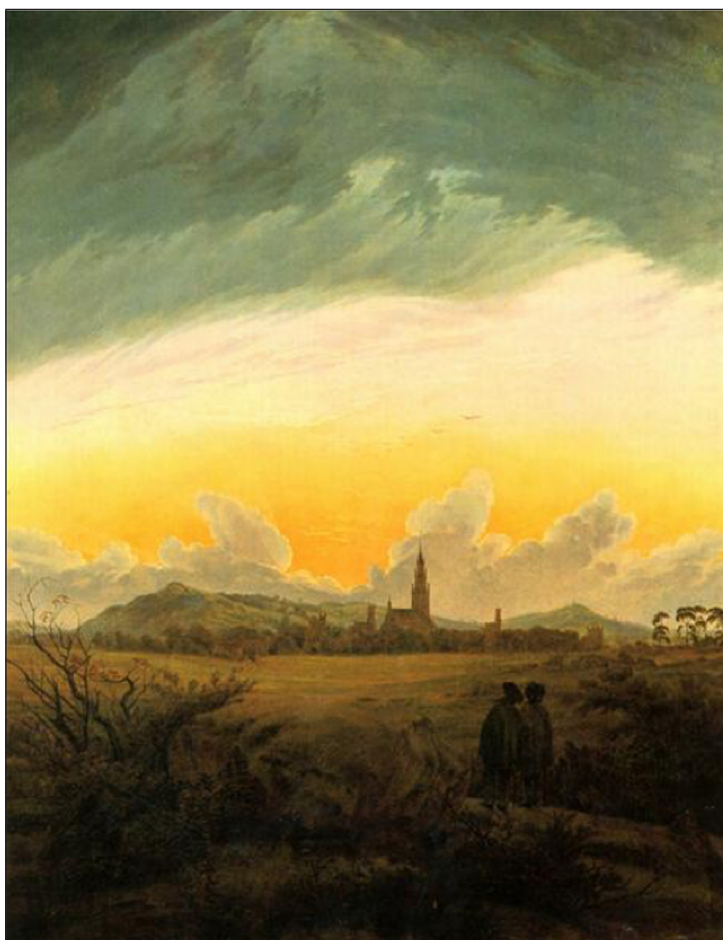


Figure 14: *Neubrandenburg*, 1816–1817.

²⁵ Caspar David Friedrich, *Neubrandenburg*, 1816–1817, oil and canvas, 91 × 72 cm, Pomeranian State Museum, Greifswald, Germany, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Caspar_David_Friedrich_036.jpg.

²⁶ Joseph Mallord William Turner, *The Roman Campagna from Monte Testaccio, Sunset*, 1819, gouache, graphite and watercolor on paper, 25.2 × 40.2 cm, Tate-Britain, London, United Kingdom, <http://www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/turner-the-roman-campagna-from-monte-testaccio-sunset-d16131>.



Figure 15: *The Roman Campagna from Monte Testaccio, Sunset*, 1819.

Turner is one of the few painters to not only add the light of the sun but to add texture as well. Turner had learned that the sun has an exterior by listening to lectures from Sir William Herschel, who theorized that sun had a surface just as distinct and diverse as Earth's.²⁷ This is when Turner began to display the sun more as a ball and less as a disc in the sky. Focusing closely on Turner's later works, from 1804 onward, he painted his sun in different ways to add to the idea that it was not just a two-dimensional figure, but a three-dimensional sphere with multiple bumps and blemishes.²⁸ Turner's attention to detail goes to show just how adept he was as a painter and how necessary it is to view his paintings in the light of day.

With all of the hardship faced by Europe, there was one seemingly small advantage through the shipping industry that allowed the world a better chance for survival. Years of colonization built up the shipping empires of England, France, Germany and many other nations to allow them to import food into the country, saving many lives in the process. The importance of shipping is shown in many artists' paintings, both for trade and empire building. Caspar David Friedrich shows ships in many cityscapes of his paintings. The German painter, born September 5, 1774, found his calling in making landscape art. Friedrich studied at the Academy of Copenhagen, under several famous painters. While at the academy, Friedrich made a name for himself and eventually opened a studio in Dresden, Germany. His focus in his earlier works was on the idea of the search for meaning in nature and how human life is insignificant of humankind.²⁹ An example of this is shown paintings like *Zwei Männer am Meer* or *Two Men by the Sea* (1817) (**Figure 2**).³⁰ In it, there is a depiction of two unidentifiable men looking at the sea, dominated by the darkness of the sky and the rough waters of the ocean. It is here that Friedrich's brilliance shines. Subtle clues within the painting suggest what life was like at this moment in time for Europeans. The men in the painting do not look at each other or even seem to acknowledge one another's presence. These men, experiencing the same things, are still alone in their struggle to live. They seem to just exist, living life the best they can in their own worlds.³¹ Being together, but alone is how many in Europe saw themselves at this time; they were alone in their survival, but together in their struggle. The vast and dark ocean is turbulent to show how the world is rough on humankind, while the sky blends in with the waters, showing the vastness of the heavens in their dark, cloudy domain. Through resilience and strength, these men still stand, the same as the rest of the world in the face of darkness. The message that this painting is giving to the viewer is that even though we all face our own individual struggles, we all must work together to sail through the turbulent seas of life.

²⁷ James Hamilton, *Turner* (New York: Random House, 2007).

²⁸ Mark Brown, "Turner Used Science to Paint the Sun," *The Guardian* (November 13, 2011), <https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2011/nov/13/turner-science-sun>.

²⁹ Klingaman and Klingaman, *The Year without Summer: 1816 and the Volcano That Darkened the World and Changed History*.

³⁰ Caspar David Friedrich, *Zwei Männer am Meer*, 1817, oil and canvas, 51 × 61 cm, Alte Nationalgalerie, Berlin, Germany, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Caspar_David_Friedrich_\(5\)Two_Men_by_the_Sea.JPG](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Caspar_David_Friedrich_(5)Two_Men_by_the_Sea.JPG).

³¹ Nina Amstutz, "Caspar David Friedrich and the Aesthetics of Community," *Studies in Romanticism* 54, no. 4 (2015). *Academic OneFile* (accessed April 1, 2018), http://link.galegroup.com.ezproxy.lib.vt.edu/apps/doc/A449315207/AONE?u=viva_vpi&sid=AONE&xid=cd166944.

Shipping was an important way to help others overcome struggles of cold. Through trade deals with other nations that had food or that could still produce, countries affected by Tambora's explosion hoped to save as many people as they could from starvation. John Crome's *Moonrise on the Yare* shows this with great detail as ships are even sighted in rural areas, showing the necessity of shipping in areas with little water. He shows the importance of harbors in *Yarmouth Harbour-Evening* (c.1817) (**Figure 16**).³² The mood of this painting is brighter than most other works of this time. The skies are still dark, and light is spread out from possible clouds and gasses from Tambora. However, it gives a more bright and optimistic feeling as shipping and commerce continue to be a significant part of the nation's economy. With this hope, life could fight back against angry mother nature. In Caspar David Friedrich's *Greifswald im Mondschein* ships are seen within the haze of the city, whether bringing food to the town or collecting riches to pay for this valuable material.

As the Tambora years came to a close in 1820, Europe began to heal from years of cold, wet weather. Painters started to depict the sky with an atmosphere cleaned of its containments.³³ In Turner's *Rivaulx Abbey, Yorkshire* (1825) (**Figure 17**), painted five years after the atmosphere cleared, the landscape was largely depicted to be light once again, and there is nothing but bright and colorful landscape capped with a blue sky.³⁴ The animals are enjoying their time out to pasture as livestock feed from the fields and drink from the river. People are seen playing and looking into the river, carefree and relaxed. Scenes like this were just a memory back in 1816 but now are common as the skies allowed for life once again.

With all of this light coming back and the reemergence of human activity, people of this time had to remember what had happened. Famine, cold, and other factors contributed many deaths all around the globe, including Europe. In *Der Friedhof or The Cemetery* (1825) (**Figure 18**), Caspar David Friedrich gives the viewer a reflection of what happened in this time, while still depicting the light that was returning to the world.³⁵ With the graves inside representing the loss of life not just in this time, but also over the course of history, the viewer remembers that life is short and that the only thing that is permanent is nature itself, as the tall trees loom in the distance. Nature was the mechanism of change for all life on Earth. Europeans were religious at the time and believed that God controlled destiny, but it was through nature that his power was on display. Just as he made the Earth and its beauties, so did he make the storms and cold that controlled the life or death that people had to face and that painters depicted in their artwork.

Although Europeans faced many hardships in the years of 1816–1820, they were still able to live during these harsh times. Cold, starvation, and many ailments were able to kill many, but it was through resilience and strength in the face of uncertainty that humanity was able to survive this trying time. Art from the period features a dark and destructive atmosphere that sucked the life out of the people below. There seemed to be no hope coming from the skies as challenges with



Figure 16: *Yarmouth Harbour-Evening*, 1817.

³² John Crome, *Yarmouth Harbour-Evening*, 1817, oil on canvas, 40.6 × 66 cm, Tate-Britain, London, United Kingdom, <http://www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/crome-yarmouth-harbour-evening-n05361>.

³³ Wood, *Tambora: The Eruption That Changed the World*.

³⁴ Joseph Mallord William Turner, *Rivaulx Abbey, Yorkshire*, 1826, water color on paper, 28 × 40 cm, Turner Worldwide London, United Kingdom, <http://www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/turner-rivaulx-abbey-tw1881>.

³⁵ Caspar David Friedrich, *Der Friedhof*, 1825, oil on canvas, 143 × 110 cm, Galerie Neue Meister, Dresden, Germany, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Caspar_David_Friedrich_053.jpg.



