

COMING APART AND COMING TOGETHER: THE
EFFECTS OF GENDER, INTERGENERATIONAL
TRAUMA, AND IDENTITY ON MENTAL HEALTH IN
ERIKA L. SÁNCHEZ'S *I AM NOT YOUR PERFECT
MEXICAN DAUGHTER*

By

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Bachelor of Arts in English Education

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2020

Submitted to the Faculty of the
Graduate College of the
Oklahoma State University
in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for
the Degree of
MASTER OF ARTS
May, 2022

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

A special thank you to my amazing advisor and committee chair, Dr. Alyssa Hunziker, for always encouraging, guiding, and motivating me throughout the process of completing my thesis and throughout my graduate program. Thank you to my friends, old and new, who were there for the laughs and the late nights. Finally, thank you to my family for giving me the love and support to pursue an education and nurturing my love of reading and understanding others. Mom and dad, thank you for all your sacrifices of coming to a new country and giving my siblings and me the chance to continue your dream. This work is especially for you. Gracias, mamá y papá. Los quiero mucho.

I love you all.

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Date of Degree: MAY, 2022

Title of Study: COMING APART AND COMING TOGETHER: THE EFFECTS OF GENDER, INTERGENERATIONAL TRAUMA, AND IDENTITY ON MENTAL HEALTH IN ERIKA L. SÁNCHEZ'S *I AM NOT YOUR PERFECT MEXICAN DAUGHTER*

Major Field: ENGLISH

Abstract: Overall, my portfolio focuses on how minorities are represented in literature and, in the case of one project, how minorities are represented in images. I primarily focus on racialized women and how their societies see them. For example, in Chapter IV I argue the role of women as warriors and in charge of transferring the memories of their Choctaw community to their people in LeAnne Howe's *Shell Shaker*, and I also include instances of racialized immigrant bodies in the first draft of my now revised paper based on Erika L. Sánchez's *I Am Not Your Perfect Mexican Daughter* found in Chapter V of my thesis portfolio. My work in minority representation extends further than women and, as a result, my portfolio demonstrates another specific focus on race and ethnic identities to show how these factors limit people's roles in society and how other Eurocentric communities might see them. Along with that, my portfolio also represents other minority groups by including work that highlights queer authors like Gertrude Stein and hidden disabilities like that of the main character, Julia, which serves as a major focus of my lead paper.

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CHAPTER I

LITERATURE PORTFOLIO STATEMENT

The contents of my portfolio showcase the careful thinking I have done over my Master's program. The work I am presenting to the committee contains original research and quality papers that I believe are a strong reflection of my academic interests. Across my seminar papers, my research asks, how do images and literature represent the experiences of minority communities, whether that be through race, ethnicity, indigeneity, gender, queer identities, or disabilities. My leading paper, "Coming Apart and Coming Together," echoes these ideas as I argue that Erica L. Sánchez's *I Am Not Your Perfect Mexican Daughter* calls attention to the specific burdens placed on Chicax youth and families. The paper, thus, discusses topics central to Chicax studies such as immigration and assimilation, while also engaging in questions of disability studies, mental illness, and generational trauma for Chicax girls and women.

My work on these seminar projects is led by my own interests and experiences. As stated previously, I find myself asking how images and literatures represent the experiences of minority communities, and I additionally think of the contributions of small details and phrasing in works. I notice small details and patterns in texts that allow me to make connections to themes, even those not explicitly stated in a work. I then challenge myself to find the connections of these details to the larger claims and experiences of people, taking it one step further by turning these observations into assignments and papers. Readings of the use of color and weather, for example,

turned into small written assignments in one of my classes or were included in initial drafts of seminar papers. A lot of my questions towards novels also revolve around the roles people and concepts play. These broad ideas are broken down and made more specific to provide a cohesive argument through creating subpoints and finding examples and quotations as evidence on how a subpoint is working in conjunction to a larger claim. Such is the case for my “Gender Performance and Memory Transfer” paper which involved looking at the roles of women in LeAnne Howe’s *Shell Shaker* and how women were tasked with passing on memory in the Choctaw community. In this paper, I provided examples for my subpoint of women’s roles as warriors by claiming that menstrual blood represents this female Native American identity and is worn proudly into battle.

While my work is grounded in a literary studies approach, throughout my seminars I have engaged in aural, written, filmic, visual, and digital humanities work, further enriching my understanding of contemporary scholarship in English. My digital humanities project, “Representation of Minorities and Society Through the Eyes of William Hogarth,” is an example of my archival work. In image 2, I broke down individual areas of the sketch by specifically analyzing certain people, shapes, and details in the midground to claim how, in a reading of the woman as sex slave, the canopy above her bed resembles a vaginal opening and embodies her openness towards female sexuality. I found that dividing the images in such a way allowed me to acknowledge multiple details and readings of images, leading to meaningful and thoughtful interpretations.

Papers such as “Meaning Making and Sound Manipulation” take a more linguistic approach by parsing individual words, breaths, sounds, and timing. This approach allowed me to differentiate between aural and written factors of Gertrude Stein’s poem, “If I Told Him, A Completed Portrait of Picasso.” I had to meticulously listen to a recording I found of Stein reading her poem and slow it down to be able to compare the semantic and lexical meanings of the piece. This strategy towards aural work later benefitted my seminar paper, “From the Slave to

the Singer,” since I was able to use this experience to interpret a musical score and lyrics in conjunction with W. E. B. Du Bois’ *The Souls of Black Folk* to argue how the message of the sorrow song, “Lay This Body Down,” is lost in the jovial music that accompanies the lyrics.

Similar to the questions I have when reading texts and my strategical approach towards projects, my own interests and knowledge base influence the critical and theoretical thinking I approach my projects with. My seminars have exposed me to a broad range of disciplines and critical concerns including fields like Ethnic studies, global Indigenous studies, food studies, slave narrative traditions, sound studies, contemporary studies, and poetry studies. This exposure has influenced my own research in multi-ethnic women’s writing, and particularly my research in Chicana studies. The latter is emphasized in the terminology I include in my revised paper, “Coming Apart and Coming Together,” through intentionally using the term Chicana instead of other identity markers, like Latina, to further specify and contain the group I am referencing to a much smaller academic field. Following my research interests, my course work has primarily been in fields related to questions of race and ethnicity. Even when such goals may not be central to a course, though, I have used my seminar papers to continue thinking about how various forms of marginalization in literature and other media may intersect with that course’s topic.

The original draft of my leading paper, while compelling, seemed like two separate papers based on gender and mental health. Through the revision process of my leading paper, “Coming Apart and Coming Together,” a stronger and more centralized argument was created to prove how gender, intergenerational trauma, and issues of identity all work together to impact the mental health of the Chicana community. The revised paper also works to highlight how the interventions included by Erika L. Sánchez spark conversations about mental illness and its invisibility specifically in young Chicanas. The original paper, “Contemporary Depictions of Life’s Struggles,” had paragraphs devoted to weather, literary American classics, and happiness as a social construct, but in revising this paper, they later proved irrelevant to my claim. I ended up removing the paragraphs or only keeping an idea that was later reframed to fit the new paper. I

also added more material on immigration trauma relating to the people who immigrate, their families, and the liminal space of having two identities in an American and Mexican context. I also made clearer connections on how traditional gender roles are connected to mental health through creating rifts and causing familial tension. The original title of the paper and the previous title on my Notice of Intent to Defend show the changes in the central ideas of my paper since contemporary issues and the American Dream no longer have a huge role in the paper, and, instead, the new title on mental health takes a bigger stance and reflects the added research with some references to previous ideas. A literature review and novel summary are included in the first three pages of “Coming Apart and Coming Together.” These changes have improved my paper by grounding my research and centralizing my claim to more clearly and thoroughly highlight the effects of immigration on mental health in the Chicana community with specific attention being given to the group’s female youth.

In consultation with my advisor, Dr. Alyssa Hunziker, we decided a target journal for this revised paper is *Research on Diversity in Youth Literature*. “Coming Apart and Coming Together” relates to the journal’s goals by presenting diversity and inclusion as central to understanding communities and their place in US society. My work also embodies how less privileged work, such as Young Adult literature and in my case, *I Am Not Your Perfect Mexican Daughter*, creates spaces for conversation about cultural uprooting, mental illness, and what this means when you feel brown and out of place. Additionally, many of the editorial and advisory board members, such as Sonia Alejandra Rodríguez, are critics I have been in conversation with through my work and research for my leading paper and other works in my portfolio.

CHAPTER II

COMING APART AND COMING TOGETHER: THE EFFECTS OF GENDER, INTERGENERATIONAL TRAUMA, AND IDENTITY ON MENTAL HEALTH IN ERIKA L. SÁNCHEZ'S *I AM NOT YOUR PERFECT MEXICAN DAUGHTER*

Within the pages of Erika L. Sánchez's novel, *I Am Not Your Perfect Mexican Daughter*, the Chicana author describes a coming-of-age story for teenage Julia, a second-generation immigrant struggling to fit into the predestined role her parents want for her. While the narrative largely focuses on Julia's struggles, Sánchez is still able to weave a complex network of Chicana community members and their struggles with mental health. Readers see how death, violence, and communal trauma affect whole communities and how people represent themselves to others as a defense mechanism. The inclusion of multiple young protagonists creates and serves as a beautiful juxtaposition against the parents and older community members who value tradition and safety over the ideas of the assimilated youth. Erika L. Sánchez uses *I Am Not Your Perfect Mexican Daughter* to show warning signs of mental health illnesses before characters' breaking points and how views on gender roles, intergenerational trauma, and the need to find a unique identity affect a person's well-being. Sánchez enables conversations on Chicana mental health between her readers through the lives of her characters and especially in the life of Chicana, Julia, as she journeys from her and her family's pain to a place of mutual acceptance and the beginning of healing. Ultimately, *I Am Not Your Perfect Mexican Daughter* aims to help readers identify

the specific burdens places on Chicana youth, particularly women and girls, in the aftermath of intergenerational trauma.

I Am Not Your Perfect Mexican Daughter opens with the corpse and funeral of seemingly angelic sister, Olga, after a semitruck runs into her on the street. The surviving members of the Reyes family, Amá, Apá, and younger sister, Julia, are left to grieve and face the aftermath of losing a member of their family. Apá is more silent than ever; Amá is a shell of the person she used to be who channels her anguish towards Julia, and Julia is having more frequent emotional outbursts than usual. Apart from facing the death of her sister, Julia has always felt like an outsider in her family for issues like always speaking her thoughts and rebelling against her parents. She does not believe in the traditional Mexican female gender roles which rely on the woman serving her husband and her family but instead aims to attend college as a way of leaving her low-income neighborhood and native Chicago. In working to overcome her sister's death, Julia finds out the truth behind her parents' immigration story including how her mother, Amparo, was sexually assaulted by the coyote helping her parents cross into the United States while her father, Rafael, was forced to watch as he was held at gunpoint. Her sister, Olga, may have been conceived as a result of the assault. Julia also uncovers her deceased sister's secret life involving an affair with a married man and a hidden pregnancy. The trauma, secrets, and the feeling of being excluded from her family and society lead a vulnerable Julia to grapple with her depression and anxiety to the point of attempting suicide. As she works to come to terms with her attempted suicide and ways to cope with her mental health problems, Julia accepts her own identity in her community and gains acceptance of her goals from those around her.

Critics in multiple fields of Chicana studies provide research on the stressors Chicana youth face such as citizenship and immigration status, acculturation, and perceived family roles and values which add to their struggles with identity and mental health (Toro and Farver 117). Given the research on mental health in the Chicana ethnic group and how literature portrays the struggles of Chicana youth, Julia and her family's story reveals another layer of depth as signs of

their depression and anxieties are delicately interlaced throughout *I Am Not Your Perfect Mexican Daughter* to subtly teach readers to recognize the signs of someone struggling with their emotional wellbeing. The subtlety of showing mental illness aligns with its invisibility since, many times, mental illness cannot be physically seen. Troy Potter and Elizabeth Parsons quote Rosemary Garland-Thomson in saying that “appearance tends to be the most socially excluding aspect of disability” and commenting that the “visual aspects of mental illness” impact how we categorize people who we think have a disability or mental illness and those who do not (121). As a result, we have a bias view of mental illness by thinking that only those who present something physically different or have such different behaviors are disabled or mentally ill. Potter and Parsons go on to suggest that the “invisibility of mental illness” is subjective since people choose whether or not to acknowledge mental illness (121). In Julia’s case, for example, small details of her behavior hint at her troubles with mental illness even before Olga’s death. Julia’s invisible mental illness can be contrasted to Amá’s physical depression since Amá shows through her dirty clothes and unwashed body how her daughter’s death is causing her to grieve. Critics of Chicana literature also read Sánchez’s novel as a coming-of-age story that shows a “female protagonis[t] struggl[ing] with [her] ‘Mexican-ness’ as a basis for exploring identity and use[s] language as not only a means of self-expression but also as a way to both unravel and remake themselves” (Santos 46). Reading the novel as a narrative that meshes the struggles of immigration, expectations, and identity provides a new view on mental illness and its invisibility in people of color.

As a way to subtly reference mental health, Sánchez’s novel deploys a familiar discussion of traditional gender roles across generations, and, thus, creates a space to discuss the impact these roles have on mental health. Amá, a first-generation immigrant, tries to implement her more traditional views on her daughters while Julia, a second-generation immigrant, is not content being confined to a housewife and maternal role; instead, she wants to create her own identity and place of being in her family. The tension between the mother-daughter duo’s different views of

what a woman should be leads to both characters misunderstanding the other and causes Julia to see herself as a failure for not meeting the expectations of her parents. Amá wants her daughter to be an obedient young girl who will eventually grow up and live a life devoted to her husband and children. She expects Julia to live a life like her deceased older sister, Olga, who Amá states “was always so comfortable here at home, spending time with her family. Bien agusto, mi niña” (Sánchez 90). However, Julia, a modern Chicana, wants a different life that will not involve her spending time raising a family and claims she hates “the way [my mother] hovers over me and criticizes my every move. I’d rather live in the streets than be a submissive Mexican wife who spends all day cooking and cleaning” (13). These differing views align with the “virgin/whore dichotomy” “which insists that women remain pure and virginal and deviance from such characteristics signals a *mujer mala* [bad woman]” (Cantú-Sánchez 3). While most women who fall under the “whore” category do not actually resemble “whores” either literally or figuratively, the idea of the trope categorizing women under these harsh definitions is still used as a weapon against women to keep them from straying away from what tradition renders as good, resulting in a negative self-image. Julia’s ability to speak her mind and assert her opinions make her stray from the virginal and submissive woman she is told to be, and, instead, she becomes a more rebellious and headstrong woman. Her snide remarks emphasize how she speaks her mind and challenge Amá’s previously stated quote by pointing out that Amá infantilizes her sister by calling her “mi niña,” my little girl, even though Olga was twenty-two at the time of her death. While Amá calls her a little girl as a sweet and loving nickname, Julia’s quip should be acknowledged because it shows how suppressed the family keeps women and how docile they are expected to be. Olga had a life of her own and her own job, yet she was still a pure and innocent girl in the eyes of her parents—the perfect Mexican daughter. Additionally, showing Julia’s strength in standing up to gender roles and conformity works as a way for Sánchez to mask Julia’s mental health struggles. The different natures of the sisters and what is expected of them creates an inner struggle in Julia as she knows who her parents want her to be and, yet, still

openly defies their views as a way to be her own person, adding to Julia's sense of not belonging and leading to her eventual suicide attempt.