Figure 17: *Rivaulx Abbey, Yorkshire, 1825.*

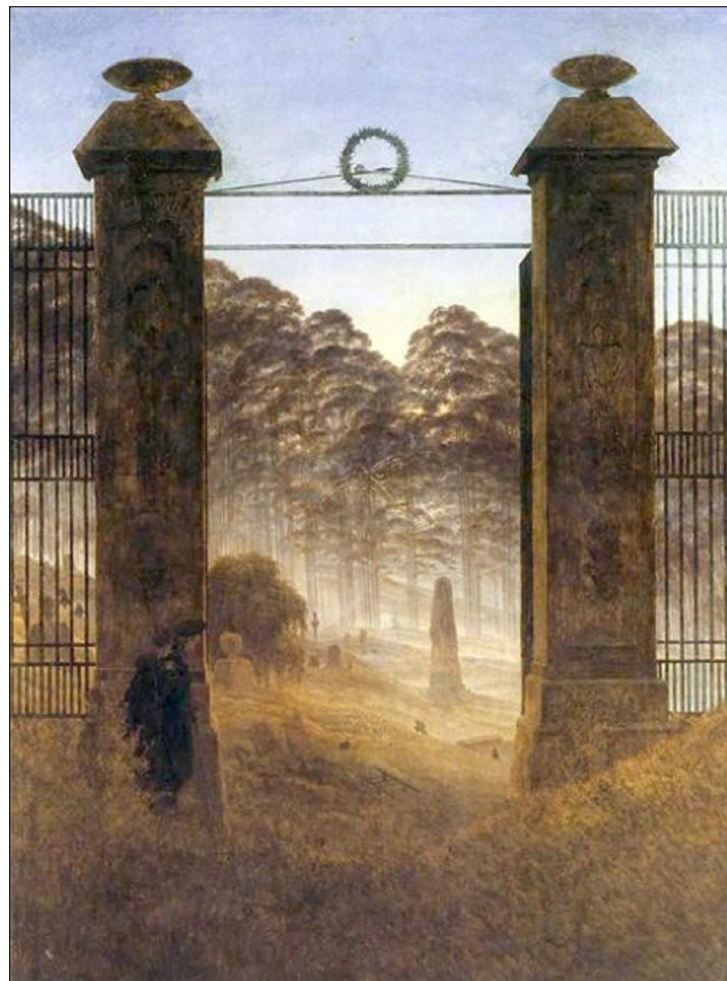


Figure 18: *Der Friedhof or The Cemetery, 1825.*

agriculture and religion were always a constant in both life and art in the Tambora years. But with the help of perseverance and ingenuity, such as shipping, humans were able to feed themselves and live through this time. Although many died, in the end, many more survived, and these people would go on to live another day remembering those who could not. It was through hard work, a resilient spirit, and the need to stay alive that the world was able to endure the ash clouds until they dispersed into history, leaving only humans, nature, and paintings to show that they even existed.

Competing Interests

The author has no competing interests to declare.

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How to cite this article: Hubbard, Zachary. "Paintings in the Year Without a Summer." *Philologia* 11, no. 1 (2019): pp. 16–33.
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.21061/ph.173>

Submitted: 01 April 2019

Accepted: 01 April 2019

Published: 30 April 2019

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RESEARCH

Russia in the Central African Republic: Exploitation Under the Guise of Intervention

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The Central African Republic (CAR) is a country in conflict and despite UN actions, it remains exceedingly violent, unstable and unable to alleviate the conditions that place it at almost the very lowest 2017 Human Development Index ranking. Recently Russia has stepped up to intervene with provisions and training. Draped in a guise of assistance with UN Security Council approval, Russia is fulfilling its own ends. While arms sales increase Putin's support in the Russian military-industrial complex domestically, training allows for Russian actors to be placed in country. The arming and training CAR's government forces as well as rebel factions enables Russia to influence all sectors while leveraging these opposing sides to further develop a powerful Russian stronghold in CAR. Russian personnel in CAR, with additional to troops in nearby Sudan, provide state actors to direct activities for Russia's benefit in rebel controlled areas with great natural resource value. The 2018 diplomatic agreements specifically allow Russia to access CAR's natural resources and clearly identify Russia's economic interests in CAR. The impact of controlling CAR's resources is enhanced by Russian seaport access in Sudan. Combined, internationally approved Russian arms and personnel for training create the means for Russia to exploit CAR's conflict. Russia gains influence over both the CAR government and rebels, access resources, and builds strategic and logistical strength in CAR as well as on the Red Sea, all, while dynamically balancing Chinese interests in the African continent.

Keywords: Central African Republic; Russia; arms; resources

"The French are hated as the old colonial power. American troops have left. It's a free country for the taking" (Losh & Mathews, 2018).

In recent years, Russia has become increasingly involved in the Central African Republic (CAR). This involvement has caught attention, prompting the international community to look fondly upon Russia for its intervention and provision in CAR. However, through further examination, it becomes apparent that Russia's activity in CAR is valuable to Russian interests and thus, not as selfless as it initially appears. In order to understand the extent of Russia's personal gain, the foundation of the current climate must first be understood. Involvement with the government and the rebels provides Russia with a strong means of control within the country. Through increasing personnel and establishing infrastructure within CAR, Russia creates an ideal environment to access CAR's vast stores of natural resources. With increased access to natural resources, Russia establishes itself as a counter to China. Together, these factors enable Russia to exploit the conflict in CAR to "establish a presence for itself in Africa's geostrategic heartland" for Russia's own gain and power (Korybko, 2017).

The desire for total political control and the struggle for power are themes which permeate many past and present conflicts worldwide. The Central African Republic is no exception. In the shadow of French colonization, CAR did not become an independent nation until 1960 (BBC, 2018). A mere five years after CAR gained its independence, its first president was ousted by the army commander who declared himself president for life (BBC, 2018). This transition of power marked CAR's entrance into extreme political turmoil, which continues today. In 2013, this ongoing power struggle came to a head as religious tensions culminated in Seleka—Muslim rebel—seized power in the primarily Christian country. Soon after, in 2014, "anti-balaka"—Christian militias—rose up and pressured Seleka rebels to hand power to a transitional government (Figures 1 & 2). Eight months after the Seleka coup in 2013, the UN Security Council finally approved "the deployment of a UN peacekeeping forces ... [to] ... support [French and] African Union troops already on the ground" (BBC, 2018). Despite the presence of UN peacekeeping forces, extreme violence, based along the lines of religious pretexts, continued.



Figure 1: A member of the “anti-balaka” militia wearing “charms for protection” in Mbakate village, CAR (Penney, 2013).



Figure 2: A young Seleka coalition rebel near the presidential palace in Bangui, the capital of CAR (AFP News Agency, 2015).

This ongoing conflict and extreme violence have left a devastating mark on the population. Over one million persons are internally and externally displaced (**Figure 3**) (FAO, 2018). The impact of this displacement is twofold; it threatens the safety of CAR’s population, while simultaneously further destabilizing the surrounding states of Cameroon, Chad, Sudan, South Sudan, Congo, and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Moreover, with two million people facing food insecurity, CAR is on the brink of a devastating famine (FAO, 2018) (AFP News Agency, 2018). Compounding the existing food insecurity, the lack of economic and infrastructure development is preventing CAR’s population from accessing the available resources necessary for economic growth. Though CAR is rich in gold, diamonds, and other rare earth minerals, 75% of individuals continue to rely on agriculture for income, and do not benefit from the many natural resources present in CAR (IPIS, 2017) (FAO, 2018).



Figure 3: A fraction of CAR's internally displaced peoples gather at Bangui's M'poko International Airport (Greco, 2015).



Figure 4: UN peacekeepers from Gabon patrolling the town of Bria in CAR on 12 June 2017 (AFP News Agency, 2018).

The deployment of 12,000 UN peacekeepers to mitigate the violence in CAR stabilized the country enough to allow Faustin-Archange Touadéra to win the 2016 presidential election (**Figure 4**) (Calzoni, 2018). However, despite the presence of UN Peacekeeping forces and the provision of UN humanitarian aid CAR's condition continues to deteriorate, placing it almost at the bottom of the 2017 Human Development Index, ranking 188 out of the 189 countries listed (UNDP, 2018). This dire situation is due in part to 75% of the country being currently under the control of 14 different rebel groups (Calzoni, 2018). Moreover, these circumstances illustrate that “international deployments have failed to create a sustainable peace” (Losh & Mathews, 2018). Internally displaced persons, refugees, food insecurity, infrastructure, and lacking economic structures compound one another; culminating to create an imploding country—rich in natural resources—spiraling towards ruin and unable to stabilize itself.

The spiraling collapse, in spite of the presence of UN peacekeeping forces, prompts discussion of additional means of intervention. Specifically, in the fall of 2017, the increasing turmoil prompted Russian offers of stability to CAR through arms and training (Losh & Mathews, 2018). Russia appealed to the UN “to make an exception to its arms embargo on the Central African Republic so that Moscow could send weapons to two EU-trained battalions of its [CAR] military” forces (Korybko, 2017). By volunteering to intervene in CAR, Russia gains international prestige. Russia, benefits itself, in complying with UN Security Council requests regarding arms imports, as “Russia plans to store them [the arms] in new containers under tight security” with serial numbers “for each unit so that they can be traced in the event that they end up in the wrong hands” (Korybko, 2017). Adhering to the UN Security Council request to secure and track arms, Russia’s engagement is legitimately recognized internationally, but not controlled by the UN Security Council. Notably, since “Russia’s engagement [in CAR] is independent of the U.N.,” Russia will undoubtedly “have a freer hand to operate or play kingmaker if the peacekeeping mission withdraws” (Plichta, 2018). Ultimately Russian involvement in CAR provides Russia with a positive image of international provision and intervention—however, it is unlikely that Russia is acting from purely altruistic motivations.

International mistrust of Russian motives has increased through Russia’s involvement with the current government in CAR as well as the many rebel groups operating in the area. Further examination of Russia’s relationship with both of these entities uncovers Russia’s presence in CAR as a benefit to Russia itself. Russia has provided multiple incentives for the CAR government—and particularly the current president, Faustin-Archange Touadéra—to work with Russia as opposed to other countries, namely, the United States or France. These incentives include the provision of arms, training, and protection by Russia to Touadéra who is already “mistrustful to the Western military presence in the country” (Plichta, 2018). Due to the tremendous conflict, CAR’s government has no financial means to build its own security. “Russia’s aid in arming the CAR’s military is a huge boon for the chronically underfunded state” (Figures 5 & 6) (Plichta, 2018). In addition to arms, Russia



Figure 5: CAR soldiers wielding Russian rifles and rocket launchers (Sputnik, 2018).



Figure 6: Members of CAR’s armed forces trained by Russian advisors demonstrate their skills at “a ceremony to mark the completion of [their] training” (Kelly, 2018).



Figure 7: Faustin-Archange Toudéra (president of CAR) with Vladimir Putin during their 2018 meeting in St. Petersburg (Vinograd, 2018).

has become continually more involved in military training and funding in CAR; specifically, “Russian instructors...may give Touadéra the military he needs to combat the rebel groups across the country” (Plichta, 2018). Furthermore, “Russian guards also help protect the President from coup or assassination” (Plichta, 2018). Together these components create an atmosphere of indebtedness to Russia within CAR’s government—dramatically increasing Russia influence over Touadéra (**Figure 7**).

Specifically, “Russia is using [this] relationship with the legitimate government as a foothold in the country to establish contacts with rebel leaders” (Calzoni, 2018). Russia is actively training CAR military forces at the Berengo palace; these Russian activities have provoked CAR rebels to increase their own arms caches (Losh & Mathews, 2018) (Schreck, 2018). This statement underlines that, while Russia specifies its weapons shipments and training as a means to stabilize CAR, a UN report published in July 2018 stated “that new weapons obtained by government forces have motivated rebel militias to boost their own stockpiles” (Schreck, 2018). Moreover, the report cited “serious outbreaks of violence, including ... areas where the situation had previously improved,” illustrating how Russia’s imports of arms have not stabilized the country, but instead have further destabilized it (Schreck, 2018).

It is critical to note that Russia has been involved in the equipping and training of these same violent rebel groups, specifically, “a force of about 500 Russian soldiers that has been stationed near Um Dafug on the border between South Darfur in Sudan and the Central African Republic” (Dabanga, 2018). During the five-month period the Russian training units were stationed in Um Dafug, “military training for ... 600 Seleka Muslim rebels from CAR and Sudanese soldiers” was conducted (Dabanga, 2018). While this training is extensive, including advanced weapon training, vehicle instruction, and paramedic training, the Russian government does not highlight its involvement (Dabanga, 2018). This desire to appear uninvolved is identified in “cellphone footage ... of Russian soldiers contacting rebels in northeast CAR” in which a Russian soldier specifically “points to the [rebel’s phone] camera: ‘Stop filming please’” (Losh & Mathews, 2018). Even though Russia does not publicly highlight their military training activities in CAR, Russian agents are present in areas held by rebels. Russian support of these rebel groups increases Russia’s influence in CAR—currently, both the government and rebel forces are receiving arms and training from Russia.

Additionally, “Russia is exploring the possibilities of the mutually beneficial development of Central African natural resources,” (Schreck, 2018). As Russia continues to establish ties to both the government and rebel forces—playing one against the other—its presence grows. Recently, in May of 2018:

Anonymous sources within rebel groups in the CAR...claimed that they had been approached by “Russian figures” offering to mediate in their conflict with the central government. A similar offer was made to the government itself, but was rejected by Bangui, according to a government spokesman. The Russian Foreign Ministry hasn’t commented on the reports. (Sputnik, 2018)

This heightened control ultimately benefits Russia through arms sales, state actors in a geostrategic area of Africa, and mineral wealth. Specifically, while Russia's arms sales within CAR is "part of its [Russia's] 'military diplomacy' to promote regional stability," these sales also enable Russia to wield significant international influence (Korybko, 2017). Russia is a player "especially in places with Western power vacuums. War zones featuring Russian guns are a showroom for courting prospective buyers" (Losh & Mathews, 2018). This is evidenced in CAR as rebels are seeking to increase their own arms stores as a response to increased arms being provided to the CAR government: "For Putin, booming arm sales help tighten his grip at home, reinforcing an important backer of his rule: the Russian military-industrial complex" (Losh & Mathews, 2018). In addition to arms sales, Russia has international permission to place Russian state actors in CAR—instructed to train and equip rebel forces.

The initial agreement between Russia and CAR included "five military officers and 170 civilian instructors, along with more than 5,000 AK-47s, sniper rifles and grenade launchers" (Calzoni, 2018). On 19 October 2018, "Russia said ... it planned to send additional military equipment to Central African Republic (CAR) and deploy 60 more instructors to train the country's armed forces, escalating its most significant military foray in Africa in decades" (Ross & Tsvetkova, 2018). This puts a total of 235 Russian personnel in CAR; however, questions arise concerning whether these individuals are active duty military or contracted Russian security forces. Investigations into this matter have resulted in the murder of three Russian journalists in CAR, late in July 2018. However, information indicates that a Russian based security firm, Wagner, is contracted in CAR:

Wagner forces may be present with both rebels and government forces in the CAR... While Wagner attempts to suppress investigations into its activities, the information available suggests an outfit that plays an increasingly crucial role for Moscow both abroad and at home. But even as this strategy has allowed Russia to rack up military successes without risking its own ground forces. (Hauer, 2018)

In addition to the secrecy shrouding the exact number of Russian personnel training rebel groups from CAR in Sudan, one-third of the Russian soldiers who had fought in Syria are now stationed in Sudan (Neuville, 2018). These facts indicate Russia's intentional increase of state actors present in the region.

In addition to increasing the number of military personnel and state actors present in the region, Russia is in the process of securing a naval supply center on the Red Sea. Russia has gone to great lengths to ensure international understanding of this construction project as a supply center as opposed to a naval base. Russian ambassador to Sudan, Vladimir Giltov, in a meeting with the President of Sudan said, "I would like to make it clear that talks are not about building a naval base, but about a supply center for Russian warships in the Red Sea" (Sudan Tribune, 2018). This transportation center will provide logistical support, allowing Russia to capitalize on CAR's natural resources. Certainly, this "supply center" would provide an excellent point for Russian equipment to pass through, specifically, equipment necessary to begin extracting CAR's rich mineral resources, to include oil; "[t]he Central African Republic is rich in oil, diamonds, gold and uranium that Russia can extract, and the CAR government could need expensive Russian equipment to mine and process raw materials" (Calzoni, 2018). A Red Sea port would logistically energize Russia's ability to access CAR's mineral wealth for "Moscow has ... made no secret of its economic interests in the country's natural resources" (Schreck, 2018).

When "Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov met with Touadera [sic] in the Russian city of Sochi in October... the officials 'reaffirmed their countries' resolve' to bolster bilateral ties 'and pointed to the considerable potential for partnership in mineral resources exploration' and energy" (Schreck, 2018). However, CAR gave "the prospecting-mining exploration concessions" to Russia (Schreck, 2018). Russia is positioned to gain greatly from CAR's uranium alone. According to International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), "only about 60 percent of the current need [for uranium] is covered by the promotion. The remaining demand must be covered by stockpiles, reprocessing and disarming nuclear weapons. In 2006, 39,603 tons of uranium were mined worldwide, but demand was 66,500 tons and will continue to increase in the coming years" (WISE, 2018). As one of the leading global uranium producers, Russia sees enormous growth potential in CAR. While Russia sees immense economic gain in these mining endeavors, the majority of these extremely profitable resources are under rebel control. For example, the area "teeming with diamonds and gold, ... is controlled by an armed group called the Popular Front for the Renaissance of the Central African Republic [FPRC]" (Losh & Mathews, 2018). However, in addition to diamonds and gold, uranium has also been discovered in this rebel-controlled area.

In central CAR, the ongoing conflict has prevented international mining companies from extracting uranium from a known, established mine in Bakouma. Interestingly, the Bakouma mine ownership reveals Russia's competition for uranium in the region. Only 10% of the Bakouma mine is owned by the CAR government, the other 90% is held by Uramin Incorporated (WISE, 2018). Forty-nine percent of the Uramin portion is held by China Guangdong Nuclear Power Company (WISE, 2010). A French company, Areva NC, owns the remaining 51% of Uramin, whose investors include Japan and the Kazakh government-owned KazAtomProm (WISE, 2010). In 2017, just as Russia was intervening in CAR, a second Chinese company sought to buy Bakouma shares from Areva NC, and failed to do so (WISE, 2010). Whether Russia's involvement