Julia's stance against traditional gender roles and strides towards being more than the tame housewife her parents want her to be lead to Sánchez depicting a greater divide between the expectations of Julia's parents and the life she wants for herself. Despite always being compared to her sister, Julia still manages to be the exact opposite of the obedient, stay-at-home, and religious daughter Olga was. Julia challenges the idea of the compliant daughter by openly speaking her mind on issues she does not agree with. She, though, is not blind to the fact that her comments are non-traditional to those of her parents and acknowledges her trouble in not being able to hold herself back from making comments that question the established gender structure of her family:

Ever since I was a little kid, I've questioned everything, which drove both my parents insane. Even when I tried to be good, I couldn't. It's as if it were physically impossible for me, as if I were allergic to rules. Things just got worse and worse as I got older. Stuff that's sexist, for example, makes me crazy. Once, I ruined Thanksgiving by going on a rant about the women having to cook all day while the men just sat around, scratching their butts. Amá said I embarrassed her in front of the whole family, that I couldn't change the way things have always been. (21)

The above quotation serves to show Julia's defiance of rules. As she gets older, she realizes that women follow ancient predefined roles assigned to them by society, and she questions such things as the idea of only women belonging in the kitchen. Scholars like Darlene C. DeFour and Tamara Mose Brown point to immigrant women also taking part in the labor force to help feed their families because "their partners' income could not support their family," and, thus, immigrant women are not only confined to the kitchen but also to the workplace (8). Amá works hard all day cleaning houses, and through Julia's modern views, readers and Julia recognize the disparity in how women and men's work is treated. The false idea of women's work being less

important than men's work causes Julia to question why women's work is still treated as inferior to men's when women work as hard or even harder than men. This imbalance of what is qualified as *hard work* is also seen in the way women are expected to work their job and complete household duties such as cooking, cleaning, and taking care of the children. Seeing how different her family's views are on gender than her own cause Julia to think of herself as an outsider, leading her to feel alone in her opinions.

Sánchez suggests, through Julia, that the mental health struggles of Chicax youth, and especially young Chicana women, are often concealed by a person's intellectual and overachieving capabilities. Julia questioning everything and "ruin[ing]" Thanksgiving by mentioning the gender roles present during family gatherings show her intellectual side when she points out the inequality she sees in her family (21). Her statement reveals her to be a thinker and aligns with her college-driven personality. Julia's attitude towards social injustice and her ability to speak up for her beliefs makes her a strong and intuitive Chicax character in *I Am Not Your Perfect Mexican Daughter*. Rather than framing Julia as another stereotypical Chicax character who is a model minority or struggles academically in school and is involved in dangerous activities, such as Julia's friend, Lorena, who is involved in heavy drinking and unprotective sex, Sánchez creates Julia as an inspirational character who knows what she wants in life and is her own person despite being conditioned to be a certain way. While making her a brilliant character, Sánchez also humanizes Julia by giving her problems many readers relate to such as her struggles with mental health relating to her need to fit in and the aftermath of losing a loved one. In humanizing Julia, "Sánchez attempts to not only critically engage in a discussion around stigmas surrounding mental illnesses but also to openly discuss the unique struggles faced by intellectual, smart ChicaNerds who feel like outsiders even within their own families" (Herrera 88). Julia, then, is an avenue for discussions on mental health in young and bright Chicax girls and women. Sánchez is creating a different narrative that takes a different angle on the misunderstood Chicax teen.

Sánchez's word choice for Amá and Julia also speaks to the irony of established gender roles. The slang word "huevona" used as an insult is an example of how gender roles work in ways that defy itself (31). Amá expects her daughters to help her around the house, and since Julia does not like cooking or cleaning, she tries to put it off as long as she can. As a result, her mother often calls her huevona, a commonly used phrase in Hispanic households that refers to a man's testicles. Julia comments on this word saying she thinks it is "a weird thing to call a girl . . . [since] it means that your eggs (balls) are so big that they drag you down and make you lazy" (31). This word is humorous, but it is also interesting to note the negative connotation associated with male testicles. This word seems to explain that men's genitalia is behind the reason they cannot help around the house. It comes off more as an insult to say that large and heavy testicles are the reason for unproductiveness. With this comment, Sánchez is questioning gender roles through Julia by effectively pointing out the irony of laziness also being associated with men and blamed on their genitals. This quotation also serves to once again show how Julia thinks differently from her family. In being the only one who points out the hilarity in calling women "huevona," Julia casts herself as an outsider who can see the ways gender affects her household. Doing so ostracizes Julia from the people she lives with who think differently and adds to the small issues that affect her perception of herself and mental health.

While Sánchez depicts, through Amá, the dual expectations of immigrant communities, the novel also reveals the ways US attitudes towards immigrants and their labor limit immigrant labor to heavily physical jobs like housekeeping and factory work. Misconceptions of immigrants being inferior to other US-born people limit immigrant workers to lower-status jobs with unfair pay and zero benefits. Such is the case for Amá, since she accepts the grotesque treatment and sexual harassment of her employers in her work as a housekeeper. Both these issues negatively affect Amá's mental health as she allows herself to be treated as lesser than other people and succumbs to unpleasant tasks. The negative views towards immigrant labor are witnessed by Julia as she sees how her mother allows herself to be treated. On the occasion when Julia helps her

mother clean Dr. Scheinberg's house, Julia recounts seeing a "giant black turd" in the toilet she is supposed to clean. She is so astonished that she is expected to help with something as simple as flushing a toilet and then cleaning the toilet that she asks if there is a hidden camera somewhere. Amá, as if it does not even bother her, tells Julia to not be so "delicate! Flush it and clean it" . . . rolling her eyes, as if she sees this kind of biological warfare on a daily basis" (100). Having this moment happen while working gives off the impression that undocumented immigrants, and more specifically female immigrants, are supposed to endure the treatment of white Americans who give off a feeling of superiority. Undocumented immigrants are supposed to do the dirty jobs that no one wants to do. Amá being accustomed to cleaning toilets and flushing other people's feces suggests that Amá belittles herself to disgusting household tasks because it is the best job she can find given her immigrant status, and she willingly puts up with the degrading treatment of white employers because she needs to provide for her family. The lower tier work Amá does creates a low self-esteem in Julia as she sees the reality of working as an immigrant in the United States. Julia, at a young age, sees the affects of class and citizenship status on her family and how that influences how others see and treat you.

The perception Julia and Amá have of themselves continues to be seen in the way white men exoticize and look at Chicana women. After Julia and Amá are done cleaning Dr. Scheinberg's house, he comes to pay them and while doing so, it is strongly implied by Julia that he looks at Amá inappropriately: "I don't like the way he stares at Amá when he says goodbye. There's something about him that makes me feel as if I'm smeared in an awful, warm goo. . . . I wonder . . . if other men look at [Amá] the way Dr. Scheinberg does" (103-04). Amá's experience as an immigrant woman working a low status job are once again seen by Julia as Amá is objectified by the stares of a white man. In Dr. Scheinberg staring, he creates a space for both women to feel subordinate to him and causes him to have all the power in their employer-employees relationship. The women are lowered to the status of objects, and their working bodies are treated as commodities that can be bought based on how men like Dr. Scheinberg give

themselves the freedom of inappropriately looking at their employees. Additionally, Dr. Scheinberg's stares allude to how Amá's body is always under the threat of assault. As a consequence of Dr. Scheinberg's actions, the women suffer a negative perception of themselves while also knowing it is difficult, from their position, to defend themselves from the offensive stares of white men. Instead, the women stomach white male harassment as part of the female immigrant experience and this acceptance, therefore, deteriorates the confidence of the women, further adding to the decline of their mental health. This incident with Dr. Scheinberg's also works to show how Julia is beginning to see, even before she knows about her mother's sexual assault, that Amá is at risk of sexual harassment because men racialize her body.

Sánchez continues to use traditional gender roles to show the harm of trauma through the character of Amá. Before Olga's death, Amá, according to Julia, was the cleanest person she knew. Julia describes her mother as a person whose "hair is always washed and neatly braided, and her clothes—even when they are old—are patched, ironed, and spotless" (11). This description of Amá aligns with the traditional notion of women being feminine which can be attributed to being clean and having a neat appearance. The image of Amá as a put together woman before Olga's death is contrasted to what readers see of Amá as a shell of a human being at the beginning of the novel after Olga's death. Julia walks into her parents' bedroom, and the sight and smell of Amá reference how grief has overcome and immobilized her: "I peek inside my parents' bedroom, and the sour smell nearly knocks me over—a mix of unwashed hair, gas, and sweat. . . . I finally step inside the room completely. The smell is so awful that I have to breathe through my mouth. . . . [Amá hasn't] eaten or taken a shower in a really long time" (13-14). As evidenced through the quote, the trauma of Amá losing her daughter causes her to neglect her basic hygiene and even stop eating. Rather than being the clean woman who takes care of herself and her family gender roles expect Amá to be, in her time of grieving, Amá struggles to get out of bed, and the family's wellbeing relating to cooking and having a clean apartment goes unacknowledged. Therefore, as a result of the trauma experienced by Amá, she lets go of the

traditional roles she provides for her family and herself which also works as a clue to the mental wellbeing of Amá and her family members who are seeing a different side of her.

Equally effective in showing the fragile mental health of the characters is the intergenerational trauma passed on from parent to child. In the search for a better life, both Amá and Apá had to cross the border between Mexico and the United States. The border, as described by Julia, “The fucking border. . . . It’s nothing by a giant wound, a big gash between the two countries. Why does it have to be like that? I don’t understand. It’s just some random, stupid line. How can anyone tell people where they can and can’t go?” (280). As a child of immigrants and part of the Chicana community, Julia hears stories about the violence that happens at the border. Even though she never crossed the border herself, she is still able to feel the pain of the community and people who did. Carolyn Garcia and Sandi Lindgren, in their research, point to the communal fears of immigration and deportation that affect even the youngest members of families. They state that immigrants cross the border because there is a “responsibility to provide for the family” despite the consequences of deportation. They continue to say that

[d]eportation was described as a source of stress for everyone. . . . Parents described attempts to keep children from knowing about deportation but indicated that this was difficult. . . . “The Hispanic community is in fear of lots of things, but [deportation] is the biggest, and it really affects the families. Sometimes our kids do not say anything but, in attitudes, they show it.” (156)

The continued immigrational fear of deportation is felt by Julia and heightens her anxieties since she knows the citizenship status of her parents and knows the limitations not being considered legal in the United States has on them. Julia is also aware of the violence that happens at the border such as Lorena’s father being left to die of dehydration there and, later, finding out about her own mother’s sexual assault. As a result of her parents’ experience of reaching the United States and constant fear to stay in the country, Julia feels added pressure to make sure her parents’ sacrifices are worth it.

When Amá and Apá crossed the border, they had hopes for a better life, including things like having a financially stable family and owning a home. However, after leaving the safety of their hometown and coming to the United States via a coyote, they were left with unexpected traumas from their journey. Tía Fermina recalls to Julia that yes, her parents did lose all their money while crossing the border, but her mother was also sexually abused by the coyote while her father was being held at gunpoint. As a result, Olga may have been conceived at that moment (Sánchez 274-75). The trauma from Amá's assault trickles down to her parenting style as she tries to shelter her daughters to avoid them being put in danger. She tries to control how her daughters dress to avoid them revealing too much skin and turns off the television when characters show any affection towards each other. Amá's fear of men is present in the novel since she dislikes when Julia is around a man. Even though Julia has a quinceñera to symbolize her going from girlhood to womanhood, Amá is not comfortable letting Julia dance with men: "As Danny spins and jerks me around, I can feel Amá's eyes hooked to my back. According to this party, I can dance with boys now, but she doesn't seem happy about this" (158). Amá's sexual assault trauma directly affects Julia's mental health since it leads to confusion and misunderstanding between her and her mother. During the time of the party, Julia does not know about her mother's assault, and as a result, Julia thinks her mother is being overcontrolling and keeping her from living her life. It is not until Julia reaches her breaking point and attempts suicide that Julia learns about the assault, and Julia begins to understand why her mother is so cautious and expects her daughters to lead quiet and safe lives. The transmission of fears, even if they are untold, aligns with Cantú-Sánchez's claim that "stories are those of both the mother and the daughter; one cannot understand the other or contest and decolonize their positionality in society without the story of the other" (2). Therefore, it is not until Julia learns about her mother's assault that she starts to sympathize with her mother's overprotective parenting style. Julia now understands her mother's fears of assault and rape have influenced the way her mother raised her and Olga, and that her

mother expects obedient and stay-at-home daughters a way to cope with her past trauma and protect her daughters.

The trickling intergenerational trauma is not limited to the women in the family. Since Apá could not save his wife from being raped by the coyote, Sánchez exhibits how the trauma leaves him as a non-speaking person. When describing her father, Rafael, Julia says

He's physically there, but he never says much. He hardly even talks to me. It's as if I don't exist. Or sometimes I think he wishes he didn't exist. . . . He works at a candy factory all day, then comes home, watches TV, and eventually goes to sleep. Seems pretty sad to me. . . . Life is passing him by, and he doesn't even know it. Or doesn't care. (Sánchez 217)

The treatment of her father leaves Julia with a fractured home since she knows her father is physically present, but she feels no emotional connection to him. Apá barely speaks to her and leads a lifestyle that revolves around work. His silence is a way of coping with the trauma of witnessing his wife being raped while he was unable to stop the coyote, and even though Julia does not yet know about this moment in her parents' past, she feels the effects of that moment in her life. She never had a father figure she could talk to, and many times, his treatment makes her think her father does not want her to be alive. In the quote above, Julia also mentions that she gets the feeling her father does not want to be alive. Emotionally and mentally for Julia, it is difficult to understand what a parent is going through and how something is affecting them to the point that the people who are supposed to take care of you, do not even want to take care of themselves. Julia struggles with the need to feel loved and accepted by her father, and his constant neglect leaves her blaming herself, thus, ruining her mental health.

Apá's continued silence throughout the novel actively works against the trope that everything will be fixed by the end of the novel. Sánchez having her characters still healing from their traumas realistically conveys the continued work that needs to be put in when dealing with mental health and other traumas. Rather than having all the characters in the novel be "healed,"

Sánchez shows them as accepting one another and reaching a level of understanding each other's goals. According to M. Roxana Loza, by ending her novel this way, Sánchez

provide[s] an opportunity to show readers both trauma and healing without removing the lasting effects of the former. The fact that there is no miraculous healing from trauma for [Apá] does not allow readers to leave these YA novels with a comfortable feeling that everything can be resolved; nevertheless, the audience is left with the reassurance that communication, community, and art can loosen the hold of trauma in a family[.] (9)

Apá still being mostly silent at the close of the novel, therefore, works to show that he is still struggling with his trauma and is working towards healing. His fatherly affection starts to show again when he finds and rescues Julia after she slit her wrists, but that is not enough to solve the fragile relationship he has with his daughter. Instead, Julia learns the truth about her father's past and how that past still haunts him, leading to her being able to understand her father. Julia and her father, despite not completely fixing their relationship, are able to work towards healing and accept one another.

While she never experienced crossing the border herself, the trauma her parents and other members of her community went through catalyzes her to follow her own dreams and achievements in the United States. As Sánchez states in an interview with World Policy Journal editorial assistant, Ritikaa Iyer, when speaking about "retaining traditional family values, it's important to remember that the world changes and our ideals evolve" (4). Sánchez's idea of the world changing and, thus, ideals changing is evident in the different goals Julia and her parents have for their lives in the United States. Amá and Apá expect to have a daughter who will stay at home and will one day have her own husband and children. They want Julia to become what they value as a traditional wife. Instead, though, in choosing to go against her parents' wishes, Julia is able to find her own journey in life and do so in a way that makes her parents' immigrant experience pay off. While the novel ends before readers see if Julia graduates college, the opportunity for higher education and being provided a full ride to attend college already gives the

sense of Amá and Apá's sacrifices to come and live in the United States as beneficial in creating a better life for their daughter, Julia.