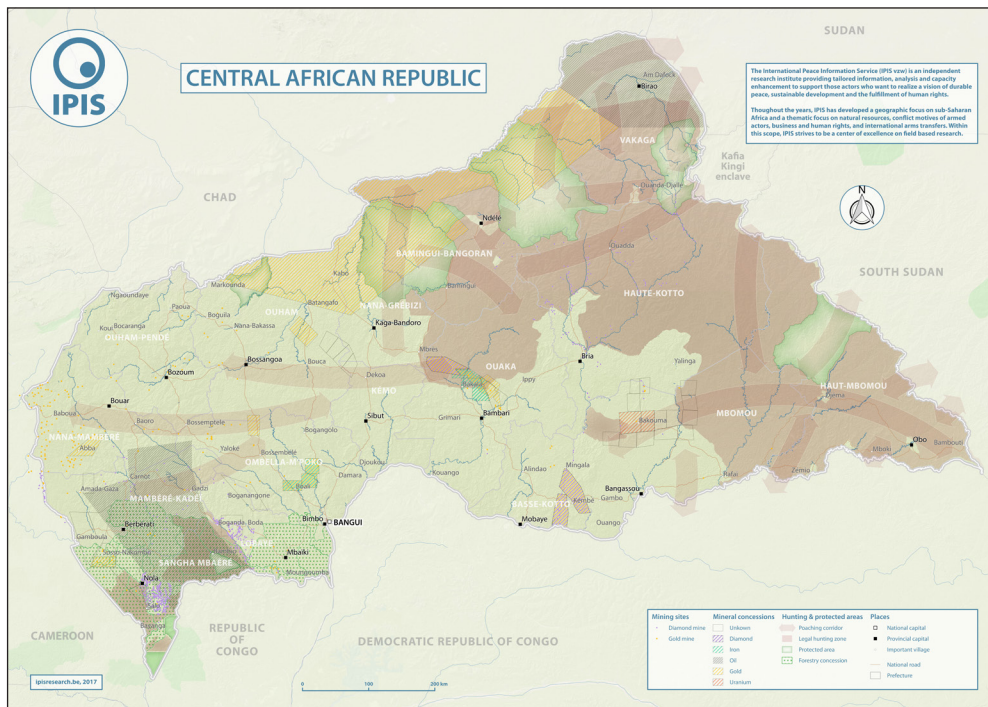


Figure 8: A map depicting the distribution of CAR's resources (IPIS, 2017). Note the Bakouma mining site in the southwest portion of the country.

in the rebel-held Bakouma area influenced this decision is unknown. Clearly, China did not gain a greater stake in CAR's Bakouma uranium mine. Uranium has also been found along CAR's southern border, between Mobaye and Bangassou (IPIS, 2017). However, oil has been identified in CAR's north-east corner. This oil is predominantly in Um Dafug, near the location where the Russians have been training Seleka rebels (Dabanga, 2018). These uranium and oil rich areas are all under rebel control. "Russia is negotiating with rebel leaders for access to important reserves of natural resources located in territories outside of government-controlled areas"; actions underlining why it is in Russia's interest to form alliance with rebels (**Figure 8**) (Calzoni, 2018).

In maintaining authority over the rebels, who control the resource-rich areas, Russia can build both infrastructure and economic strength while balancing China's strategic focus in the region. With Moscow and Beijing in a "shared rivalry against the United States...[these] two powers will try to divide the spoils of the African continent" (Calzoni, 2018). China is already invested in the continent of Africa and interested in developing the Sahelian-Saharan Silk Road. Through this investment, China is exercising its own military diplomacy maneuvers, and Russia fears the potential scale of China's economic power. Thus, Russia is seeking to balance Chinese power in the region and in doing so, provides "strategic value to China in an effort to equalize the two states' partnership with one another" (Korybko, 2017). Russia's investment of security and economic development in CAR would gain Russia this strategic value. Furthermore, the developing Russian naval supply center on the Red Sea allows Russia a "northern mainland-maritime interface on the Sahelian-Saharan Silk Road" (Korybko, 2017). On the other hand, Russia may be strategically planning to develop its own "axis of influence through Sudan in the north and southwards into Angola", according to an anonymous senior United Nations security official in Bangui (Losh & Mathews, 2018). This axis may prove a counter to China's Sahelian-Saharan Silk Road, which seeks to link Nigeria with Ethiopia—through the Sahara—however this route may be more economically profitable if traversing CAR (Korybko, 2017). Thus, the motives behind Russia's endeavors to secure CAR for the UN Security Council frame Russian strategic gains as a counter to China in the region.

Clearly, CAR is a dysfunctional country and Russia is profiting from its instability in many ways. By intervening in CAR, Russia gains positive international attention. However, the arms and training that Russia uses in its military diplomacy directly produce Russian financial growth. This financial gain from Russian arms assures political support for Putin within the military and industrial sectors domestically. Yet, the provision of Russian arms to CAR's government motivates CAR's rebel factions to build their own weapon stockpiles, and Russia does not hesitate to provide arms to these rebels as well. Logistically, Russia is leveraging the training needs attended with these arms to build up Russian forces in the region, with additional backup troops and naval support based in nearby Sudan. By training and arming the CAR military, Russia's actions of military diplomacy fulfill international intervention while appeasing UN concerns for the region. Yet, conversely,

these activities generate more rebel tensions that Russia then meets with more arms and engagement to ultimately gain access to rebel-controlled areas rich in natural resources. Consequently, access to these resources will multiply Russia's wealth and influence in the area, creating a strong and strategic means to balance China's interests in Africa. Combined, these activities reveal that despite a selfless guise of intervention and aid, Russia is gaining greatly by its involvement in CAR. Russian Foreign Ministry spokesman, Artyom Kozhin, voiced to CAR's government and the international community, "we believe these projects will help stabilize the economic situation in CAR, promote the construction of the infrastructure, and serve as a basis for drawing additional investment to the country's economy" (Schreck, 2018). Yet, Russia's intervention ultimately benefits Russia.

Acknowledgements

I express my thanks to Professor Ken Stiles for his critique of this research and cooperation throughout the research process. But most importantly, I acknowledge my parents for their unconditional support and unending encouragement through the entirety of this process.

Competing Interests

The author has no competing interests to declare.

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How to cite this article: Goodison, Kyran. "Russia in the Central African Republic: Exploitation Under the Guise of Intervention." *Philologia* 11, no. 1 (2019): pp. 33–42. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.21061/ph.177>

Submitted: 01 April 2019 **Accepted:** 01 April 2019 **Published:** 30 April 2019

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RESEARCH

Toni Morrison's Experimental Novel, *The Bluest Eye*: Tempering 'Disinterested Violence' Through the 'Narrative Project'

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In "Toni Morrison's Experimental Novel, *The Bluest Eye*: Tempering 'Disinterested Violence' through the 'Narrative Project,'" I claim that Morrison critiques the intellectual practice known as modernist purification. This essay complicates earlier studies which simplify *The Bluest Eye* as a text solely concerned with racism inflicted on African Americans by whites. Rather, modernist purification and mediation shed light on the underlying mechanisms by which characters in the text (blacks and whites) are reduced into ideological abstractions devoid of subjective experiences and worth. This practice allows for the "disinterested violence" to be inflicted on all races seem more permissible. I then assert that the notion of the "narrative project" (coined by Morrison) provides the proper medium by which a critique of purification may be made. However, in order for Morrison to critique purification as afflicted on characters, such as the protagonist, Pecola Breedlove, Morrison must engage in a type of scientific inquiry which necessitates the enactment of purification, echoing Émile Zola's notion of the "experimental novel." In Morrison's "scientific inquiry," however, there arises a paradox: she must enact and reify that which she also critiques. In a fashion that recalls Robert Musil's juxtaposed discursive modes in *The Man without Qualities*, Morrison attempts to alleviate the aforementioned conundrum (her own potential for "disinterested violence" in the writing of her novel) by establishing a pair of paradigmatic shifts in the novel's narrative structure and its ethical/moral aims.

Keywords: Toni Morrison; Modernism; Modernist Purification; Narrative; Émile Zola; Robert Musil; *The Bluest Eye*

Name? Age? Occupation? Address? Ulrich was being questioned. He felt as though he had been sucked into a machine that was dismembering him into impersonal, general components before the question of his guilt or innocence came up at all. His name, the most intellectually meaningless yet most emotionally charged words in the language for him, meant nothing here ... His face counted only as an aggregate of officially describable features – it seemed to him that he had never before pondered the fact that his eyes were gray eyes, one of four officially recognized kinds of eyes, one pair among millions; his hair was blond, his build tall, his face oval, and his distinguishing marks none, although he had his own opinion on that point.

–Robert Musil, *The Man Without Qualities*, Volume I

They were everything. Everything was there, in them. All of those pictures, all of those faces.

–Toni Morrison, *The Bluest Eye*

I. Introduction

Despite its status as a debut novel, Toni Morrison's *The Bluest Eye* (1970) is at once intricate, complicated, and ambitious in its scope and implications. The novel's protagonist, Pecola Breedlove, desperately wishes to attain blue eyes despite (and arguably because of) "the unyielding earth" of her status as a black girl (Morrison 3). Her predicament, marked by the unbridgeable chasm between how she wishes to see the world and how she finds it reminds us of Cervantes's Don Quixote, Flaubert's Madame Bovary, and even Yukio Mishima's Kiyooki Matsugae, who dies in pursuit of an unrequited love, an unfulfilled ideal, prompting a grieving friend to lament, "it would unquestionably be wonderful if a man could really make

the substance of the world truly conform to that of his innermost heart" (Mishima 387). *The Bluest Eye* channels universal themes and in so doing joins a rich literary tradition (broadly speaking, that of Europe but also of world literature) which predates (and informs) American and African American literature. The inclusion of Morrison into a type of conversation between her novels and works of European and/or world literature does not diminish Morrison's contributions to American and African American literature despite critics' fears. Nor does it lessen Morrison's status as an accomplished novelist in her own right. As with any novelist or artist, Morrison inherits from a set of precursors and responds to them, in part, by adapting and applying universal themes to a milieu that has been perhaps until now underrepresented. Valerie Smith notes that despite the "universal" nature of Morrison's work, "Morrison's writing is famously steeped in the nuances of African-American language, music, everyday life, and cultural history" (270). Similarly, Timothy Parrish asserts that though Morrison's novels undoubtedly serve as testaments to "her complex understanding of modernist prose aesthetics ... the true achievement of her fiction has been to give voice to an African-American point of view previously unrepresented in American literature" (xxxii). These two points intersect in Smith's claim: "Morrison uses her fiction to mine the unexplored depths of American culture" (270).