The effects of intergenerational trauma on mental health are further emphasized by Sánchez through the fears of Chicana children being raised to be afraid of immigration raids. Sánchez give readers a peek into Julia's life as a second-generation immigrant with fears of her undocumented parents being deported. She recounts how she

grew up learning to be afraid of la migra and listened to my parents and family members go on and on about papeles. For a long time, I didn't understand what was so important about these pieces of paper, but I eventually figured it out. My parents could have been sent back to Mexico at any moment, leaving me and Olga here to fend for ourselves. . . . I remember the raids in Apá's factory when I was little. La migra shipped mojudos back by the busload, separating families forever. It must have been some sort of miracle that these sweeps were never during his shift. . . . I can't imagine what it would be like to live without him. (Sánchez 167)

Hearing her family members talk about the horrors of immigration officers coming to arrest people provides a way for the fears of undocumented family members to be passed down to Julia. These fears create anxiety in Julia about what could happen to her family and serve to recognize the distinct vulnerabilities of Chicana youth with undocumented family members. While she feels her family does not understand her, Julia also acknowledges that she dreads her family being separated. Even though she describes her father as only physically present and does not pay attention to her, Julia knows he is an integral part of her family. Her anxiety of her father being deported is heightened when her father continues to work at the candy factory the immigration raids have been happening at. While it is dangerous for Rafael to keep working at the factory, Rafael being undocumented limits the types of jobs he can have. The need to provide for his family keeps him at the factory even if he is at risk of being deported. Apá's employment situation is similar to Amá's as they are only "qualified" to work low wage jobs and are left

vulnerable to deportation and harassment due to their undocumented status. The continued risk the parents takes of possibly being deported takes a toll on all the family members, especially Julia who is always described as overly sensitive. Her parents' immigration status and Julia's constant fear of family separation add to the stress Julia already faces of being misunderstood and grieving the death of her sister.

The same fears and anxieties about being immigrants are reflected in the Reyes family's caution towards white people. Julia is aware of the discrimination Chicana people face, and her relationships and interactions with other people show the intergenerational trauma she has. When thinking about how she confides in her white teacher, Mr. Ingram, Julia reflects that "[I]like my parents, I've always been suspicious of white people, because they're the ones who call immigration, who are rude to you at stores and restaurants, who follow you when you're shopping" (167). Julia's fear of the white people she interacts with hurting her is a result of the stories and warnings she has been told by her community. Many times throughout the novel, the unfair treatment of people of color is seen and gives reason to the feelings of wariness the immigrant community has. When Lorena and Julia are having lunch at an expensive restaurant, the waitress keeps staring at them, and it is implied she thinks the girls who look like they do not belong are going to leave without paying. Lorena, to end her assumption, waves the cash she is paying with in front of the waiter, and suddenly, the girls' food is brought out (304-05). In this instance, the stigma white people have against low-income people of color proves the Reyes' belief about white people's unfair treatment towards them to be true. The waitress treats the girls differently than other customers based on their appearance and only treats them with some respect after she sees they are at least going to pay for the food. Julia's awareness of the difference between her Chicana community and white communities, taught to her by other members of her community, continues to be seen as she struggles in finding a place where she belongs.

Along with showing Julia's issues with mental health through the stress of breaking away from traditional gender roles and having intergenerational trauma passed on from members of her

Chicanx community, Sánchez presents key components of Julia's struggle with mental health related to her inability to have an identity in her communities. Julia's ability to think differently and her need to go to college cast her as an outsider in her community. While it is a good thing that Julia is smart and driven to get an education, it also affects her mental health in that US society has taught her that in order to be seen as smart, she needs to be closer to a "white" person because US society thinks of non-immigrant white people as being the ones who are supposed to succeed. When it comes to Chicanx women, it seems that there is a kind of "identity policing that deems smart young women 'not Latina enough'" (Herrera 117). Critic Roxanne Schroeder-Arce states in her work that "white culture is viewed as central and most smart, and any lack of assimilation on the part of non-white people equates to less smartness. Latinx youth's cultural knowledge and language are often viewed as deficiencies rather than additions to their intellectual capacities" (109). Schroeder-Arce's observation is seen in *I Am Not Your Perfect Mexican Daughter* as Julia grapples with two distinct identities, the daughter of immigrants and the person who wants to fit in, and lives in a liminal space where she feels she is not fully Mexican or a white American. While at a family party, Julia's uncle, Tío Bigotes, points out the lack of authenticity Julia has in being Mexican because she is not fluent in Spanish: "Look at this one. . . . With a cactus on her forehead, and she can barely speak Spanish. This country is ruining your children, sister" (84). Culturally, saying that someone has a cactus on their head, is an offensive way of saying a person looks Indigenous. Tío Bigotes' insult being directed at Julia makes her question her identity since she knows she is Mexican, but a signifier like not being able to fluently use Spanish casts her as inauthentic in the eyes of her uncle. It is as if Julia needs to prove she is Mexican, and failing to prove her heritage causes Julia to struggle with where she belongs. Struggling to speak Spanish causes her to not be "fully" Mexican, but at the same time, her dark skin and hair along with her Indigenous features cause her to not be a part of white America. Julia's view of not being either Mexican or American places Julia in a "cultural liminality—a liminality often described as the existential knowledge of knowing that you are

neither from her nor there” (Terrones 34). Consequently, not knowing where she belongs or what her identity is causes Julia to feel isolated from both her communities.

As Sánchez heavily suggests, Julia’s mental health issues are influenced by both external and internal factors. Her own negative self-esteem and thoughts coupled with the ideas of the family and community she is a part of negatively affect Julia by people trying to tell Julia how she should shape her identity. A major conflict of identity for Julia is language. Interspersed throughout the novel, the use of “proper” English is suggested to help Julia be taken seriously. Her mentors like Mr. Ingman suggest the idea of language as power: “I’m teaching you standard English, which is the language of power. . . . [Y]ou will learn to speak and write in a way that will give you authority” (30). While saying that standard English will help them, Mr. Ingram also gives reasons why neighborhood slang would not be as beneficial as standard English: “Does this mean . . . [t]hat slang is bad? . . . Absolutely not. . . . but would it be helpful to speak that way in a job interview? Unfortunately not” (30). Julia loves language, but being told there is a proper way to speak further complicates her shifting identity. Standard English as the language of power suggests that Julia should leave behind both her Spanish language roots and her urban slang English. At a point in time when Julia is a “‘troublesome’ misfi[t] . . . caught somewhere between [her] communities and the Anglo world,” being told that the way she speaks is not the correct way if she wants to be successful damages her self-esteem and adds her feeling like she does not belong in either the Chicana or Anglo society (Buffone and Herrera 7). In displaying language as a tool for assimilation, Sánchez conveys the dangers of assimilation on mental health as another label that separates communities of people.

As an outsider in her community, Julia’s character can be classified under the wounded adolescent girl trope. Elizabeth Marshall describes this trope as “the traumatized adolescent girl’s metaphorical and literal placement on the outskirts of the soc[iety who is the] . . . simultaneous subject, object, and opponent of cultural classification” (121). Marshall goes on to claim that “adolescent girlhood and mental illness are naturally entwined” (121). Sánchez uses the wounded

girl trope to subtly showcase the impact of immigration struggles and being part of a new society on the mental health of Chicana youth. Julia's inability to have the same American experience as her peers causes her to face the challenges of assimilation and leads her to struggle with her Chicana identity. Julia's identity dilemma hints at her struggles with mental illness before it is confirmed later in the novel. When talking about cultural differences in food, Julia confesses that, "I can only eat junk food in secret because it's forbidden in our house. . . . Amá says Americans eat nothing but garbage, which is why everyone here is so fat and ugly. . . . She's never taken us to McDonald's, not even once, but no one ever believes me" (Sánchez 57-58). The above quotation shows Julia as someone who does not take part in the fast-food culture of the United States. How widespread fast-food chains are and the expectation to occasionally eat fast-food are suggested to be part of the American experience through the mention of Julia's peers not believing she has never eaten out with her mother at the fast-food tycoon chain, McDonald's. Thus, food is weaponized as a marker of difference, and not experiencing fast-food with her family places Julia on the outskirts of American society.

During the climax of the novel, and the breaking point of Julia's mental health struggles, Sánchez references Julia slitting her wrists as a result of the constricted and archaic world she finds herself in. This action disrupts the social order and Julia by "represent[ing] the self-destruction of that order as its toxicity creates its own demise" (Saltz 36). Julia's difficult relationship with her parents, the trauma of being a second-generation immigrant, and the confusion when it comes to her identity negatively prompt Julia to want to end the life others want her to live. Slitting her wrists also allows Julia to shift the power of who is in control of her life back to herself and enables her to make her own decisions, however dangerous. Julia's failed attempt at suicide causes her struggles with mental health to be acknowledged, and a way to help her cope with her problems is created as she starts her process towards healing. Similar to other types of journey narratives, a return to Julia's immigrant roots is needed for her to start healing and be able to create an identity for herself. Gloria Anzaldúa's borderlands theory proposes "the

US-Mexico borderlands as both a literal space of occupation and confrontation and a metaphorical site of rupture, identity-crossing, and of course literal and figurative border crossing” (6). Anzaldua’s idea of the border serving as a space that begins and ends parts of our lives and identities makes Julia’s journey to Mexico the ideal healing spot for Julia as she comes to terms with her place in society and begins her path of acceptance of herself and others. Julia, therefore, is finally able to start creating a safe space to exist between both of her worlds.

Julia’s happiness with the space she exists in is seen through her enjoyment of her new surroundings in Mexico and her positive attitude towards her family events. Contrasted against the parties she hated in Chicago, Julia’s joy of being in Mexico is evidenced by her appreciation of the music and parties she attends. When at a party, Julia points out that the

music is tinny and crackly—partly because of the cheap sound system—but I still like it.

The accordions are ridiculously joyful, even when the songs are about death. Tía Fermina and tío Raul dance cheek to cheek. Belén dances with Mamá Jacinta’s lanky next-door neighbor. I watch everyone’s jumpy little dances as the sun bakes me into a cocoon of laziness. (Sánchez 260-61)

The description of this party is a sharp contrast to the quinceñera Julia had back in Chicago where she hated being and commented negatively on her family members. Here in Mexico, she enjoys hearing the music no matter how bad it sounds and loves seeing her family members dancing. Her change in attitude points to the healing process Julia is going through as she can now find enjoyment in small things like listening to crackly music. An important detail, too, is that the music, in this scene, is joyful even when it is about death; so here, death is not as debilitating as it is in Chicago. Death is seen in a more positive light through songs and that, in a way, saves people from depression, something that could have benefited the Reyes as they coped with Olga’s death. The words used to describe the party are also more playful and positive. Back in Chicago, Julia would often describe things in a negative way like the clothing her aunt would wear that was too tight for her body. Here, though, words and phrases like “joyful,” “cheek-to-cheek,” “jumpy

little dances,” and “cocoon of laziness” are happier and delightful. The shift in the words that Julia uses to describe people and her surroundings are a sign that she is feeling better and is starting to have a healthy way of seeing the world. The change in her cynical and critical attitude towards aspects of her culture like music and dancing prove that Julia is finding a place for herself in her Mexican identity.

Similar to the details that hinted at the causes of Julia’s struggle with mental health, Sánchez includes small details that point towards Julia finally starting to heal and feel like she will eventually belong somewhere. Through her details, Sánchez presents “Mexico as a land of promise” by having Julia enjoy her time in her parents’ hometown and finally achieve the calm and answers she wanted while in the United States (Socolovsky 398). Julia is in her tía’s backyard when she notices “[t]he white and yellow roses planted in old buckets are thriving despite the drought, because tía Fermina cares for them as if they were children. Their persistence makes [Julia] feel hopeful” (Sánchez 269). The flowers here can be taken to be Julia and her family, with a more important connection to Julia. The flowers are still alive and beautiful despite what the land is going through and possibly foreshadow that Julia and her family are going to be fine. While the family went through their own drought coping with Olga’s death and dealing with their own issues of mental health, the Reyes, like the flowers, will be alright in the end. Something as life threatening as a drought can be compared to Julia’s failed suicide attempt, so like the rose, Julia will be cared for and prosper in the future. This quotation also provides one of the few instances of hopefulness in the novel hinting at Julia’s healing and changing views on life. Being a novel that centers around a teenager’s struggle with suicide, anxiety, and depression, there is a gloomy tone and dark outlook to life for most of Julia’s story; however, while in Mexico, she starts feeling hopeful again, bringing her to a state of peace and happiness that she did not have while in the United States. Julia continues her healing in Mexico and reflects on her struggles with suicide. In doing so, Julia is able to find herself and start her life as her own person.

Paralleling Apá's storyline of healing not being complete by the end of the novel, Sánchez creates a realistic narrative of the constant work towards positive mental health and identity through Julia still working on herself at the end of the novel. Julia reinforces how Farah Jasmin Griffin defines healing as "never permanent: it requires constant attention and effort. I am using the term healing to suggest the way in which the body, literally and discursively scarred, ripped, and mutilated, has to learn to love itself, to function in the world with other bodies" (524). In Julia's continued efforts to better her mental health, she realizes the journey she has gone through in struggling with depression and anxiety, comes to terms with her suicide attempt, and recognizes the positive strides she has made towards her own healing. Julia has also found a comfortable place for herself in both her Chicana and American societies. She recognizes how she is different from others, but at the same time, she takes full advantage and takes pride in her immigrant identity. Julia's background as an immigrant causes her to live out her own dreams and make her parents' struggles of coming to the United States being worth the journey they went through at the border. The traumas and experiences of the Reyes family give Julia a reason to follow her own dream of a college education.

Once back in the United States, Julia embraces her newly found identity of both a person of Mexican descent and a new American. Julia starts showing empathy towards her parents and is more considerate of their experiences as immigrants, thus, starting to heal her relationship with her parents. She recognizes how her parents' past have shaped them and influenced her and Olga's homelife. However, while accepting of her parents' different views, Julia takes Amá and Apá's immigrant dream for a better life and makes it her own. She is able to claim agency over her own life while still respecting and having a good relationship with her parents. In a way, an intergenerational dream for a better life is passed on to Julia, and Amá and Apá are successful in achieving a better life through their daughter. Julia recognizes the transfer of her parents' dream by stating that

[i]n some ways, I think that part of what I'm trying to accomplish—whether Amá really understands it or not—is to live for her, Apá, and Olga. It's not that I'm living life *for* them exactly, but I have so many choices they've never had, and I feel like I can do so much with what I've been given. What a waste their journey would be if I just settled for a dull, mediocre life. Maybe one day they'll realize that (Sánchez 339, emphasis in original)

Julia becomes aware that part of her new meaning in life is to make use of the opportunities her parents gave her when they crossed the border. Amá and Apá faced border violence when they initially crossed over to the United States and continue to risk deportation to keep providing for their family. While their family looks different than they imagined, the Reyes have managed to continue living for each other and lead their own meaningful lives. Julia's "expression of agency" in the quotation above "is a powerful vocalization of self in relationship to one's family and community. A return to the earlier rejection of familia" happens as the family starts healing their trauma wounds and comes back together (Santos 55). Julia, Amá, and Apá are able to accept the death of Olga and the distinct roles each surviving member of the family has to achieve a fulfilling life on their own terms.

Sánchez creates a powerful and touching depiction of the immigrant experience through her characters in *I Am Not Your Perfect Mexican Daughter*. While telling the story of teenager, Julia, she highlights the importance of mental health in the Chicana community and the continuing process of healing. Realistic portrayals of familial and societal expectations on gender roles show the harmful effects these ideas can have on immigrant families. However, Sánchez's careful presentation of a lost identity and hidden and intergenerational trauma creates a sense of empathy in readers to understand and support each other. Most importantly, though, Sánchez reminds readers to acknowledge mental health issues, even when invisible, and encourages readers to reach out if they need help.

CHAPTER III

MEANING MAKING AND SOUND MANIPULATION IN GERTRUDE STEIN'S "IF I TOLD HIM, A COMPLETED PORTRAIT OF PICASSO"

Gertrude Stein's work has often been seen as confusing and hard to understand. This is understandable if one only reads silently to oneself, but when read aloud, Stein's work proves to be comprehensible and clear. Much of the aural factor of listening to Stein's work has become readily available through advancements in technology that let us capture sound as it was intended to be heard. Due to this, Stein's work can now be enjoyed being read by others or by Stein herself. Having the ability to listen to Stein read her own work allows us to hear her work as she meant for it to be understood since the phonetic literacy of her piece can be heard in elements such as intonation, pitch, and individual phonemes. Given this, her clauses do not seem to run together as they do on paper, but instead, each is given its own meaning and importance. For this project, I will trace how the phonetic literacy in Gertrude Stein's "If I Told Him, A Completed Portrait of Picasso" changes due to new sound mediums such as recordings being available in order to find differences between the lexical and semantic meaning of words that may influence how a reader interprets and understands her poem. To aid me in doing this, I will divide my paper into five sections: introduction to the work, genre, textual analysis, audio analysis, and the changes in meaning that occur between the differences in mediums.

I. Introduction to the work

One of Gertrude Stein's most famous friends was the artist, Pablo Picasso. The two were known to be close friends for some time when they were both in France which led to both of them creating a portrait of one another in their respective fields. "If I Told Him, A Completed Portrait of Picasso" is actually the second part of her literary portrait about the artist. "If I Told Him" was written after the two were not as close and is supposedly a response to a disagreement Stein had about Picasso exploring different art styles that were not as influential as cubism. Stein draws heavily on a comparison to Napoleon Bonaparte in this poem, and along with giving readers a glimpse of the Picasso she knew, Stein also suggests that history will teach Picasso that even great people fall.

Before Gertrude Stein was an influential author in the literary field, she studied psychology and was a medical student. Her background in these fields have prompted many to speculate if her stream of consciousness writing style pulled influence from those past interests. For "If I Told Him, A Completed Portrait of Picasso," however, some critics say that her interest in the sciences prompted a writing style that focused on exactitude:

[L]eading Steinians have been led to speak of "the intensely theoretical, 'scientific' approach to phenomena which characterizes all of her work," and the desire in her portraits "to come to know people, and to know them as a scientist," and how her "fabled obscurity" is in fact "an extreme form of literalism," a "function of what might be called her hyperrealism."¹

The extreme form of literalism that Robert Chodat points out in the paragraph above is due to the exact language and words Stein uses in her writing so that everything she mentions has a purpose and is always written in a continuous present. Writing in a way that favors both the continuous present and science as precise and exact has led critics like Chodat to claim that she takes part in

¹ Robert Chodat, "Sense, Science, and the Interpretations of Gertrude Stein," *Modernism/modernity* 12, no. 4 (2005): 587.

something that resembles poetic science. Poetic scientists aim to “show how ‘scientific description becomes poetic and poetic description scientific,’ and makes use ‘of the resources of poetic description in order to extend the domain of science.’”² While “If I Told Him” does not present itself as scientific in the sense that it is clear scientific law and repeatable, it does give insight into the human brain which connects to the branch of psychology. Literature works in a way that we can examine why humans do what we do and say what we say based on the experiences that surround us. It gives us a way to express ourselves in a private matter or share it with others in order to understand the complex emotions and thoughts that come with being human. These complex emotions can be seen in Stein’s poem as she often sounds repetitive and creates short phrases which make the reader question why she is doing that and what she means by it.

II. Genre

The poem, “If I Told Him, A Completed Portrait of Picasso” fits into the genre of literary portrait. Ulla Haselstein defines literary portraits as “text[s] with the objective of characterizing an actual person ha[ving] to compete with painting, and to emulate the individual life-likeiness of visual representation.”³ Through Stein’s use of prose in her poem, the cubist artist, Pablo Picasso, is describe in Stein’s literary portrait. Stein’s portrait of Picasso is influenced by a friendship that spawned while she spent time in France and revolves around the idea of telling the poet, Picasso, something. According to Haselstien, one of the key aspects of a literary portrait is that they have referential qualities to the person being described.⁴ A hint of the references towards Picasso is the comparison of him to Napoleon Bonaparte: “If I told him would he like it. Would he like it if I told him. Would he like it would / Napoleon would Napoleon would would he like it.”⁵ The “he”

² Steven Meyer quoted in Chodat, “Sense” 591

³Ulla Haselstein, “Gertrude Stein’s Portraits of Matisse and Picasso,” *New Literary History* 34, no. 4 (Autumn 2003): 724.

⁴Ibid

⁵ Gertude Stein, “If I Told Him, A Completed Portrait of Picasso,” *Poetry Foundation*, (2008).

and “him” being referenced in the lines are Picasso, and so, the speaker is wondering if Picasso would like being compared to Napoleon. While there is the wrongfully assumed notation of Napoleon being short, this idea links him to Picasso in that Picasso was also below the male height average. Napoleon and Picasso also shared similar characteristics in that they were ambitious to obtain their goals, and they were considered leaders in their fields. While Napoleon excelled in military leadership, Picasso was a leader in the arts, specifically the cubist movement, and was considered a pioneer of the early twentieth century. His work, varying from paintings to set designs, is highly regarded as influential and inventive of cubism and collages. Connecting Picasso to another major leader in a different field helps Stein achieve the referentiality that classifies her poem as a literary portrait. Interestingly, Stein writes in a way that draws from psychology and visual discourses that make her work resemble that of cubist artists.⁶ She plays with different types of perception, understanding, and knowing to create a representation of a person without directly describing his appearance.

While at first glance, “If I Told Him” can seem like it is a series of words that are repetitive and are hard to understand; it is these same qualities, though, that also provide referentiality to the poet, Picasso, and his technique of cubism. Cubist art is seen the same way as the poem, “If I Told Him.” Cubism is meant to be a type of art form that intellectually stimulates the viewer. There is no single focal point in the art, but instead, there is an array of shapes and lines that work together to create an intriguing image and in later years, collages, that challenge the viewers to find their own meaning in the work. In this same way, Stein’s poem challenges readers to find meaning in her work. Part of the challenge of reading Stein in general, but also a challenge to find meaning in her work, is that she writes, for the most part, in a paratactic style. Her series of short sentences create something that seems repetitive but have small changes in the way the sentence is said. These small changes create slight variations in meaning from the

⁶Haselstein, “Gertrude Stein’s,” 727

previous sentence. In the poem, the speaker says “The first exactly. / At first exactly. / First as exactly.”⁷ Stein is trying to say the same thing, but with each line, there is a slight variation of how she words sentences that creates miniscule changes in what she means. “The first exactly” is different from “At first exactly” because the latter is more specific to a time that is in the past and “[a]t” serves as a preposition, maybe even a comparison to something. The former is more definite in its wording that it is the current present by using the word “[t]he” and serving as a determiner. The last part, “First as exactly,” again shifts the phrase around and influences the meaning to be more about the exactitude of being like the first than something that may have to do more with time and place. These slight differences are scattered throughout the poem and resemble the same notion of cubist art as “composition[s] of which one corner [i]s as important as any other corner.”⁸ Similar to Picasso’s paintings in which the analysis of one part of the canvas is as important as the other, Stein’s work in one sentence is as important as another sentence in order to find meaning in her work which leads to stimulating the readers intellectually. Stein’s continues to challenge readers through the use of “monosyllabic words”⁹ in her poem. Most of the words in her poem are monosyllabic and peppered throughout to help create not only the short paratactic phrases but short phonemic sounds as well. Even the title, “If I Told Him,” is made up of monosyllabic words that help create choppy-like breaks in the text of the poem.

While Stein did draw influence from painted portraits, she creates her own take on the literary portrait genre by

[a]voiding description, condensation, and the “iconic” form of encompassing categorization, but also narrativization, empathy, and psychological theorizing, Stein’s early portraits present and evaluate certain habits or traits of the portrayed individuals and thus in spite of their ostentatious negativity continue to obey basic genre rules. Her later

⁷ Gertrude Stein, “If I Told Him.”

⁸ Gertrude Stein quoted in Linda Voris, “‘Shutters Shut and Open’: Making Sense of Gertrude Stein’s Second Portrait of Picasso,” *Studies in American Fiction* 39, no. 2 (Fall 2012): 189.

⁹ Ibid

portraits tend towards abstraction, but again genre conventions are cited in order to provide a conceptual frame for reading.¹⁰

Presenting her poem as a series of abstract thoughts, utterances, and questions leads Stein to avoid directly describing Picasso in her poem, but still adheres to the notion of mimetic idealism,¹¹ a main feature of literary portraits. In practicing this technique, Stein is able to still capture a portrait of Picasso but does so by describing him in a series of metaphors like her comparison of Picasso and Napoleon. Stein also mentions Picasso in her work through the manipulation of aural sounds in her poem. As Linda Voris points out in her article, “variations on the phrase ‘and so’ rhyme visually and aurally with Picasso.’ Indeed, spelling out ‘Picasso’ we see that much of the portrait derives from his name.”¹² Every time a word ends in the same /o/ sound as in the word so, it is reminiscent of the painter, and, therefore, he is continually present in the poem without being directly referred to with the exception of the title of the poem.

III. Textual Analysis

Gertrude Stein once said in an interview that “if you enjoy [a work] you understand it.”¹³ While her work is not the easiest to read due to the challenging way it is written, readers should still find enjoyment in her work that leads to some kind of understanding. As is true of modernist writers, painters, musicians, etc., people who are influenced by modernism, like Stein, write in a way that rejects and challenges previously conceived notions of what a book, poem, painting, melody, etc. should look like. Stein, as a major player in this movement, challenges the conventions of the genres she writes in and takes on a more experimental perspective in her work. Her poem, “If I Told Him, A Completed Portrait of Picasso,” embodies the experimental risks she took in describing an old friend in the form of a literary portrait. Stein starts off her poem by

¹⁰Halestein, “Gertrude Stein’s,” 727

¹¹ Ibid

¹² Voris, ““Shutters Shut and Open,”” 192.

¹³ Gertrude Stein quoted in Brain Reed, ““Now Not Now: Gertrude Stein Speaks,”” *English Studies in Canada* 33, no. 4 (December 2007): 105.

making statements out of what is typically understood to be questions: “If I told him would he like it. Would he like it if I told him.”¹⁴ Already, Stein is getting rid of basic grammatical rules that say that questions, which words like “would” are typically a marker of, should be punctuated with a question mark to show the interrogative meaning in the phrase. Instead, Stein writes her question in the form of a statement which she continues to do all throughout the poem. There are no question marks anywhere that readers would expect there to be, so her lines only hint that they are questions through words like “would,” “if,” and “who” which carry an interrogative connotation to them. While the poem centers around questioning if the speaker should tell the person she is talking about something, it seems rather ironic that there is nothing that demarcates the actual question phrases.

Readers of literature are often taught that they should read to the punctuation and take a pause there so as to not interrupt the flow of what the author is writing. However, with Stein’s poem, this idea is also disregarded. Not adding as much punctuation as is typical leads to long lines like “Would he like it would Napoleon would Napoleon would would he like it” that sound repetitive and long. There are no breaks for readers to mentally take pauses and interpret what Stein is saying. Even if they did though, her word choice and how she structures her phrases still create a challenge to break down and interpret. From the previous quotation, for example, the basic meaning that can be understood is something along the lines of the subject in question, in this case Picasso, liking being compared to Napoleon as a pioneer in his field. This of course, raises the questions of there being any possible negative qualities that may be related to Napoleon and if Picasso would still like being compared to him when those qualities are also taken into account.

¹⁴ Stein, “If I Told Him.”

Stein makes use of paratactic phrases in her work that lead to short words being present in the poem and short phrases. The use of these words and phrases often lead to examples of a continuous present in her poem:

Now.

Not now.

And now.

Now.

From the quotation above, the continuous present can be understood when the author writes “Now” and the reader reads the word “Now” that moment has already passed, so that moment is “not now” anymore since it is not in the present. There needs to be another “And now. / Now” interchange for the poem to continue to be in the present. Stein continues to keep readers in the continuous present throughout her poem by including lines like “[s]hutters shut and open and so do queens. Shutters shut and shutters and so shutters shut and / shutters and so and so shutters and so shutters shut and so shutters shut and shutters and so. And / so shutters shut and so and also.” Constantly using the phrase “shutters shut” creates a present moment of shutters shutting and opening and shutting again. This moment seems as though it is in constant motion of one shutter closing and another opening and more closing as if it were a line of shutters that are being closed one after another.

In addition to creating a continuous present in her poem, Stein also manages to have fun in her poem by being ironic. Readers often regard Stein’s work as repetitive and redundant, and in this portrait, she highlights exactly that by calling herself out on her repetitiveness: “Now actively repeat at all, now actively repeat at all, now actively repeat at all.” This line serves to show that Stein is aware of what she is doing and has a purpose for doing it. She even embraces this aspect of her writing and is able to proudly recognize it. Not only is Stein repeating herself in this line, but she is also repeating herself in other lines in the poem. Persistently repeating herself serves two purposes, though. The act of repetition constantly keeps the subject in question and what she

is writing about to always be mentioned throughout the poem. The reader always goes back to the beginning of the poem and other parts of it since everything is being brought up again. Like cubism, Stein shows that every word she writes is important in her work by interconnecting thoughts and phrases from the latter part of the poem to parts that are in the beginning. Second, her constant repetition shows the stream of consciousness aspect in her writing as well as touching on Stein's psychological roots. By constantly repeating herself, the speaker comes off as if she is saying everything as it comes into her brain. This gives readers a glimpse of what can be understood as the anxiety of contemplating asking an important question or not. The repetition of the words seems like the speaker is constantly thinking things over in her brain and repeating things that she thinks she must do. Similar to when someone paces around trying to resolve something, the continuous repetition shows the mental pacing going around in the speaker's head as she contemplates telling Picasso what she thinks.

Like her use of irony, Stein also brings a more lighthearted tone to the poem by showing readers her amusement in writing it. In the middle of the poem, the speaker seems to be pointing out male leaders by the pronoun "he," but in doing so, the speaker also creates a continuous stream of "he he"s that come off as laughter: "He he he he and he and he and and he and he and he and and as and as he and as he and he." While Stein is referencing Picasso, Napoleon, and possibly other men, the way she chooses to write the hes as sequences of each other creates a mocking effect in her poem. It is as if she is laughing while writing this poem and is possibly chuckling of how highly these men that are considered leaders think of themselves. She may be, through her experimental and carefully placed words, trying to poke fun at the idea of men being great leaders while not seeing how infantile they can act sometimes by thinking that they are superior to everyone who surrounds them. It is also worth noting, that Stein's friendship with Picasso allows her to be jokingly playful in the literary portrait she writes of him since there is a certain confidentiality that has stemmed from that bond. The time they spent together in Paris has

allowed them to get to know each other well enough that they feel like they can gently mock each other while still wanting the best for one another.