Morrison's work, and specifically, *The Bluest Eye*, in all its complexity, has generated a number of compelling and diverse readings over the past few decades. Debra T. Werrlein, for example, examines the interplay between childhood innocence in American culture, a national ideology of innocence, and popular culture in *The Bluest Eye*. Donald B. Gibson reframes *The Bluest Eye* as a "countertextual" novel that, unlike most works of social critique, engages in a conversation with itself to clarify by complication (rather than by simplification) the social conundrums present in the text. Arguably, Werrlein approaches the novel with an amalgamation of cultural, social, and historical frameworks in mind. On the other hand, Gibson encapsulates his various readings of the novel within the framework of a narrative structure (the "countertext"). Inevitably, a study which emphasizes the cultural, social, and/or historical facets of a novel often sacrifices much-needed commentary on a work's narrative structure. The inverse is often true as well. I argue, though, that in *The Bluest Eye*, the narrative form and structure is inextricably linked to the novel's examination of the cultural phenomenon known as Modernity (which will be used loosely henceforth, for obvious reasons).

Narrative structure and notions of Modernity, as critiqued by Austrian philosophical writer Robert Musil, are centered around a notion I would like to term, not unlike Gibson's "countertext," counter-paradigms. Though scholars and readers have offered differing suggestions as to who or what exactly "centers" the novel – Pecola, Claudia (Pecola's friend and part-time narrator), or the titular "bluest eye" that is the white gaze – I suggest that the novel intentionally eludes such "disinterested" classification (which Morrison implicitly criticizes) by making and unmaking paradigms by which a systematic act of disinterested classification is made possible in the first place (Morrison 23). *The Bluest Eye*, then, is not only a novel about white on black racism or a hegemonic white culture and its effect on black individuals (though these are salient issues the text undoubtedly raises). It is also a novel which, by its very structure, attempts to enact what its characters cannot do – to escape or elude a systematic act of ordering/classification that is not limited to the white gaze ("the bluest eye") but is rather symptomatic of Modernity's reach which, with its "disinterested violence," compartmentalizes individuals (black and white) into abstracted ideological containers ("the bluest I"). Morrison's novel, then, is also a novel concerned with its own construction and form. (Morrison, after all, tentatively terms *The Bluest Eye* as a "narrative project" in a foreword to a later edition of the work).

II. Morrison's Experimental Novel: In the Company of Musil and Zola

If we reconfigure *The Bluest Eye* into a "narrative project," a novel which by the logic of its construction, form, and discursive mode attempts to temper or counteract a problematic cultural phenomenon it must also portray to eventually criticize, Morrison's work most recalls Robert Musil's modernist masterpiece *The Man Without Qualities*. Musil's work is a sprawling "novel" (critic J.P. Stern once remarked, "it is great, but it is not a novel"), spanning approximately 1800 pages, its conclusion forever "to be determined" since Musil's sudden death in 1942 well before the novel's completion (quoted in Bernstein 124). The novel's cohesion as a narrative "whole" is as elusive as its resolution, as the novel tracks its central protagonist Ulrich, his sabbatical from "life," his dealings with Austrian high society, and his philosophical musings (or digressions) on the nature of, say, modes of thinking, history, mathematics, or economics. The work's grand scope and aim, not only in terms of its page count but also the numerous lines of inquiry it pursues, may be explained by Allen Thiher's assertion that *The Man Without Qualities* is a "very modernist project" in that Musil "believed his novel to be a form of total cultural criticism" which targeted "the entire spectrum of culture, from its intellectual and moral dimension to what Emerson called the manners of everyday life" (230).

In *Robert Musil and the NonModern*, Mark Freed goes a step further. He first claims that Musil engages in some form of cultural critique, that is, on the philosophical discourse on Modernity. Freed then elaborates on Musil's providing an alternative to perceived shortcomings of the aforementioned discourse by way of juxtaposed discursive modes in *The Man without Qualities*. According to Freed, Musil effects a critique of what Bruno Latour calls modernist "purification," one of two sets of intellectual practices that "characterize the modern intellectual constitution" (5). Freed defines purification as

the practice of dividing “an otherwise undifferentiated world into smaller and smaller entities (humans and gods, all the way down to atoms ...)” (5). Furthermore, he explains, “[m]ore generally, purification carves up the world into distinct ontological zones: a human world of Culture on the one hand and a nonhuman world of Nature on the other” (5). Thomas Harrison problematizes Freed's analysis and states the potential implications of modernist purification or, to use his phrase, “all systematizations of existence” which allow for “ideological reduction” ultimately mobilized for “formulaic control” (27). This leads to the second of what Freed terms “intellectual practices” that “characterize the modern intellectual practices”: “mediation” or “translation” (5). Mediation or translation “creates mixtures of purified entities, hybrids of nature and culture that are neither entirely human nor nonhuman,” the success of which indicates the integrating of nonhumans into a human world” (Freed 5). In my opinion, Harrison's “diagnosis” of modernist purification's potential ills and Freed's summarization of Latour's claims intersect when one asks: what if “ideological reduction” itself is a form of “mediation” or “translation” not by which nonhumans are integrated into a human world of culture but by which humans are conflated with hybridized “nonhuman” objects (say, white dolls mediated by an ideology) and are thus rendered into “hybrids” (as ideological abstractions)? Morrison, I believe, raises this question in *The Bluest Eye*. By extension, both Morrison and Musil, respectively, offer discursive alternatives to the intellectual practice of modernist purification.

Musil's efforts to critique modernist purification revolve around what he termed, in German, the “Essayismus.” Of course, this critique is only possible, according to Freed, if one de-privileges “the practices of purification that have historically been the center of modern science” (6). *The Man Without Qualities* opens with the famous “weather passage” which has attracted many interpretations by Musil scholars. This passage is essentially a juxtaposing of “two discursive modes” (Freed 8). The first discursive mode exemplifies modernist purification in that the weather is described in meteorological, scientific terms (the denotative description), which precludes a relationship to subjective human experience and interest. (For example, how is one to interpret and relate to “[t]he isotherms and isotheres were functioning as they should”?) (*MWQ* 3). The second discursive mode introduces human concerns “that have been occluded from the scientific description” (Freed 8). (The lengthy “weather passage” concludes, “[i]t was a fine day in August 1913.”) (Musil 3). What this juxtaposition of discursive modes ultimately offers is an alternative to modernist purification by which denotative discourse is destabilized. As Freed states, “Essayismus draws into question the very possibility of an accurate description of the world, and, hence, the possibility of Truth as the single correct one” (9).

Morrison enacts her own version of Musil's Essayismus in *The Bluest Eye*, what she calls “my narrative project,” to both portray and confront the cultural conundrums that necessitated a novel — much like Musil's — fraught with cultural, ethical, and literary implications (xiii). Ágnes Surányi reframes *The Bluest Eye* as a response to the “Black is Beautiful” movement of the 1960s (11). She notes, however, that Morrison “worried that this slogan of racial pride would be unable to dispel the long-term psychic effects of the prejudices rooted in racialism and sexism” (Surányi 11). Morrison herself mentions in the foreword what served as the impetus for the writing of *The Bluest Eye*. She recalls a conversation with a childhood friend who desired blue eyes. Morrison then goes on to say, “*The Bluest Eye* was my effort to say something about that ... Implicit in her [friend's] desire was racial self-loathing. And twenty years later I was still wondering about *how* one learns that” (xi emphasis added). The key word in Morrison's foreword seems to be “how,” for we see it again in the “preface” just prior to the story's beginning proper: “[t]here is really nothing more to say — except why. But since why is difficult to handle, one must take refuge in the how” (6). This is the statement on which the novel's “inquiry” (as Morrison put it) and thus the novel as a whole is dependent; it authenticates, authorizes, and necessitates the rest of the novel. And indeed, the novel in a way reads like a scientific “inquiry,” which recalls Émile Zola's “The Experimental Novel.” In his essay, Zola proposes “the application of the experimental method to the novel and to the drama” in response to Claude Bernard's attempts to apply the experimental method to medicine and physiology (“the physical life”) (645). Zola argues that the experimental method be extended to “the knowledge of the passionate and intellectual life” and concludes this line of argument with the following: “The experimental novel is the goal” (645).

Morrison enacts her own “experimental novel,” synonymous with her “narrative project,” not so much as an end but rather as a means to investigate “the how” of Pecola's eventual madness. The passage cited above, which authenticates and authorizes the “inquiry” constitutive of *The Bluest Eye*, nearly echoes verbatim Zola's explanation of the mechanism behind how the experimental novel functions. Zola too explains, the “[e]xperimental science has no necessity to worry itself about the ‘why’ of things; it simply explains the ‘how’” (645). Here, discussions concerning Musil, modernist purification, Morrison's “narrative project,” and Zola's notion of the experimental novel intertwine. As I argue, modernist purification is the “how” behind the “disinterested” violence (racial or otherwise) inflicted on the novel's characters. The only way in which Morrison can depict, with objective and scientific precision, the mechanism behind “disinterested” violence (the how) is by structuring the novel into an experimental novel which legitimizes all observations made for the purposes of investigation. Morrison then, not unlike Musil, employs narrative structure to first portray that which she criticizes and, second, to critique that which she portrays without falling into the trap of ultimately reifying in the minds of readers the objective, “disinterested” violence she must enact to make a “scientific inquiry” possible in the first place. Put more simply, there is a paradox. Morrison has to conduct her own version of modernist purification to accurately explain the “how.” Purification,

however, is also what she must criticize. First, we will consider how modernist purification is enacted and critiqued in the fictional world of *The Bluest Eye*. Secondly, we will discuss how Morrison ultimately reconciles and overcomes the paradox of enacting what is also the subject of her criticism.