Stein then takes a clearer approach to her poem by directly saying that Picasso needs to learn from history if he does not want to be forgotten when he is not the best in his field anymore.

The poem also ends saying,

Play fairly.

Play fairly well.

A well.

As well.

As or as presently.

Let me recite what history teaches. History teaches.

This quotation serves as the speaker giving a warning to Picasso that he needs to be careful. The speaker is telling the artist that he must play fairly and not let his ego consume him because one needs to only look at history to see that everyone's reign must eventually end. She tells Picasso that if he looks at history, he will be able to see that all great leaders, such as Napoleon, were eventually defeated. If he is not careful of his actions and what he does in his field, he will also fall like the past leaders history teaches about. This quotation also serves to show how Stein's poem resembles the abstract technique that many cubists used in their work. Stein has huge blocks of poetry in her work, "If I Told Him," that are made up of one word or short phrases. Juxtaposing longer sections of poetry with longer blocks gives a visually more abstract look to her poem which mimics the work of others in the period she is writing in and of the subject in question's, Picasso, work. While Stein tends to write in a style that is repetitive in all of her work, here and in other aspects of her poem, that same style helps her succeed in imitating a cubist technique. Similar to Picasso's art style, Stein produces a literary portrait of the painter in a cubist style that seems fitting for who it is meant to represent.

IV. Audio Analysis

On paper, Stein's poem, "If I Told Him," is read in a way that is different from Gertrude Stein's recording—perhaps due to the idea that modernism values readers creating their own meaning from a text. While there is some punctuation that provides instances for readers to take a break, the poem is still missing the aural factor that is experienced when the author reads her own work. Gertrude Stein's "use of auralty as a device to convey sensory experience of word-sounds occurs throughout Stein's literary and performance works."¹⁵ In the 1934-35 winter audio recording of "If I Told Him, A Completed Portrait of Picasso,"¹⁶ Stein reads her own work and plays around with pauses, tone, intonation, emphasis, speed, and other things to deliver her own interpretation of how her work should be performed.

The recording of the actual text starts around the 0:08 mark, and instantly you can hear breaks where the author intended there to be breaks. Not only is she pausing where the punctuation is but also where you would expect there to be punctuation. For example, once the line "Would he like it would Napoleon would Napoleon would would he like it" is read aloud by Stein, she adds short pauses before the auxiliary verb "would" which therefore breaks apart one long line into a line with multiple more noticeable phrases. From what Stein recites, the line reads more like "Would he like it, would Napoleon, would Napoleon, would, would he like it," which is more fragmented and reads more naturally than the how it is written on the page. Stein continues to punctuate the text with her voice throughout the poem but especially the next few lines.

At the 1:06 timestamp, Stein interrupts her long phrase as she did with the previous example, however, this time, she uses her emphasis on the word "the" to show the beginning of a new sentence: "Exact resemble to exact resemblance [*the*] exact resemblance as exact

¹⁵ Johanna Frank, "Resonating Bodies and the Poetics of Auralty; Or, Gertrude Stein's Theatre," *Modern Drama* 51, no. 4 (Winter 2008): 505.

¹⁶ Gertrude Stein, "If I Told Him, A Completed Portrait of Picasso," recording from *Poetry Foundation* (2013).

resemblance.” Emphasizing “the” in the line above, parses the sentences making it more understandable as well as emphasizing how exact the resemblance she is talking about is. It seems as if by emphasizing that resemblance, then that resemblance is the closest resemblance to the original. Since she is comparing Picasso to Napoleon, it seems as if that added emphasis means that Picasso is the number one person who resembles Napoleon the most. The example above, also contains one of the discrepancies between the text and the audio. While reciting the last part of the quote above, “the exact resemblance as exact resemblance,” Stein adds a few extra words towards the end. The line then reads, “the exact resemblance as exact [as a] resemblance” which makes the comparison between Picasso and Napoleon even more apparent by noting how much Picasso is a resemblance of his predecessor.

There are a few other instances where Stein adds words in the audio recording that are not in the original print version of her poem. When the audio reaches the 2:54 timestamp, Stein reads the line “As proportions as presently. / Farther and whether. / Was there was there was there what was there was there what was there.” However, in her performance, Stein adds another phrase after “[a]s proportions as presently” and adds and deletes words in the long phrase of the example above. Stein recites something after “[a]s proportions as presently” that can be understood as “Farther and farther was the king” along with some indistinguishable words after that before picking up with the next phrase written in the text, “Farther and whether.” While the last part of the poem Stein adds during her performance cannot be clearly understood, what is distinguishable adds to the comparison of Picasso and Napoleon being the best in their field during the time they were alive. Stein also adds the word “what” and deletes the words “what,” “was,” and “there,” so that the last full sentence of the previous example reads more like “Was there was there [what] was there ... was there [what] was there ... was there ... there was there.” Including extra words and deleting words does not change much in what the author means in this phrase, but it does prove that writers have the ability to improvise while they read their poetry aloud.

While there are clauses in the poem that hint at questions, there are no question marks to indicate that these clauses are questions. The line “Who came first Napoleon at first. Who came first Napoleon the first. Who came first, / Napoleon first” dabbles with the possibility of being a question with words like “who” serving as interrogative pronouns. However, as stated before, there are no question marks in the text to formally indicate that these are questions. In the audio, though, Stein uses her voice as an instrument to create a question and response dialogue in her poem. At the 1:50 mark, Stein uses inflection and tone to make more sense of her writing. From what she says in the recording, the line is read more like “Who came first[?] Napoleon at first. Who came first[?] Napoleon the first. Who came first[?] Napoleon first.” Stein varies her intonation in the phrase, specifically with the word “who,” which hints at it being an interrogative clause, but she also takes a small break after asking her question. She then continues to vary her intonation to a more affirmative tone that makes her response seem like an assertive statement answering her question.

Similar to her use of tone in the previous example, Stein also uses tone to set the mood of her poem. Stein’s repetition of the word “he” comes across rather boring in her audio rendition. Around minute 2:21, Stein starts reading the line “He he he he and he and he and and he ... and and he and he.” Stein has a lethargic tone when she reads these words as if she is tired of the male species and all that history credits to them for being great leaders. She creates a mood that is rather negative and comes off as if she is reading a long list of male accomplishments. Her voice seems a little annoyed as she is telling Picasso that he is either one of the many men that is in his field or one of the many men that were once great leaders but were eventually defeated. This is a stark contrast to the jovial and giggly mood that can be interpreted when the poem is only being read from the page. Reading from the page visually allows the reader to see the hes as a series of laughs, but when listened to, the hes lose that comedic effect for a more mundane interpretation of what is written on the page.

In the audio of the poem, many individual sounds are either run together or emphasized to set them apart. Once again, Stein makes use of the manipulation of vocal sounds to bring out the parts of the poem she thinks should be heard more. Timestamp 1:57 aligns with the line “Exactly do they do. First exactly. Exactly do they do” in which Stein runs together the sounds of the words “do they do” to sound more like one word that blurs into the background of the main word “Exactly.” Blurring the enunciation of the last three words of the sentence tunes the listeners’ ears to hear the word “Exactly” more which can help shed light on her point of Picasso having the same qualities and tendencies as other past leaders. In an opposite way, though, Stein is emphasizing the /æz/ sounds of the words “has” and “as.” The emphasized phonemes of these words can be clearly heard at the 2:47 mark. The stress that she adds on these sounds seems to drive the comparison she is trying to make between Picasso and other influential leaders even more as she continues to use the sound /æz/ in the words she chooses. Interestingly though, by placing emphasis on the /æz/ sound and then holding back on the rest, she creates a pull and release type movement with her voice that seems reminiscent of the pulling and releasing of a chain chugging along on the railroad. The sounds she makes describe the words she is saying as she mentions trains in the lines “Has trains. / Has trains. / As trains.” Giving more priority to the sounds of the phrases and words she uses is a quintessential trait in Stein’s work as she delves into sensory experience by “mak[ing] the sound of a word correspond with the visuality of the object” she mentions, and, in this case, she makes readers and listeners picture a train as she mentions and vocally mimics a train.¹⁷

As previously mentioned, there are instances in the poem that compare the subject in question, Picasso, to Napoleon. These instances serve as Stein warning Picasso to be careful since he may not always be at the top of his discipline and could be defeated like Napoleon. The speaker states,

¹⁷ Frank, “Resonating Bodies,” 506

I judge judge.

As a resemblance to him.

Who comes first. Napoleon the first.

Who comes too coming coming too, who goes there, as they go they share, who shares all, all is as all as as yet or as yet.¹⁸

This quotation serves to show that the speaker judges how much Picasso resembles Napoleon and maybe hints at a possible ego issue of both men believing they are superior to others. Stein achieves showing the listener that she judges people who judge through her higher pitch in her recording. Her pitch is slightly higher than the previous line which can make listeners envision that she is pompously declaring that she judges people who think too highly of themselves. The speaker depicts an image of Picasso and Napoleon walking by and sharing things. These things can be taken to be similar characteristics and personality traits that could be due to their massive achievements. Both men are highly regarded as important and influential figures. However, the speaker also states, “Who comes too coming coming too” which echoes sounds that seem to resemble the word Waterloo, where Napoleon was famously defeated and led to the end of his empire. The reference to the battle in which Napoleon famously lost serves as a warning to Picasso that even great leaders have to fall eventually.

V. Changes in Meaning

The advancement of sound technology helps us capture and restore recordings of events, people, movements, and art. In the case of Gertrude Stein, the preservation of her 1934-35 winter recording in New York allows readers to listen to a complicated text and see how it is supposed to be read. As David Toop states, “the voice [is] a prime site for the redefinition of the body in relation to the machine age” in which the voice has the potential of a “transformative

¹⁸ Stein, “If I Told Him” recording

instrument.”¹⁹ Stein uses her voice in a way that affects the poem when it is read aloud. The way Stein reads her poem adds emphasis, intonation, tone, and improvisation to the original text version of it. These techniques are more audible due to the studio idealism that is achieved by sharpening the speaker’s voice, in this case, Gertrude Stein.²⁰ Studio idealism allows sound engineers to shape the recording in the way they want to. In the case of Stein’s recording, there is no realistic noise present in the recording studio. Apart from her voice, the only other sound that can be heard is the static in the background of the recording. Using only her voice as an instrument to add meaning proves Louis Cabri’s point that “a temporal sequence of recorded utterances shows more differences from itself than as word forms in print” because certain parts of the poem are brought out more.²¹ As mentioned above, one of the most complex lines in the poem, “If I told him would he like it. Would he like it if I told him. Would he like it would / Napoleon would Napoleon would would he like it,” suddenly makes much more sense when read aloud because the intonation and use of breath as a starting and stopping point helps Stein punctuate her poem in her recording so that a dialogue forms throughout.²² It is no longer a series of words that seem to repeat themselves, but a conversation that the speaker has with herself that listeners get to be a part of when they hear the recording.

The command Stein has over her voice also serves to set a mood for her poem. As pointed out previously, the series of “he he he he” lines lose the comedic effect that one might interpret from the print version of the text. Instead, Stein provides a dull rendition of this line in her poem by reading it in a sluggish tone. Therefore, this changes the semantic meaning of

¹⁹ David Toop, “Sound Body: The Ghost of a Program,” *Leonardo Music Journal* 15, no. 1 (January 2005): 29.

²⁰ Sarry Parry, “The Inaudibility of ‘Good’ Sound Editing: The case of Caedmon Records,” *Performance Research* 7, no. 1 (2002): 25.

²¹ Louis Cabri, “On Discreteness: Event and Sound in Poetry,” *ESC: English Studies in Canada* 33, no. 4 (December 2007): 2.

²² Stein, “If I Told Him.”

laughter achieve through the “he he” and goes back to the lexical meaning of “he” as a person of the male sex. The tone of the poem is also affected when Stein reads the lines

Now.

Not Now.

And Now.

Now.

There is a lower pitch when she reads the lines at timestamp 0:35. The lower pitch helps her achieve a more assertive and aggressive tone that makes her voice sound more like a man’s. In doing so, she is challenging the gender roles present in the poem by losing the feminine quality in her voice to sound more like the people she is referencing, Napoleon and Picasso. This makes her better able to prove to a male audience that she is capable of being confident and self-assertive in asking questions, judging, and warning the subject of her poem.

As is true of Stein’s writing style, there is a lot of repetition in her poem. The use of audio further fortifies her use of repetition while also manipulating the use of heteromorphological and homomorphological use of her words.²³ Scott Pound states that heteromorphological is “the difference between one signifier and all the rest” while homomorphological has to do with “the difference between different soundings of the same signifiers” that can be affected by things like intonation.²⁴ Looking solely at the text of Stein’s poem leads one to see the repetition in the lines “Exact resemblance to exact resemblance the exact resemblance as exact resemblance, exactly / as resembling, exactly resembling, exactly in resemblance exactly and resemblance. For this is so. / Because.”²⁵ The words “exact resemblance” are the signifiers in this phrase. While Stein uses the same words, the homomorphological meaning of the “exact resemblance” changes when she raises the intonation

²³ Scott Pound, “The Difference Sound Makes: Gertrude Stein and the Poetics of Intonation,” *English Studies in Canada* 33, no. 4 (December 2007): 33.

²⁴ Ibid

²⁵ Stein, “If I Told Him.”

of certain words in the phrase for emphasis. At 1:06, Stein stresses determiner words like “the” and “a” which affect how “exact resemblance” is treated. While the difference is small, she gives more significance to certain phrases that lead to pointing out how superior and unique this particular “exact resemblance,” in this case Picasso, is to the original, Napoleon. When she says “[*the*] exact resemblance” and “as exact [as a] resemblance” she is making these two phrases stand out as the highest-ranking level of resemblance that can be achieved and further pushes the comparison of a resemblance to the original. The way that Stein manipulates her voice is a further indication of what Gustavus Stadler hints at in his essay when he suggests that the way we say things is more important than the words we are saying.²⁶ Including emphasis and extra words allows Stein to further differentiate between phrases of the same words.

Stein further pushes the homomorphological difference between one set of signifiers and the next in her last line. She plays around in the text with the structure of the line, and then in the aural rendition she strengthens this difference in structure by taking a small pause before repeating her line. The time stamp of the last line starts at 3:35 as she says, “Let me recite what history teaches. History teaches.”²⁷ The grammatical structure of the first sentence treats “history teaches” as the object of the sentence. Then in the next phrase, “History teaches” flips its place from the object in the previous sentence to the subject and verb of the current sentence. Doing this allows Stein to play around with word structures so that she can announce a statement of what she is going to do and then use the same words as a response. She is changing the meaning of words and how they work in a sentence by simply swapping the roles the words’ play in a sentence so that the object that is being acted upon is now the thing doing the acting.

As Linda Voris stated in her essay, Picasso is always present in the poem without being referred to directly.²⁸ When the poem is read aloud, sounds like /o/ are peppered throughout the

²⁶ Gustavus Stradler, “‘My Wife’: The Tape Recorder and Warhol’s Queer Ways of Listening,” *Criticism* 56, no. 3 (2014): 425.

²⁷ Stein, “If I Told Him,” recording.