III. 'Disinterested Violence' in *The Bluest Eye*

The Bluest Eye is undoubtedly concerned with how people and objects are ordered, classified, or schematized into a larger framework of understanding and being. The description of the Breedlove household is one such example. We are told, "[e]ach member of the [Breedlove] family in his own cell of consciousness, each making his own patchwork quilt of reality – collecting fragments of experience here, pieces of information there" (Morrison 34). The description of the Breedloves' sofa, "split straight across the back by the time it was delivered," offers a look into how the "patchwork quilt of reality" is perpetually being made and remade while the Breedloves are presumably unaware of this pervasive, "fretful malaise that asserts itself throughout the house and limits the delight of things not related to it" (Morrison 36–37). The coal stove – interestingly in the *center* of the bedroom much like the novel itself, which acts as a "center," as I propose, with no center – the narrator claims, "is the only living thing in the Breedloves' house," for "the fire seemed to live, go down, or die according to *its own schemata*" (Morrison 37 emphasis added). This is, however, a subtle point in the text often missed by critics and general readers, not unlike the characters in the novel who seem unaware of this hidden constitution of the world in which they live and to which they contribute. In other words, for readers and the novel's characters alike, the world of Morrison's *The Bluest Eye* is woven quietly, almost surreptitiously, and this is arguably the height of the text as a work which follows in the footsteps of a realist tradition, its mimetic qualities and aims being employed to portray the ways in which the novel's characters, unawares, are constantly and quietly being worked upon and, ultimately, compartmentalized by some form of external classification and organization, a white hegemonic ideology, for instance, being one example.

Interestingly, Morrison mobilizes a narrative strategy which makes the constitution of the world (as relayed to us by the narrator) difficult to repeal and ignore. Simply put, yes, the "making" of the character's worlds is subtle in that the characters are seemingly unaware of it. However, its subtlety does not necessarily translate to a type of transiency. Excluding the Dick and Jane primer at the outset, the novel is primarily narrated by two narrators: an older Claudia who reflects on her childhood (these chapters have no headers) and an all-knowing or omniscient narrator who seems to hover about in the text, observing and, most importantly, objectively relaying to readers "how" (not "why," as we are told in the prologue) the world, or some semblance of a reality, misshaped for, and then subsequently works upon, say, the Breedlove family (Morrison 6). An instance in which we find this objective narrator at work reads:

These and other inanimate things she [Pecola] saw and experienced. They were real to her. She knew them. They were the codes and touchstones of the world, capable of translation and possession. She owned the crack that made her stumble; she owned the clumps of dandelions whose white heads, last fall, she had blown away; whose yellow heads, this fall, she peered into. And owning them made her part of the world, and a world a part of her. (Morrison 49)

At least three things are of significance here. First, this objective narrator with his precise observations echoes Bernard's and Zola's "observer" and his role in the experimental novel. Zola cites Bernard, who claims, "[t]he observer relates purely and simply the phenomena which he has under his eyes ... He should be the photographer of the phenomena, his observation should be an exact representation of nature ... He listens to nature and he writes under its dictation" (quoted in Zola 646). Here, we have the objective narrator, authorized by the novel's "inquiry" into the "how," dictating how Pecola's notion of reality is being made and remade. This leads to the second important point which harkens back to Latour's theories on purification and mediation. The dandelions (nonhuman objects) are integrated or "hybridized" into the human world via "translation" or "mediation" and only after this process, it seems, do they become Pecola's "possessions" (Morrison 49). These dandelions and the process they undergo under Pecola's eyes, however, as the observer-narrator notes, are the "codes and touchstones of the world," implying, if the traditional definition of "touchstone" (the fundamental or quintessential feature) is applied, that in this fictional world of the novel, all characters and even nonhuman objects are perpetually enmeshed in a never-ending web of purification, translation, mediation, and possession by each other (Morrison 49 emphasis added). The observer-narrator lays bare and exposes the underlying seams and rivets of this reality to which all, more or less, contribute, as he notes, "[a]nd owning them [the dandelions] made her [Pecola] part of the world, and a world a part of her" (Morrison 49). Lastly, what is important here is the heading of chapters observed by our objective narrator. The chapter headings are a "deconstructed" version of the Dick and Jane primer (an example reads, "HEREISTHEHOUSEITISGREENANDWHITE ...") (Morrison 33). This deconstructed version of the Dick and Jane primer points to the fact that the construction (or deconstruction) of any discourse affects or even contributes to its reading and meaning. This seems to be an authenticating nod to the observer-narrator whose observations are not merely sentences to be read but are more a depiction of reality rendered immutable by the strategic use of the observer-narrator on which the novel's scientific inquiry depends. Moreover, this intimate or insular scene between Pecola and the dandelions presents a microcosm of what occurs in the world at-large at an institutionalized level, as we see depicted in the passage between Claudia and her white, blue-eyed doll.

Regarding *The Bluest Eye*, Morrison once stated in an interview with the *Paris Review* that she “put the whole plot on the first page” (82). Presumably, she was speaking of the prologue in which an older Claudia recounts “the fall of 1941” when “Pecola was having her father’s baby” (Morrison 5). If the plot, the literal story, is contained in the prologue, as Morrison has suggested, the novel’s thematic concerns and what the novel as a “narrative project” first enacts, then must reject, are concentrated in the passage with the younger Claudia and the “blue-eyed Baby Doll,” which she receives as a Christmas gift (Morrison 20). The older Claudia remembers how her younger self felt when she first encountered the doll: “I was bemused with the thing itself, and the way it looked. What was I supposed to do with it?” (Morrison 20). This passage, in a sense, is a retelling or a version of what the novel itself attempts to do as an investigative narrative project; there is bemusement and subsequently an inquiry, by literal dismemberment, which takes place in order to understand something not previously known. The older Claudia, perhaps somewhat begrudgingly, reflects that she “could not love it [the doll]. But [she] could examine it to see what it was that all the world said was lovable. Break off the tiny fingers, bend the flat feet ...” (Morrison 21). The author, the reader, and the novel’s other characters (such as Pecola) are reflected in Claudia’s inquiring eyes. There is also, however, a duality present here: a critique and, eventually, a proposed solution in the form of the narrative structure of the novel. Morrison not only critiques the dominant ideology of white beauty forced onto young black girls (“all the world had agreed that a blue-eyed, yellow-haired girl, pink-skinned doll was what every girl child treasured”), she arguably more so criticizes the “disinterested violence” of which both whites and blacks are capable – not only by physical violence but also by a violence of mass categorization on which an ideology thrives and by which physical violence is made to seem more permissible (hence the “disinterested” adjective which signals a disregard for subjective experiences and worth) (Morrison 20–23).

What occurs in the passage above is a conflation of a coming-of-age with a coming-into-ideology, and this may be Morrison’s point. Just prior to Claudia’s dismembering of the white doll, we learn that she is aware of some sort of “desirability that had escaped [her], but apparently only [her]” (Morrison 20). This desirability, of course, concerns notions of white beauty or the white ideal, facets of an ideology into which “adults, older girls” have already been initiated (Morrison 20). Claudia, being “younger than both Frieda and Pecola,” (i.e. a young, pre-adolescent child), arguably encounters this ideology for the first time, the ideology being in the form of the “big, blue-eyed Baby Doll” (Morrison 19–20). This is where the trajectory from Claudia’s pre-adolescent self to Claudia’s coming-of-age/“coming-into-ideology” (an ideology of “disinterested violence”) first takes flight. Claudia’s interaction with the doll is, to say the least, one of hostility, resistance, and tension:

When I took it to bed, its hard unyielding limbs resisted my flesh – the tapered fingertips on those dimpled hands *scratched*. If, in sleep, I turned, the *bone-cold* head collided with my own. It was a most uncomfortable, *patently aggressive* sleeping companion. To hold it was no more rewarding. The starched gauze or lace on the cotton dress *irritated* any embrace (Morrison 20 emphasis added).

The tension alluded to earlier is not simply an illustration of white against black racism; it is more complicated than that. Rather, this passage constitutes a struggle between Claudia as an independent, subjective self (precisely because of her young age) and a “less-than-human” ideology being imposed on her by her parents and, by extension, “all the world” (Morrison 21). The doll, of course, is a perfect symbol of what a “disinterested” ideology comes to represent; after all, what is a doll but a diminished, manufactured, and an artificial version (or abstraction), with “those round moronic eyes,” of a human being? (Morrison 20) On a deeper level, then, Claudia resists that symbol of self-effacement lest she herself, in a sense, comes to resemble a “doll.” Claudia’s “flesh” resists those “hard unyielding limbs and “ the “bone-cold head” [of the doll] “collid[es] with [her] own” (Morrison 20). The mention of Claudia’s “own head” is significant here in that it conveys a sense of resistance in the head against an external or alien mode of thinking (if the head is understood here to be a universal symbol in which is housed thoughts and memories that ultimately constitute a unique and subjective self). The doll is described as “patently aggressive,” which is open to interpretation with its double meaning (Morrison 20). If we consider the traditional meaning of “patently,” that is, “clearly” or “obviously,” we can interpret the doll to be a clearly “aggressive sleeping companion.” However, the doll (and what it comes to represent) is also “patent-ly” aggressive in that, even as Claudia is sleeping, she (her “rights” to and as herself) is being patented over to this mode of thinking which reduces young children (such as herself) into “dolls.” She is, after all, “scratched” by this doll in that she has been marked by the first scratch of a long process of effacement that has just begun (Morrison 20).