²⁸ Voris, “‘Shutters Shut and Open,’” 192.

lines and can clearly be heard. Picasso ends in the same /o/ sound, so the aural factor of reading the poem aloud constantly reminds readers that the poem is a portrait of Picasso. It is as if the poem is a collage of Picasso's name. The most prominent line in which the /o/ sound can be heard is at 0:49: "Shutters shut and open so do queens. Shutters shut and shutters and so shutters shut and / shutters and so and so shutters and so shutters shut and so shutters shut and shutters and so. And / so shutters shut and so and also. And also and so and so and also."²⁹ Every time the word "so" is said, Stein is forcing readers and listeners to hear the last syllable of Picasso's name. As a result, the meaning of the "so shutters shut" phrase is not the lexical meaning of shutters closing anymore, but instead the concept of who the painter, Picasso, is by recreating the sounds of his name through the words used.

VI. Conclusion

While Stein's work poses a challenge for those who first encounter it only through print, the inclusion of an audio recording helps ease the difficulty of understanding what she means. The words Stein uses "in written form ... [may] seem bizarre and difficult to follow, but when she herself reads them aloud it is all perfectly lucid, natural, and exact."³⁰ When Stein adds intonation, tone, emphasis, and other vocal elements to her performance, she is making it easier for listeners to follow what is going on in the text. Where the punctuation is missing in the physical text, Stein uses her voice to add it. She manipulates words and clauses in order to create differences in meaning between the words and clauses that are the same and gives her work a sense of organization. She also plays around with the sounds of her text so that listeners and readers can see that she has put thought into the words she carefully chooses so that an overall meaning and purpose can be found in her work. In the case of "If I Told Him, A Completed Portrait of Picasso," Stein uses her voice as a tool to create a dialogue within her poem that serves to showcase Picasso as an excellent member of his field but also warn him that even great leaders

²⁹ Stein, "If I Told Him," recording.

³⁰ Eric Sevareid quoted in Pound, "The Difference Sound Makes," 26

eventually face the end of their reign. Even when she does not clearly state who she is talking about, the phonetic elements she chooses in her work always make Picasso be present, so this portrait is a constant reminder of who Picasso is.

CHAPTER IV

GENDER PERFORMANCE AND MEMORY TRANSFER IN LEANNE HOWE'S *SHELL SHAKER*

In an interview with Kirstin L. Squint, Choctaw novelist, LeAnne Howe, stated that if “[y]ou want something done, go to the women ... [because] women run things in our communities” (220). Howe exemplifies this view in her work by defying traditional gender norms through her characters. Contrary to Euro-American views, indigenous literature, like Howe’s, tends to reflect its own culture and gives a bigger focus to women’s societal roles by often presenting them as leaders and avid participants of their communities. Thus, gender roles in indigenous communities are the opposite of what some groups may be used to. Even post-European contact, many Native American tribes in the United States and elsewhere still maintained the importance of the matriarchy in their communities and thrived from it. Such is the case in LeAnne Howe’s contemporary novel, *Shell Shaker*, which traces the lineage of eighteenth-century Choctaw woman, Shakbatina, to the late-twentieth century Billy family. Juxtaposing the two storylines from the past and the present allows Howe to create an array of strong female characters that help redefine traditional gender norms and show a shift in agency from what readers may be used to. Through the use of her compelling characters, like the Billy daughters, Susan Billy, and Shakbatina, LeAnne Howe demonstrates in *Shell Shaker* how women serve as pillars of their community whose power and dynamic relationships with others creates a space for diplomacy with other nations and passing along the memories and traditions of their

Choctaw roots; Howe unsettles Euro-American norms to simultaneously present women and memory as people who are independent of men and knowledge-keepers who can pass on their family history as a link to the past and continual present, a conceptualization of identity, and as a way of healing past familial trauma.

The novel opens with the narrative of Shakbatina detailing her own lineage to that of the first Shell Shaker in her Choctaw community: “Call me Shakbatina, a Shell Shaker. I am an *Inholahtha* woman, born into the tradition of our grandmother, the first Shell Shaker of our people. We are the peacemakers for the Choctaws” (1). Right away, it is clear that heritage is important to the character and that she boldly states who she is related to. While doing so, she also states her role and the role of her ancestors in her community as peacemakers. It is the role as a peacemaker that catalyzes Shakbatina’s offer to sacrifice herself to save both her daughter, Anoleta, from death, and her community from war. Offering herself as sacrifice without considering the physical and emotional pain she will endure allows Shakbatina to show her bravery and courage before everyone in her tribe. Her independence to take control of her life and do with it as she wants to save her daughter is a devotion to the love she has for Anoleta and the Choctaw people: “I fold my arms and again wait patiently for a relative to stand up and praise my strategies for saving Anoleta and averting war. They must declare my daughter’s innocence and vow to protect her. But they sit silent as owls” (6). The inaction of the men in Shakbatina’s tribe as she announces her suggestion of sacrificing herself proves that Choctaw women are capable of making decisions without men trying to change their minds. Women thoughts and actions are respected by members of the tribe.

Paralleling Shakbatina’s sacrifice for her daughter, Susan Billy, a contemporary descendant of Shakbatina, pleads guilty to murder to save her daughter, Auda. Susan’s storyline centers around protecting her daughter, family, and people by taking fault for the murder of Redford McAlester. Similar to Shakbatina, she shows her love to the people who surround her by offering herself as the guilty party and maintaining some peace in her community. Pledging

culpability buys her family enough time to solve the mystery behind Redford's murder and make sure that all the spirits that torment the family are finally laid to rest. Susan, however, has no initial intention of solving the family's past troubles and offers herself in her daughter's place altruistically. Similar to Shakbatina, while the men in Susan's family are uneasy about her decision, they respect it and do their best to help Susan leave jail soon.

The passivity of the Billy family Choctaw men, like Isaac, in their communities is further pushed when women are described as the head of the house for the Choctaws. As evidenced throughout the novel, there is a female-centric genealogy that is a symbol of pride for the Billy family and other members of the tribe. When Susan Billy has her daughters, she

never let[s them] use [her husband's] last name. Some thought it was because they were never officially married by a white preacher, but that wasn't the reason. His sister maintained it was against her culture. "We are Billys," she had said. "This is final." ...

Susan was following a very old tradition. In the old days, Choctaw children traced their kinship through their mother's family. Not their fathers. (61)

Opposite of what many Euro-American families may be used to, the female last name takes precedence in Choctaw communities, and it is the relationships to the female members that hold more history and power in their community. For this reason, women can be considered stronger, more independent, and natural-born leaders to the Choctaws.

In both the past and the present Choctaw women serve as ardent communicators for their tribes. In doing so, the novel "points out the positive relations the Choctaws had with their European allies ... and how these relations affect the present-day Choctaws" (Romero 14). Members of the eighteenth-century timeline mention that they often traded with the Europeans that came in. While Red Shoes may have had ill intentions in his relationships with the Europeans, most of the Choctaw tribe did not. The Choctaws would trade and welcome Europeans to their community. Of course, some were wary of the Europeans due to the dangers they brought along with them to the tribe like guns and smallpox, but the overall relationship

between the groups was amicable. People like Father Renoir, who represents the French, are even enamored by the Choctaw culture and their ways due to the friendliness and community he has been shown and deliberately chooses to leave behind his own culture to be part of the Native American one. He is willing to live with the fact that he may disappoint his father and his country if they find out the truth about why he is staying and why he wrote the fake documents to his country. He was leaving everything he was familiar with to be with a Choctaw woman. The twentieth century narrative alludes to the relationship between the Choctaws and the Irish. The kindness between the two groups stems from the charity and donation the Choctaws provided for the Irish during the potato famine the country went through. As mentioned previously, Kirstin L. Squint suggests that if “[y]ou want something done, go to the women ... [because] women run things in our communities;” therefore, it is not far-fetched to think that women facilitated the relationships with the Irish and encouraged their community to give back to those in need (220). Women are often stereotyped as being kind and family oriented, but relating to the Choctaws, this can be considered a positive stereotype since these qualities help build strong communities and relationships. Shakbatina and her daughters, for instance, helped create a sense of diplomacy between nations as they eased trade within communities and fostered friendships with people like Bienville. In the contemporary storyline, Auda also creates a stronger sense of community by putting together Redford McAlester’s campaigns. If not for her, the campaigns would have not been as successful, and the Choctaw tribe would have not been as united as they were during the time Redford was their tribal chief.

Similar to the communication skills the women present in the novel, characters like Shakbatina, Susan, and their daughters are portrayed as leaders who are also warriors in their communities. Shakbatina, as previously stated, shows her courage by her willingness to step in and sacrifice herself for her daughter: “Plunging my fingers in the paint, I mark my cheeks and spread the vermillion over my chin and down my neck the old-fashioned way Ilapintabi once stained his face. When I finish I whoop *tushka panya*, a warrior’s death cry” (Howe 15). The red

paint on Shakbatina's face is another sign that she is willing to die to save her daughter. This action is further enhanced by the death cry she gives. Like their mother, Anoleta and Haya step in to aid their community whenever there is conflict between tribes. When the Choctaws are fighting against the Chickasaws, Anoleta and Haya join other warriors and state,

Once enraged, women are the fiercest killers of all, cutting out beating hearts, skinning the heads of wounded enemies, leaving them to die slowly. The night marks time with the sounds of tearing flesh and screaming men. For an Indian woman at war, there is no tender mercy. ... [Anoleta's] hands find pleasure in their tasks. (187)

Choctaw women are able to shed their connection to being kind and caring people when they need to fight to protect those they care about. In doing so, they turn into strong warriors for their communities who are capable of submitting people to horrors even men would not consider doing. The shift in person allows them to show the range of their characters and how far they can go for those they love. It is also important to note, though, that Howe unsettles traditional views of love and kindness, since warfare can also be seen as kindness in that you are protecting the people you love from harm. In doing so, Howe redirects the stereotype of kindness being associated with feminine, and instead presents it as masculine. Paring violence as a form of kindness pushes back on traditional Euro-American views.

The idea of Choctaw women being warriors is still present in the 1990s narrative. Susan Billy shows a more contemporary take on what being a warrior is like by being a strong role model for her daughters even in moments where she is suffering:

Her mother is not the emotional type, as she's proven over the past few days ... Susan Billy has always been more like a military strategist. After she was told that her husband had suddenly died from a brain aneurysm ... she sat very quietly in the library looking at old photos of him. Later, she walked upstairs and screamed into a feather pillow. The next morning she buried the pillow and all but one photo of him in the backyard, took a job as a grocery clerk, and went on to raise Auda, her two sisters, and many other

Choctaw children ... For most of Auda's life, her mother had behaved like a soldier on duty. (118)

While Susan is not the typical warrior her past ancestors were since tribal grounds and affairs have changed in the present, her emotional strength and determination to raise her daughters and other children show that she is a contemporary version of a warrior who is fighting her own battles. Susan, through it all, provides herself as a stable person who people can rely on. The qualities she exhibits as a soldier contradict the idea of females as weak and emotional. As the quotation states, Susan does show her emotions when she grieves her husband, but then, immediately after, she shows that she knows what she has to do for her family, community, and herself. Being a stable and reliable person is another form of care work that allows Susan to exhibit the qualities of a soldier. In the same way that we see military soldiers care for others by liberating oppressed nations or helping vaccinate people, Susan is easing the pain of losing a father for her daughters and creates a sense that everything will be alright. She enables her daughters to not be as heavily affected with the death of their father by not letting herself breakdown or cause any additional worry for Auda, Adair, and Tema. This sense of care mimics the humanitarian side of being a soldier; one in which a sense of peace and safety is created.

Similar to other women in Native American novels, menstruation is important to Choctaw women. Their blood represents who they are as warriors in their tribe and is a symbol of pride they openly wear into battle:

When our enemies began killing our beloved men, it was the Choctaw women who whirled their tongues like hatchets and took up the fight that day. They pulled red water and fire from their menstruating bodies and smeared it across their chests. Even the seasoned English soldiers who carried muskets and powder horns dropped their weapons and ran back into the swamps. They couldn't fight bullet-proof blood. (44)

As evidenced by the quote above and contrary to the taboo that Euro-American society has towards menstrual blood, Choctaw women and other Native American groups see it as a source of

empowerment giving value to who menstruating people are as women and warriors. This blood, though not directly passed down like other memory artifacts, serves as a story that is passed down through the family. Additionally, there is a type of special force or sacred power tied to menstrual blood since women who wear it are said to be bulletproof. The inclusion of this story serves to further build on the importance of women in the Choctaw community as being held on a higher pedestal than men. Specifically here, they prove to be better warriors and have a certain invincibility to them that men do not have; these qualities are all tied to women's ability to menstruate and the menstrual blood they shed.

The roles of the female characters in *Shell Shaker* continue to show their independence of men and white society by having at the forefront successful women who work in male dominated fields such as politics and academia, Wall Street, and the entertainment industry. Looking at the Billy daughters, each is successful in her own career. Auda is a historian and assistant chief whose lectures and goals of recontextualizing history to present Choctaw and other Native American histories accurately causes "a significant shift from being positioned as objects of a colonial gaze to Indigenous agency through claiming subjective space to tell and control their own stories" (Vellino 152). Auda's work causes her criticism from others and many to disregard what she says, but she is still a powerful voice in her field. Providing her work and beliefs are crucial steps to get society to talk about, notice, and change the way history is written. The second Billy sister, Adair, is equally successful as her career as a stockbroker. She is considered to be one of the best brokers because of her ability to make her clients high amounts of profits and being able to predict how the stock market will change. Adair defies traditional gender norms and proves to be independent in the way she creates a successful career in a male-dominated field. She embodies a man in a woman's body when she dresses in men's clothes, smokes cigarettes, and makes her presence known in the way she comports herself, which further empowers her to be a strong presence in the room (Howe 42-43). The youngest Billy sister, Tema, like her older sisters, has also been able to find success as an actress. Tema's career as an actress has given her

a sense of independence knowing that she is making a living and supporting her son while doing something she enjoys. Additionally, she is the only sister to have a successful relationship with her husband throughout the whole book. These sisters create a sense of independence that is important in the novel to show how they do not rely on men to be successful and lead fulfilling lives. Their independence provides another example of the matriarchal society that is common for Choctaws in which traditional gender roles are dismissed, and women have more agency in their lives.

Howe structures her novel in a way that the few men who are present in the story act as compliments to the female characters. Their roles are small and secondary, and, thus, support Sylvia Veronica Morin's claim that "[w]oman is feared because her existence outside of the time and space make it difficult to impose patriarchy's paradigms" (36). This claim relates to the Choctaw society in *Shell Shaker* through the connections of the past and present. Shakbatina and her female lineage has continued to be led by strong females, and the matriarchy that was created centuries ago still continues and is respected. Due to the continuation of strong female leaders, there has never been a significant shift in power in which a male-led society is preferred by the people. While there may be powerful male figures like Redford McAlester, who was a chief for the tribe, his role is minuscule and limited since he is dead for almost the entirety of the book. The information readers get of him is through flashbacks, a space created between his and Auda's modern and past selves, and other people's opinion of him. Therefore, while he is the subject of the murder, he is not a character who is as important as the rest of the female ensemble. His past self, Red Shoes, was alive for most of the novel, but in a similar fashion, his character served as a catalyst for the plot and did not provide any positive leadership qualities like the female characters. His role in the tribe showcased him as ambitious, selfish, and a traitor whose own greed for power led to the death of his wives and the destruction of his own people.

Other male characters that present positive qualities like Isaac, Hoppy, Kio Chitto, and Nitakechi are shown as supportive of their sisters, mothers, and wives while also showing their

own emotions. When Isaac is with Dolores again, he mentions how he coped dealing with their forbidden love over the years and never forgot her: “I’ve cursed you, that much is true, but I’ve always sent along words of affection, sometimes when I was in the tub, sometimes on the road in my truck. Over the years I’ve kept you informed of what’s been happening to me. ... What we’ve missed Dolores” (Howe 168-69). Emotions such as the ones Isaac displays around Delores make the characters dismiss characteristics like independence and being apathetic which are stereotyped with males to being more sensitive and open with their feelings. In turn, this makes male characters take on roles that may be considered more feminine causing the traditional gender roles of many of the characters in this novel to swap. The men are portrayed as more emotional and support the female leaders in their community while the women are more independent and present stronger leadership qualities.