This “scratch” inflicted on Claudia too has a double meaning. Though thus far my reading has emphasized the “disinterested violence” between Claudia and her doll, the scratch on Claudia reminds us that she too has been a victim of “disinterested violence,” in an emotionally vapid transaction between her parents (“the grown people” of “all the world”) and herself (Morrison 23). When the adults in her life scold Claudia for dismembering her doll, she reminds us that “that nobody ever asked [her] what [she] wanted for Christmas” and that “had any adult with the power to fulfill my desires taken me seriously” she would not have asked for something “to own, or to possess” (Morrison 21). Rather, she tells us, she “wanted ... to feel something on Christmas day. The real question would have been: “Dear Claudia, what experience would you like on Christmas?” (Morrison 22). Here again is the tension between Claudia’s yearning for a self-realizing or self-fulfilling

experience (in the most literal sense) rather than essentially being worked upon by her parents who reduce her into a version of themselves (expecting Claudia to dote on, say, white dolls or Shirley Temple), thus inscribing Claudia into their mode of thinking (a "collision" of "heads") while conflating simultaneously white dolls with white girls. (This preempts any attempts by readers to moralize on behalf of one race or the other as, again, this "disinterested" abstraction is inflicted upon both blacks and whites). In this manner, then, the lines demarcating notions of coming-of-age and "coming-into-ideology" or the white "doll" and real-life white girls are ultimately blurred, becoming synonyms or different versions that come together to create the same thing: "all the world" (Morrison 21). Claudia's "little impulses" to violence against "little white girls," however "truly horrifying," should come as no surprise then; it is the parents who first enact this conflation between white dolls and real-life white girls. Claudia only follows suit as a child only could, emulating and reenacting the "disinterested violence" first inflicted on her (Morrison 22–23). Though for some this may seem a leap of logic, this logic is arguably justified by the logic of the narrative structure itself.

Here, we arrive at an examination of possibly the two most violent and disturbing characters in the novel, Cholly Breedlove, who rapes his daughter, and Junior, who tortures and kills the family cat with "the blue eyes in the black face" (Morrison 90). Though both characters commit heinous acts, the "disinterested violence" they inflict on Pecola and the cat, respectively, cannot be reenacted by readers by way of a narrative which prefaces these universally condemnable acts with the histories of these characters that somehow make their actions, if not justifiable or permissible, more understandable. As Gibson notes, "[i]t would on the whole be easier to judge Cholly if we knew less about him and if we could isolate the kitchen floor episode [of Pecola's rape] from the social context in which it occurs and from Cholly's past. But we cannot ..." (47). Our omniscient observer-narrator also notes, regarding Cholly, "[h]aving no idea of how to raise children, and having never watched any parent raise himself, he could not even comprehend what such a relationship should be" (Morrison 160). If we draw a link between Cholly and Claudia, one sanctioned by the narrative's logic which suggests that one's past upbringing is perpetually shaping (and even contributing to) one's conduct in the present, we are forced to ask the obvious: if Cholly's actions in the present are made understandable by his past and his upbringing, why does this not apply to Claudia's own upbringing and her subsequent coming-of-age/coming-into-ideology marked by her interaction with the white, blue-eyed doll? The novel's narrative structure seemingly responds to this query, suggesting that Claudia, not unlike Cholly, follows suit and enacts in the present what has already been sanctioned as permissible or allowable by the past. In this way, two seemingly disparate story arcs of the novel, that of Claudia and that of Cholly, are brought together, while what is forebodingly presented to us is the role of the household as a mediating "middle ground" between society-at-large and the child for instilling in youth a conflation between objects of ideological abstraction and real-life human beings with their respective subjective experiences and worth.

We see this take place, for instance, in Geraldine's and Junior's home. Geraldine's "pretty gold-and-green" house (as perceived by Pecola) echoes the "green and white" house in the Dick and Jane primer; it too is described as "pretty" (Morrison 92, 3). However, the Dick and Jane primer, not as a learning tool/exercise for reading but as an exercise in modernist purification or classification, comes to the fore in the form of Geraldine's action within her household. She "educates" Junior (whose name indicates a type of passing down from one generation to the next) on the difference between "[w]hite kids," "colored people," and "niggers" (Morrison 87). Furthermore, Geraldine organizes the world in the following manner: "[t]he line between colored and nigger was not always clear; subtle and telltale signs threatened to erode it ..." (Morrison 87). The entirety of Geraldine's role as Junior's mother consists of "constructing" him into a "colored" person. Junior, like Claudia's dismemberment of her white, blue-eyed doll, is "dismembered" (in an eerie, almost pseudo-scientific manner) into qualities that establish his presence within the "colored people" paradigm. Junior is only Junior (in the eyes of Geraldine) to the extent to which he proves "he belong[s] to the former group" (Morrison 87). He must only wear, for example, "white shirts and blue trousers," his hair must be cut "as close to his scalp as possible," and "Jergens Lotion" is applied to his face almost as a cosmetic to cover up any chances of his face "becoming ashen" (Morrison 87). Perhaps most devastatingly, however, for Junior is the lack of any motherly affection from Geraldine. Lest we forget, the name Junior also suggests that, put simply, Junior, though violent and troubled, is still a child in need of his mother's love. However, the observer-narrator informs us that "Geraldine did not allow her baby, Junior to cry. As long as his needs were physical, she could meet them" (Morrison 86). Interestingly, Junior does not retaliate directly against his mother for this lack of affection. Rather, he tortures and eventually kills Geraldine's cat which, I argue, is the abstract notion of mediation by ideology (like Claudia's doll) made manifest as a household pet that can be "loved" and with which one may be infatuated (in Geraldine's case). When Geraldine is alone in the house with her cat, she engages in a type of sexual act with it, a type of intercourse between Geraldine and the image of herself as a black woman with blue eyes (the cat, we are reminded more than once, has "blue eyes" with a "black face") (Morrison 90). Our observer-narrator informs us that "the cat will jump into her lap. She [Geraldine] will fondle that soft hill of hair and let the warmth of the animal's body seep over and into the deeply private areas of her lap" (Morrison 85). Junior's retaliation against Geraldine's cat and not Geraldine directly suggests that the real issue in their household, to say the least, is not limited simply to the actions of an unaffectionate mother. The larger concern here is the ideological reduction of people into "colored people" or "niggers" that puts to the wayside some semblance of a unique, subjective relationship between people and, more specifically, between Geraldine and Junior, between mother and child. Geraldine and Junior's

relationship, it seems, has devolved into a parody of a "relationship" simply between a "colored" woman and a "colored" boy. (Junior's less-generalized first name, Louis, is rarely mentioned). And looking down on this tumult (from Pecola's point of view) is "Jesus looking down ... with sad and unsurprised eyes," perhaps in a nod to Junior's tacit recognition that something much larger than simply an unaffectionate mother – the violent ideological reduction/abstraction which Geraldine's actions only perpetuate – is at work in the world at-large (Morrison 92).

As mentioned earlier, Claudia is indeed "scratched" (or marked), irreparably changed by her encounter with the doll. Prior to her receiving the white doll for Christmas, Claudia, in an honest, heartfelt monologue, tells us how "[she] did not want to have anything to own, or to possess any object" (Morrison 21). However, after this experience, Claudia exhibits possessive and objectifying tendencies when she detests Shirley Temple not because she is, for example, a white symbol of beauty to which Claudia has no access, but because "she danced with Bojangles, who was *my* friend, *my* uncle, *my* daddy who ought to have been soft-shoeing it and chuckling with me" (Morrison 19 emphasis original). More problematic here than the potential undertones of "reverse racism" is the fact that Bojangles, arguably the most famous African American tap dancer of the 20th century, is first defined by his race and because of his status as a black man, is reduced to an object to be possessed (by a black girl), while ascribed to a "correct" way of being (not dancing with white girls) solely on the basis of his race. In short, Claudia is enacting the same "disinterested violence" inflicted on her the Christmas prior and only imagining Bojangles in a manner similar to critics who saw Bojangles as a cultural figure who served as a type of "template" for, or a sweeping representation (by way of racial stereotypes) of, African Americans at-large (Morrison 23). Claudia has indeed come of age, however problematically this development may manifest itself.

The fictional world of *The Bluest Eye* (or in other words, the "adult" world into which Claudia is eventually initiated) is one governed by modernist purification. Literally, the novel's beginning proper (following the Dick and Jane primer and the "preface") is a performance of violence made more permissible by the objective classification of Rosemary Villanucci, (ironically termed a "next-door friend"), as an abstraction of "white skin" on which "red marks" may be made" (Morrison 9). This passage opens the section entitled "Autumn" and, as one may have presumed, the section entitled "Winter" follows. Interestingly, however, the passage cited above in which Claudia first encounters the white, blue-eyed doll and is "marked" by a coming-into-ideology is said to have taken place in Christmas ("It had begun with Christmas and the gift of dolls") (Morrison 19). This is, however, remarked upon in the "Autumn" (not the "Winter" section) and the narrative itself seems to digress into a flashback, presumably to the Christmas of the year prior. What this suggests is that Claudia's experience with the doll and its consequences, namely the conflation of human beings and dolls/objects by way of ideological mediation and modernist purification, is a type of "pre-history," or a past that undergirds the occurrences that mark the narrative's beginning. More simply, the passage with Claudia and the doll authorizes, permits, and explains (like the way in which Claudia's or Cholly's pasts authorize the present) the actions of violence inflicted upon Rosemary. The fictional reality introduced to readers (and as it is formed in the minds of readers) then, seems inseparable from the modernist purification both displayed and implicitly critiqued. The inception of the novel in the reader's mind is accompanied by the inception of modernist purification; the two, it seems, are inseparable. The Dick and Jane primer also hints at this notion at play in the narrative's beginning, for the primer, as employed by Morrison, is really an exercise in which readers are made aware of how, "between retina and object," we first observe an object (in this case, "the house"), then classify and deconstruct it in an act of modernist purification ("It is green and white. It has a red door."), and ultimately qualify it with an adjective that then places the house, in this case, on a scale of physical and aesthetic beauty/value ("It is very pretty.") (Morrison 48, 3). This "exercise" in modernist purification to which readers are introduced is indeed an instructional template for how the rest of the fictional world must be organized in accordance with the inquiry (suggestive of Zola's experimental novel) that Morrison pursues.