The roles of the women in the novel are further reinforced and built up by the inclusion of memory. Memory, as presented by Howe, is something that is transferable and passed down by the women of the family, creating a communal memory between an ancestor and her descendants. Thus, memory serves, through the women, as a way to create a historical, personal, and familial space. Harvey Markowitz et al. state that “the literary traditions of tribal societies create stories that are place and event centered: here something happened and a particular person was present” (35). Markowitz et al. previously quote Michael Dorris’ belief that oral tradition is “the cornerstone of every tribal society [...] the vehicle through which wisdom is passed from one generation to the next and by which sense is made of a confusing world. It is responsible in large part ... for the education, entertainment, and inspiration of the community” (35). Oral tradition and memory are interconnected in a way that by keeping traditions alive we are also keeping the people and things in those traditions alive through our memories. Remembering allows us to give people, things, and places a life beyond death and the physical world. These traditions and the memories they carry and create establish a set of stories that connect a community to each other and to the history of their ancestors and place.

Building a communal past based on shared memories and traditions in *Shell Shaker* is done by stories told from one generation to the next. As Sarah Eden Schiff claims, “memory automatically preserves narratives of a communal past but requires activation through the act of storytelling” and that characters “can only recover through an essential connection with [their] bloodline” (106-07). Storytelling is signaled as an important aspect of memory. In the novel, one of the key unifying elements in the Billy family is the story of how an ancient ancestor tied turtle shells to her feet and danced as way of asking the fire spirit, Miko Luak, to help protect her people from the dangerous enemy:

It was then our grandmother did an extraordinary thing. She built a fire and she strapped the empty shells of turtles around each ankle. She didn't sing aloud because she was afraid the children would hear sorrow in her voice, so she only moved her lips in silent prayers. For four days and nights she never stopped dancing around the fire. (Howe 2)

This story about the Billy family's ancient grandmother is passed down through the children as a way to remember the grandmother's sacrifice when her “ankles were swollen and bloody where the shells and leather twine had cut into them. The ground around the fire was red with her blood, but she still danced” (2). The story also serves as a reminder of the promise their grandmother made with a fire spirit to keep her community safe since she painstakingly danced for days as a way to show her sincerity to him. Keeping this story alive allows the memory of their ancestor and the promise she was given alive and keeps honoring her sacrifice. The memory of their grandmother gives her ever-lasting life, and the Billy family, as a result, always keeps the lesson of devoting their actions to the powerful force of nature and spirits in mind.

Objects like the turtle shells that are passed down through the family serve as physical objects that carry memories attached to them. The shells, as stated in the paragraph above, carry the memory of the Billy family's grandmother and her sacrifice. Brenda Vellino argues that memory objects “accrue agentic and metonymic force as witness to past atrocities” (162). This force, while not heavily emphasized, can be taken to be the power in which the turtle shells carry

meaning and hold the family's oral traditions together. The shells are carefully protected and passed along the female lineage of the Billy family as a symbol of strength and warrior qualities. In the process of being passed along, these shells have witnessed the "past atrocities" that have affected the Billy family. Starting with the ancient grandmother's bleeding and damaged ankles, the shells then see Shakbatina's death, Anoleta's death, Susan's mother grieving her stillborn children, Susan Billy unexpectedly losing her husband and having to raise a community on her own, and Auda's involvement in Redford McAlister's murder. The shells are an object that is continuously present in the lives of various people who have gone through horrific events since they are a family heirloom passed down through the daughters and serve as a symbol of remembering their ancestors and their hardships. Women, once again, prove to be important members of their family through passing the turtle shells that keep their oral traditions and memories alive.

Similar to the turtle shells, the black stone that traces back to Tuscalusa also serves as an object that carries memories attached to people and events. When the ancient grandmother was performing her ritual to ward off invaders, "Tuscalusa put a tiny black stone in [her] mouth and told her to swallow it. He said it represented his spirit" (Howe 3). This stone serves as another reminder of the Billy family's ancestor's sacrifice and the promise the fire spirit made to their ancient grandmother. This stone is also passed down through the generations of the Billy family. The contemporary character Isaac is the one who has possession of the stone throughout most of the present storyline. This stone has brought Isaac luck like when he had it in his hand when he asked Dolores for work. Later, when the two end their relationship, the stone is a symbol of their love, so Isaac gives it to Dolores: "The old woman was sitting in the rocking chair holding in her hand a tiny gray stone with holes in it, like a skull. Dolores would later learn from Isaac that the stone held the essence of two powerful Ancestors. It was as necessary to the old woman's comfort as a roaring fire" (147). While there is not of mention of the stone Dolores has at this moment is the same one Isaac carries, it can be implied that it is due to her past relationship with

Isaac, close ties with the Billy family, and the inclusion of essence of ancestors who are strongly implied to be ancient grandmother and Tuscalusa. The latter reason proves how history and memories are passed down through objects. The stone continues to be passed along throughout the family and goes back to Isaac who then leaves his good luck stone for Tema's son, Hoppy: "This should go to Hoppy: it holds the Billy family together" (168). The inclusion of this quote serves to further exemplify all the associations that are carried and transferred by an old stone that once belonged to their ancestors. This stone also proves that while it is passed down as an artifact of memory through the matriarchal line, it can still be in possession and kept in the family through male characters.

Similar to how women use their menstrual blood as a weapon during battles, Choctaw women provide their own bodies as a vessel that serves as a transference of memories for future members of their family. In serving as vessels, women create what Schiff calls a "communal past" that provides descendants with a means to "recover through an essential connection with [their] bloodline" (108). A communal past is created in communities through the oral stories, traditions, and other items passed down between tribes and families. As seen in *Shell Shaker*, it is usually the women who are telling stories of their family's past histories, share important artifacts, and, due to their roles as the head of the family, lead their families in continuing their traditions. These elements all work in creating a sense of community between tribal and family members. Along with that, all these aspects provide a way to continue sustaining the memories of their families' histories, promises made to certain families, myths, and lessons.

Along with stories, traditions, and artifacts creating a communal past that maintains memory, characters like Auda, who is a historian, serve to reconstruct history in a way that refutes what past colonial documents have said and instead highlights Native American histories as a way of decolonizing what Euro-American history books tell us. Rebecca Tillet would suggest that people like Auda "re-member the past, physically piercing together individual recollections to produce a more rounded and complete 'history' that recognizes all those who have been denied

and excluded” (29). Neglecting doing research and publishing lesser-known histories or histories that have been denied only provides people with half-truths and one-sided ways of history, ways that favor a colonial perspective. Having Auda be a historian who is able to apply the memories of her people to her work allows her to publish untold stories and a more accurate version of events. Strong women like her keep the memories of her people alive for future generations to come and does so in a way that her work can be published and presented, allowing more people to be able to hear Native American histories and be introduced to different versions of histories.

Passing along traditions and histories allows communities to not forget their roots. Constant remembrance of history based on the memories of the people who are part of it is what Tillet refers to as “anamnesia” (29). Tillet looks towards the *Collins English Dictionary* to define anamnesia as “a failure to forget or a refusal to forget” and states that it “deriv[es] from the Latin *monere*, anamnesis is thus etymologically both a ‘reminder’ and a ‘warning’” (29). The characters in Howe’s novel practice anamnesia by constantly keeping their Choctaw traditions and ancestors present in their lives. The act of continual remembrance by the Billy family and other members of their tribe serves as a refusal to forget their ancestors and as a way of respecting those who came before them. By not forgetting the stories of their ancestors, they are reminding themselves of things like the promises made to their family and how people must respect powerful beings like spirits. This, like Tillet suggests, also creates memory as a way of serving as a warning. In the novel, the Billy family’s communal memory serves as a warning in the voices, visions, and dreams the Billy daughters and other women receive. When Tema is performing in the theatre, she suddenly hears voices saying words in the Choctaw language. Hearing those voices leaves her in shock, and she freezes on stage. Eventually, the voices stop, but she confesses to her husband that “there was something ominous in the audience tonight. The voice said I was Red Shoes’ killer, or something like that. I’ve got to go home and find out what is wrong. When danger the passes I’ll join you in New York, or anywhere else you want” (Howe 35). At this moment, Tema is still unaware of her sister, Auda, being accused of murder, and her

mother confessing to it. It is the voices of her ancestors that serve as a warning that something is wrong, and she must go home. These warnings continue to be present throughout the novel through various female characters. Connections to the voices of their ancestors are strongly bonded to the people who hear them since people in the present constantly remember those who came before them. Once again, women in the novel prove to be vessels of memory that serves to remind and warn the family.

The transference of memory is further built on by memories serving as a cyclical continuous present in the novel. Howe presents her narrative as one based on “intergenerational time” that has a “cyclicity in which it makes sense to consider ourselves as living alongside future and past relatives simultaneously as we walk through life” (Kyle Powys Whyte quoted in Vellino 157). The Billy family represent exactly what the above quote mentions since they always look to their ancestors for help and a sense of safeness in their lives. Along with honoring their kinship, the parallels between the storylines going on in the past and the present create a more obvious connection between past and future relatives. The twentieth century characters are portrayed as reincarnations of the eighteenth century ones going through similar situations in their lives. Shakbatina storyline of stepping in as a sacrifice instead of her daughter Anoleta parallels Susan pleading guilty for a murder Auda is suspected of doing. Similarly, Anoleta’s storyline features a dangerous relationship with Red Shoes that was once fueled by love but then turned to betrayal as the past version of Auda’s storyline that involves her love with Red Shoes reincarnation, Redford, and the way he betrayed Auda and the community he led. Other storylines like Isaac and Delores’ of forbidden love also have parallel versions of them in the past. All these storylines show the cyclicity present in the memories and lives of the past and present Billy family members.

The Billy family’s ancestors continue to help present-day members throughout the present characters’ lives through moments in which they step in to give warnings, but also, to protect family members. The presence of the ancestors in the present characters’ lives further

builds on the how they are directly involved in the lives of their descendants. As Eric Gary Anderson points out,

Near the end of chapter 1, the narrator, a Shell Shaker named Shakbatina, is executed and keeps narrating anyways. Her involvement in the lives of her future relatives, along with the close parallels between 1738 and 1991, indicate that the family problems and tensions between the Choctaws and the Chickasaws in 1738 have not yet been resolved, but also give voice and meaning to networks and relations that traverse time and space and are more powerful than physical death. (282)

Shakbatina is one of the female characters who is constantly present in the lives of her descendants. She is a protecting mother to her family lineage and steps in when her family needs her. Shakbatina is able to split herself in two and is able to continue living through her spirit. When Carl Tonica is revealed to be a threat to Shakbatina's family, she makes herself present to him in the form of an old lady. She knows how greedy Tonica is, and so, she taunts him with the idea that she knows where Redford McAlester hid millions of dollars. To protect her family, she purposefully deceives Tonica into meeting her on the other side of the road. Shakbatina makes a semi-truck strike an unsuspecting Tonica leading to his death (Howe 142-43).

Another example of Shakbatina stepping in to help her family members and solve unresolved issues of the past is the answer to the mysterious murder that is the main plot of the novel. Redford is seen as greedy and consumed by the corruption of controlling casinos and the illegal embezzlement of money as Red Shoes was in his greed and need for European goods with disregard to the harm that it could cause his people. As a powerful matriarchal figure, Shakbatina proves that she will defend her family at all costs and end the issue that should have stopped with her generation. At the end of the novel, it is revealed that Auda is freed from her physical relationship to Redford when Shakbatina steps in to help her. Shakbatina narrates that her

story is an enormous undertaking. Hundreds of years in the making until past and present collide into a single moment. Auda did hold the gun in her hands, gently, as if it were

inlaid with jewels. It was then I slipped my hands in front of her hands, and together we struck a pose. The day was hers, all hers, but it was my day, too. (222)

Having Shakbatina be the one who does and controls the shooting frees Auda both of her relationship to Redford and from being declared guilty of the murder since her fingerprints were not on the gun. Shakbatina's spirit masked any evidence that could accuse Auda of murder and erased her memory from that moment. Regarding Auda's spiritual connection to Redford, that connection can only end and does end when Auda is able release herself from her feelings and connection to Redford's past and present self, and when she is able to fully realize how independent she is without him, resulting in her recognizing that she is now a new person. Thus, the remembrance of the Billys ancestors not only helps them keep their family traditions alive, but also keeps the spirits of their ancestors alive in a continuous present, allowing them to protect the current generation of their family.

Along with the women in the novel proving they are able to use memory in the form of objects to symbolize their family's history and forming a continual present through memory, the women in the novel use memory to also form a sense of communal indigenous identity. The identity that memory brings with it can be both positive and negative. In the case of Shakbatina, the memory of European contact is physically shown on her pocked skin. The constant memory of smallpox is permanently marked on her skin and causes her to have negative feelings towards herself. Shakbatina realizes that her once beautiful skin is now damaged by her time fighting smallpox and is something that others see about her:

A small boy bawls, and runs to me crying ... Someone has taken his toy boy. When I pick him up in my arms to hug him, he pulls back and looks inquisitively at the hole in my eyebrow and the scar rivulets on my cheek. I gaze back at him. I want him to remember what the *Inkilish okla* disease has done to me. (6)

These pockmarks are a way to identify both Shakbatina's personal struggle with smallpox but also her community having contact with European colonizers. Shakbatina identity is also heavily

affected by the marks since she knows she is not as beautiful as before and some people, like the small boy, look at her strangely. Her self-confidence and female identity are heavily damaged by the marks that she will not let her husband see her naked again, further carrying the trauma and memory of disease well past the period Shakbatina was actually ill.

On the other hand, memories can also serve as a way to positively identify individuals and communities. As mentioned previously, characters like Auda serve as a way to stop “viewing [others] through the lens of the colonizer” (Piep 353). Her push to recontextualize history with the stories of people who were ignored so that a more European idea of Manifest Destiny and saving people from savageness was promoted diminishes discriminatory attitudes by providing society with a clearer view of the identity and traditions of the civilizations that thrived even before European contact. Having Auda and her sisters reclaim their Native identity in *Shell Shaker* aligns with the argument that the “difficulty of regaining one’s voice, one’s subjectivity, after being reduced to silence [is] a “speech act of memory.” Agency enables the recovery of a subjugated people to a position of authority, at least with regards to history and identity” (Barnim 65). By taking control of their communal memories and using them in their careers, the Billy sisters are able to be successful individually and promote a precise version of Native American history and representation to various communities. Auda brings in stories of her people to her work as a historian. Adair transfers the trading skills of her ancestors into a successful career as a stock market broker. Tema personifies storytelling by working as an actor and creating stories for people to see and hear. Furthermore, the agency given to the women by recognizing their own identities as Choctaw women helps them come together as a family to solve Redford’s murder and put an unsolved family issue and evil spirit to rest.