IV. Paradox Reconciled

This returns readers to the paradox inherent in Morrison's narrative project. As mentioned earlier, readers are forced to ask themselves: How can Morrison overcome the paradox of enacting that which she criticizes? The deconstruction of the Dick and Jane primer, enacted by Toni Morrison herself, responds to this conundrum. Morrison removes punctuation marks when the primer is repeated for the second time. In its third iteration, all spaces have been removed from between individual letters. In this way, as alluded to by Gibson, Morrison asserts her authority as the author of the text (i.e. *The Bluest Eye*) that will follow the primer while foreshadowing the dismantling of her countering, by way of her novel's narrative structure, the purification she must critique. In this way, Morrison "owns" and authorizes the enactment of modernist purification as an instrument necessary for her inquiry that undergirds the substance of her novel. In other words, Morrison overcomes the paradox mentioned above and reconciles the problematic enactment of modernist purification to the fact that it is employed, by her authority as the text's author, to portray to readers the whole canvas or landscape of Pecola's mental collapse and the larger societal/institutional contributors to her collapse.

Simultaneously, Morrison foreshadows the novel's precarious state as a work which does not conform to any given paradigm and thus eludes the "disinterested violence" of classification. What occurs here for this to happen is a series of paradigmatic shifts. The first paradigmatic shift is foreshadowed by the Dick and Jane primer itself, for readers can track

the trajectory of the primer as an established, conventional, and state/ideologically sanctioned paradigm (as interpreted by Werrlein) to a primer whose structure/form is manipulated by Morrison to foreshadow and convey, at the very least, her intentions of a subversive counter-message. More significantly, however, are the two paradigmatic shifts that constitute *The Bluest Eye* itself.

The first shift occurs in the narrative mode. Understandably, Morrison must employ strategies that bring to mind Zola's experimental novel. This is achieved, as noted before, through Zola's observer-narrator who, with scientific precision, demarcates the fictional world into schemata and categories so that some form of inquiry may be mapped within it. However, this creates the risk of enacting the same "disinterested violence" to which, for example, Pecola and Claudia fall victim, for by this mode of narration, characters cannot avoid being rendered into abstract, scientific "case studies." (In this case, how would Morrison be any different from her character, Geraldine?). However, through a discursive strategy that echoes Musil's Essayismus, Morrison counters the necessary but potentially problematic observer-narrator through the subjective recounting of the past by the older Claudia. For example, in the chapters narrated by Claudia, Pecola is not a subject of inquiry but is a friend for whom any potential rescue from insanity is, as Claudia sorrowfully reflects, "much, much, much too late" (Morrison 206). For those, though, who paid attention to the "preface," this intentional destabilization of discursive modes is perhaps not so surprising. The preface, which I reconfigured earlier into a type of authenticating/authorizing act on the part of Morrison, hints at such a discourse, for though it concludes with an authorizing act for an inquiry ("But since why is difficult to handle, one must take refuge in the how"), it commences with the intimate phrase "[q]uiet as it's kept," indicating a secret perhaps passed down orally and made available to only those to whom one is close (Morrison 5). The "[q]uiet as it's kept" phrase, however, carries with it a second meaning that links it to the second paradigmatic shift in *The Bluest Eye*.

The second shift marks the novel's trajectory from simply being a narrative/literary project to a work with cultural/ethical implications. Though the preface opens with such a phrase that indicates a personal story or testament set in the somewhat insular town of Lorain, Ohio, the novel ends with a sweeping moral statement from which "the earth, the land, [the] town," and "the land of the entire country" cannot escape (Morrison 206). (This brings to mind Thiher's notion of the "very modernist project" in part defined by its commitment to "total cultural criticism.") (230). In the older Claudia's moral statement, the pronoun "we" comes to the fore as she reflects that, for instance, "[w]e [the community] honed our egos on her [Pecola], padded our characters with her frailty, and yawned in the fantasy of our strength" (Morrison 205). However, the fatalistic conclusion often attributed to *The Bluest Eye* (perhaps brought upon by Pecola's irreversible madness) is a misnomer, for a sense of hope in redemption is subtly woven into the novel's concluding sentence: "[a]t least on the edge of my town, among the garbage and sunflowers of my town, it's much, much, much too late" (Morrison 206 emphasis added). Though Pecola's madness is indeed final, Claudia's use of "[a]t least" and "my town" implies that Pecola's plight need not repeat itself in the future elsewhere, perhaps somewhere "[o]n the earth, the land, [the] town," and "the land of the entire country" towards which Claudia's moral/ethical statement is directed (Morrison 206). Put another way, Pecola, with "her head jerking to the beat of a drummer so distant only she could hear," is in her own world, so to speak, either in her solipsistic world of madness or, in another reading, within the confines of the novel as a fixed, immutable text (Morrison 204). However, Claudia's final statement implies a moving beyond Lorain, Ohio and the novel itself, into a larger world of which readers too are a part. Though *The Bluest Eye* does not command readers to take certain actions (perhaps in the way the assertive book-narrator does at the conclusion of Morrison's *Jazz*), readers cannot escape the gaze of the poignant scene between Pecola and the white immigrant storekeeper Mr. Yacobowski. Pecola is "invisible" and erased by Mr. Yacobowski "between retina and object, between vision and view" (in a marked allusion to Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man*) (Morrison 48). Though Mr. Yacobowski's oversight is, unfortunately, justified by Pecola ("How can a fifty-two-year-old white immigrant storekeeper ... see a little black girl?"), it seems the reader cannot escape from being implicated into this scene, for the novel (as any work of literature) shapes and influences what is "between" the reader's "retina" and the object, or, in this case, the novel he/she is, at the most rudimentary level, seeing and, by extension, reading (Morrison 48).

In these various ways, Morrison's novel, much like Musil's, becomes a literary, cultural, and ethical project. This is perhaps what justifies to the fullest extent Morrison's enactment of modernist purification, for it ultimately becomes a key component of Morrison's larger project. Morrison, in a "Musil-ian" manner, employs scientific precision (the "how") precisely for some form of ethical betterment or progress in the future (to which Claudia's concluding statement alludes). The conclusion's interplay of Pecola's impossible recovery from insanity but Claudia's implicit faith in the possibility of redemption elsewhere brings to mind the words of German aesthetician Martin Seel, who has mused about "impossible possibilities that make possible possibilities visible" so that we ourselves may see "possibilities graspable in the here and now" (quoted in Harrington 182). Though Pecola, as Manuela López Ramírez mentions, "is one of Morrison's irreversible lunatics," the older Claudia is in her own right a contributor to what Tessa Roynon terms "the Morrisonian project" (89, 604). Claudia, as friend and narrator, preserves "[a]ll of those pictures, all of those faces" (i.e. Pecola's history and experiences that make her a unique, subjective individual) (Morrison 45). Simultaneously, she offers her own story as a cultural/ethical messenger to counter the observer-narrator who must pursue, by Morrison's authorization, the scientific inquiry into Pecola's madness.

By way of Claudia's narrative contribution, the novel (as the primary mediating medium in which all lines of inquiry were made possible) comes powerfully alive as it eludes the "disinterested violence" it must both enact and critique (Morrison 23). In ways both comical and serious, Claudia's vomit, perhaps as an opposing symbol to the barrenness and sterility of ideological reduction inflicted on individuals, serves as a fitting metaphor for the novel itself – its intricate structure, its aims and aspirations, and what it has come to stand for in our reading: "The puke swaddled down ... green gray, with flecks of orange. It moves like the insides of an uncooked egg. Stubbornly clinging to its own mass, refusing to break up and be removed. How, I wonder, can it be so neat and nasty at the same time?" (Morrison 11).

Competing Interests

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How to cite this article: Kim, Joshua. "Toni Morrison's Experimental Novel, *The Bluest Eye*: Tempering 'Disinterested Violence' Through the 'Narrative Project'." *Philologia* 11, no. 1 (2019): pp. 42–51. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.21061/ph.175>

Submitted: 01 April 2019

Accepted: 01 April 2019

Published: 30 April 2019

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Virginia Tech, US

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Keywords: philologia volume XI

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FATHER TIME IS OUT BINGE DRINKING AGAIN
HE ALWAYS TELLS HIS WIFE HE'S GOING ON
A COFFEE BREAK, BUT WHO GOES ON A BREAK
FOR COFFEE AT ONE A.M. IN THE NIGHT
SHE BELIEVES HIM, I THINK SHE MIGHT HAVE TO
OR SHE'S LOST HER CHANCES AT HAVING TIME

HE LEFT HIS COFFEE ON THE WINDOW SILL
SHE DID NOT MOVE IT SINCE HE LEFT THAT DAY
IT'S FULL OF DUST AND COBWEBS NOW I LOOK
INSIDE IT AND SEE MY BLACK REFLECTION
I THINK HE DROWNED SOMEWHERE INSIDE OF IT
SOMETIMES I IMAGINE HIS WHITE TINY
CARCASS FLOATING AROUND LIKE MARSHMALLOWS

MY MOTHER CAN'T SEE HERSELF IN THE MUG
SO SHE JUST STARES AT THE FIRE AND SHE SMOKES
UNTIL HER LUNGS ARE AS BLACK AS THE EMPTY DOORWAY
AND WATCHES THE CLOCK, WAITS FOR FATHER TIME
TO WALK THROUGH THE DOOR, TO BE HOME AGAIN
AND TO SAY HE'LL NEVER RUN OUT AGAIN

BUT I KNOW HE WILL LIKE HE ALWAYS HAS
LIKE ON ONE OF THEIR DATES, WHEN HE ASKED HER
"WANT A DRINK?" AND SHE SAID, "I CAN'T ANYMORE."
AND THEN, LIKE ALWAYS, TIME RAN OUT AGAIN
AND SHE JUST SAT, WONDERING WHERE HE WENT.

FATHER TIME'S COFFEE BREAKS:
Poem by Abbigale Gray

How to cite this article: Bush, Taylor and Abbigale Evans. "Featured Poem." *Philologia* 11, no. 1 (2019): pp. 4–6. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.21061/ph.179>

Submitted: 03 April 2019 **Accepted:** 03 April 2019 **Published:** 30 April 2019

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