The use of memory continues to prove that it is transferable by the notion of traumatic memory being passed down through a family’s descendants. Aspects of memory can be passed on through the “intergenerational transfer of traumatic memory” and phenomenon’s such as “‘postmemory,’ [sic] in which subsequent generations experience the memories (again, most

often traumatic) of their forebears as their own” (Dickinson 202-03). Post memory as a result of the traumatic experience of the Billy family’s ancestors is peppered throughout the novel. The most obvious example is Auda’s storyline paralleling Anoleta’s. However, other characters also experience aspects of post memory. Tema is the reincarnation of Haya, Anoleta’s younger sister. In the eighteenth century narrative, Haya ruins Anoleta’s plan of poisoning and killing Red Shoes by warning him about the food Anoleta plans on giving him. This action leads to Red Shoes surviving and causing war to break out between the Choctaw and Chickasaw tribes. As a result, Anoleta is still tormented by Red Shoes and many tribe members, and even her own family members, are murdered in a war supported by Red Shoes. Haya could have saved her sister the pain of losing loved ones and finally being able to rid herself of Red Shoes, but Haya’s decision to warn Red Shoes of her sister’s plan ruined the lives of many people. Since Tema can be taken to be Haya’s contemporary version, it makes sense that Tema feels guilty and as if she owes something to Auda, Anoleta’s reincarnation:

Tema can’t remember what day it is, or whether the Sun is coming up or going down. She’s been in a makeshift hospital room since they brought Auda home. She won’t leave Auda, somehow feels responsible for what happened. She’s always felt a debt to her sister, but can’t explain why. There have been times over the years when she would wake up believing she knew why. But like the color of running water, she can’t name it. In Tema’s dreams there is a road of fire, the glint of an ax. Immobility. Nothing. (Howe 209)

The above quotation is Tema’s post memory causing her to feel guilty for betraying her sister hundreds of years ago. She dreams of fire and axes because her past self traveled with Anoleta to throw Red Shoes into a fire and cut off his head. Now, in the present moment, she feels the need to protect Auda from danger while she is in a coma. These feelings are linked to the transfer of memories her female ancestors have passed on to her and the reincarnation of her former self both in the person she is and in her past self’s experiences in life. Memory, once again, uses the female

body to serve as a vessel to continue the life of past ancestors in the lives of the present descendants.

The female characters' memory in *Shell Shaker* continues to be a way of healing past familial trauma by using the story itself as a catalyst for a new movement of appreciation of Native American literature. LeAnne Howe provides a story to her readers that emphasizes strong female characters, rich Choctaw traditions, and prioritizes a retelling of history from the voices of the silenced. She successfully accomplishes creating a multigenerational story by pulling from her own memories, history, and stories passed down to her about her own culture. As Patrice Hollrah would suggest, one of the ways in which *Shell Shaker* heals past trauma is the relationship Howe introduces between herself, her ancestors, and the Choctaw nation "in which she brings these disparate elements together to create consensus ... She tells her story, not the colonizer's version of Choctaw history" and that, in itself, is empowering (79-80). Telling the story of her people and creating characters that tie in her rich Choctaw roots enable Howe to start the healing process of indigenous people by introducing their stories and cultures to Euro-American society. In doing so, she takes part in a movement to decolonize history like her character, Auda, and makes her culture and stories available outside of the Choctaw community. Howe's capacity to present both women as independent knowledge-keepers and their memory as vessels of transfer through her characters and herself constructs a compelling story that resonates with readers outside her Native community. The result of her actions is healed trauma as readers learn of a decolonized version of history.

Presenting women as true carriers of memory and history allows Howe to unsettle traditional Euro-American views on gender. This leads to Choctaw women being leaders in their tribes, communities, and careers, but also deconstruct history as told by Euro-Americans and rebuild it with the histories of those who have been ignored. Strong, independent women, like Howe and her characters, who serve as knowledge-keepers can then use their leadership and

memories to sustain a matriarchal society and retell histories of their community and ancestors as describe by their own people.

CHAPTER V

CONTEMPORARY DEPICTIONS OF LIFE'S STRUGGLES IN *I AM NOT YOUR PERFECT MEXICAN DAUGHTER*

The perfect Mexican daughter must know how to cook, clean, be polite and respectful, and, most of all, have and take care of her family. As a result of these types of views, women in literature are often seen as passive caretakers of the household and are confined to maintaining their husbands fed and children safe. As generations go on though, customs of some cultures affect others, leading to many young people drifting away from so-called *traditional* gender roles and opting for a more modern view of gender. These shifts in ideas can be seen in the novels we are currently reading. One of the great attributes of emerging contemporary Latinx literature is that it contains young protagonists whose “self-awareness and agency, despite marginalization by social and historical constructs, . . . offe[r] opportunities for the adolescents to critique the status quo” (Mathis and Vaughan 288). Such is the case for teenage Julia, the titular character in Erika L. Sánchez, *I Am Not Your Perfect Mexican Daughter*, whose defiant personality challenges her parents’ idea of the perfect Mexican daughter as she aspires to be something more than a submissive daughter and wife. Through Julia’s narrative, readers can see the contemporary issues of a Mexican American as she struggles with her family’s traditional views and her own modern views, the “American Dream,” and mental health, eventually leading her to heal herself by returning to her roots and accepting the help of those who surround her.

Sánchez's critique of gender and gender roles is beautifully done by her juxtaposition of conflicting views between Amá, a first-generation immigrant, and Julia, a second-generation immigrant. The mother-daughter duo's different views of what a woman should be are a source of tension throughout the novel that leads to both characters misunderstanding the other. Amá wants her daughter to be an obedient young girl who will eventually grow up and live a life devoted to her husband and children. She expects Julia to live a life like her deceased older sister, Olga, who Amá states "was always so comfortable here at home, spending time with her family. Bien agosto, mi niña" (Sánchez 90). However, Julia, a modern Mexican American, wants a different life that will not involve her spending time raising a family and claims she hates "the way [my mother] hovers over me and criticizes my every move. I'd rather live in the streets than be a submissive Mexican wife who spends all day cooking and cleaning" (13). These differing views set up a good base of Julia critiquing outdated gender roles. Julia's snide remarks even challenge Amá's previously stated quote by rightfully pointing out that Amá infantilizes her sister by calling her "mi niña," my little girl, even though Olga was twenty-two at the time of her death. While Amá calls her a little girl as a sweet and loving nickname, Julia's quip should be acknowledged because it shows how suppressed the family keeps women and how docile they are expected to be. Olga had a life of her own and her own job, yet she was still a pure and innocent girl in the eyes of her parents—the perfect Mexican daughter.

Julia, on the other hand, has always strived to be more than the tame housewife her parents want her to be. Despite always being compared to her sister, Julia still manages to be the exact opposite of who everyone thought Olga was. Julia challenges the idea of the compliant daughter by openly speaking her mind on issues she does not agree with. She, though, is not blind to the fact that her comments are non-traditional to those of her parents and acknowledges her trouble in not being able to hold herself back from making comments that question the established gender structure of her family:

Ever since I was a little kid, I've questioned everything, which drove both my parents insane. Even when I tried to be good, I couldn't. It's as if it were physically impossible for me, as if I were allergic to rules. Things just got worse and worse as I got older. Stuff that's sexist, for example, makes me crazy. Once, I ruined Thanksgiving by going on a rant about the women having to cook all day while the men just sat around, scratching their butts. Amá said I embarrassed her in front of the whole family, that I couldn't change the way things have always been. (21)

The above quotation serves to show Julia's defiance of rules. As she got older, she realized that women follow ancient predefined roles assigned to them by society, and she questioned such things as the idea of only women belonging in the kitchen. Some may argue that it makes sense for the men to take a break while at home since they spend the day working, however, scholars like Darlene C. DeFour and Tamara Mose Brown point out that immigrant women also took part in the labor force to help feed their families because "their partners' income could not support their family" (8). With that in mind, and remembering that Amá also works hard all day cleaning houses, it makes sense for Julia's modern views to cause her to question why women are still treated unequally to men when they work as hard or even harder than men.

Carrying the idea of women being expected to work at home all the time and keeping the place clean is the inclusion of the slang word "huevona" used as an insult (31). Amá expects her daughters to help her around the house, and since Julia does not like cooking or cleaning, she tries to put it off as long as she can. As a result, her mother often calls her huevona, a commonly used phrase in Hispanic households that refers to a man's testicles. Julia comments on this word saying she thinks it is "a weird thing to call a girl . . . [since] it means that your eggs (balls) are so big that they drag you down and make you lazy" (Sánchez 31). This word is supposed to be humorous, which it is, but at the same time, it is interesting to note the negative connotation associated with male testicles. This word seems to explain a man's genitalia is behind the reason they cannot help around the house. It comes off more as an insult to say that large and heavy

testicles are the reason for unproductiveness. With this comment, Sánchez is questioning gender roles by effectively pointing out that if the reason that men do not help around the house is because they work all day, then why is laziness also associated with men and blamed on their genitals?

Besides Amá being used to taking care of the cleanliness of her own house, she also transfers those skills to her job. As a way to help provide some income and sustain her family, Amá provides domestic work to rich neighborhoods, so she, like many other female immigrants, has found a way to use her domestic sphere skills for income. Sánchez also quickly points out how society has taught us that a woman's job is to clean in mentioning how Olga was always Amá's angelic and reliable helper (98). In cleaning the homes of others who differ from her in class, race, and background, Amá makes herself susceptible to being treated as a lesser human being even though domestic service is valid and honorable work. This treatment is seen in both the things she sees while cleaning and the way Dr. Scheinberg eyes her after she is done cleaning. On the occasion that Julia was helping her mother clean Dr. Scheinberg's house, she recounts seeing a "giant black turd" in the toilet she was supposed to clean. She was so astonished that she was expected to help with something as simple as flushing a toilet and then cleaning the toilet that she asks if there is a hidden camera somewhere. Amá, as if it does not even bother her, tells Julia to not be so "delicate! Flush it and clean it" . . . rolling her eyes, as if she sees this kind of biological warfare on a daily basis" (100). Julia's reaction to seeing feces in a toilet that someone knows other people are going to see is reasonable. Having an unflushed toilet meant for cleaning gives off the feeling that Dr. Scheinberg wants his workers to earn their money by doing gross jobs, therefore, treating people like the Reyes women as inferior.

Building off of Dr. Scheinberg's character, he also serves to show how men look at women from the people of color community and women in general. After Julia and Amá are done cleaning his house, Dr. Scheinberg comes to pay them and while doing so, it is strongly implied that he looks at Amá inappropriately: "I don't like the way her stares at Amá when he says

goodbye. There's something about him that makes me feel as if I'm smeared in an awful, warm goo. . . . I wonder . . . if other men look at her the way Dr. Scheinberg does" (103-04). Other than the professor belonging to a white and higher class than the Reyes family, he also represents men exoticizing women of color and harassing women who are simply doing their job. People like him are the reason why women are still treated like objects and women of color are degraded even more than white women.

The experience Julia has with her mom cleaning houses lets her prove to herself once again that she does not want a life like her mother's. Julia notices that much like how women are often overlooked in society and are practically invisible in some places, "domestic work is an 'invisible occupation,' because it occurs within private homes, because it is generally not recorded in census or survey data, and because the workers themselves are often forced to take an invisible, self-effacing stance while on the job" (Hondagneu-Sotelo 198). This invisibility, especially for someone with such an outgoing personality like Julia, leads her to think she would much rather like to work outside of the typical household atmosphere and be part of a more male-dominated world such as writing. Troy Potter and Elizabeth Parsons would suggest that by "[a]nnex[ing] from the maternal, [the character] can now move further into the/a patriarchal discourse," meaning that by Julia distancing herself from her mother's world and essentially that of the Hispanic woman, she has a better chance of making her dreams of being a writer a reality (125). In this way, Julia is breaking free of the traditional views of her family and taking steps to being her own person.

The myth of the "American Dream" is also referenced heavily in *I Am Not Your Perfect Mexican Daughter*. Like regular goals and plans, the American Dream is individualistic and changes based on where and what a person wants out of life. For the Reyes parents, most of the novel shows them as responsible adults who want to take care of their family by having stable jobs, going to church, and raising obedient children. In trying to have a shot at a better life and achieving their "dream," Amá and Apá had to cross the border. Doing so, left the couple much

more traumatized than they originally hoped. Tía Fermina recalls to Julia that yes, her parents did lose all their money while crossing the border, but her mother was also sexually abused by the coyote while her father was being held at gunpoint. As a result, Olga may have been conceived at that moment (Sánchez 274-75). Julia later learns that her father used to be the town artist and her mother was not the perfect daughter Julia always thought she was. It is highly possible to assume that Amá being raped while crossing the border and Apá not being about to stop the abusers led to them being shells of the people they once were. Huge parts of their personalities from when they are young are no longer present as adults. Apá hides his artistic abilities, is forced to get a financially stable job, and is a man of few words while Amá loses her rebellious nature and settles for a safer life. It is not so far-fetched to claim that Amá enforces obedience and traditional lifestyles in her daughters as a way to prevent something like rape happening to Olga and Julia as it did to her when she did not listen to her mother and left the safe space of home. This story reinforces the horrors people go through to get to the United States and proves how damaging it can be to cross the border. The trauma it left the Reyes parents makes Julia realize “how little [she] know[s] them” (275). Her modern-day life blinds her from seeing the reality of all her parents went through to be in the United States.

The idea of an unfulfilling and dangerous “American Dream” is further carried by references to American classics like F. Scott Fitzgerald’s, *The Great Gatsby*. When Julia and Conner first met at a used bookstore, they have a conversation about the delusion of the 1920s period. They mention that after the movie came out, the era was glamorized and treated as if racism, classism, and poverty did not exist. Conner quips that his mother “totally missed the point of the book” by throwing flapper-era parties (171). *Gatsby* centers around everything wrong with the United States in the 1920s by pointing out the corruption of society powered by greed, money, alcohol, class, consumerism, and loss of morality disguised under the extravagance and fun of the decade. Similar to the parties Gatsby and others throw in the novel, the American Dream is exaggerated and a hoax to most immigrants since they have to succumb to difficult and often

dangerous jobs to make a living. As a result, people like the Reyes, do not achieve the social mobility they thought they could have. Their lifestyle may have improved a small amount in terms of finances, but they have to deal with discrimination and being far from their loved ones showing that issues of the past are still present today.

As a result of Julia being a second-generation immigrant raised in the United States, she has a better chance at achieving her own American Dream than her parents. Julia strives to break away from traditional gender roles and tries to pave her way to become an author. In a conversation with World Policy Journal editorial assistant, Ritikaa Iyer, Erika L. Sánchez stated that it is important for people and communities to “help and not judge” others as well as understanding that “[w]hen we speak about retaining traditional family values, it’s important to remember that the world changes and our ideals evolve” (4). Sánchez shows what she is speaking to with her novel through the clash of Julia and her family’s differing views and their eventual reconciliation as Julia’s parents wish her luck as she leaves her family home to pursue a college education in New York. Julia’s efforts to be able to leave her hometown of Chicago and be provided a full ride to college are an example of her achieving her own dreams despite being from a low-income and immigrant family. She is also building off of her parents’ dream of a better life through her interpretation of what she wants in life.

Present-day issues like mental health are also focused on in the novel. Beauty is a trait heavily associated with being female and the feminine. This trait, even in times of grieving, is shown by Sánchez to depict how mental health affects our own beauty and our perceptions of it. Trying to come to terms with her sister’s death, Julia channels her anger towards her sister’s dead corpse’s lack of beauty:

My poor older sister had a special talent for making herself less attractive. She was skinny and had an okay body, but she always managed to look like a sack of potatoes. Her face was pale and plain, never a single drop of makeup. What a waste. I’m no fashion icon—far from it—but I do feel strongly against dressing like the elderly. Now she’s

doing it from beyond the grave . . . Here I am, thinking all of these horrible thoughts about my dead sister. It's easier to be pissed, though. If I stop being angry, I'm afraid I'll fall apart until I'm just a warm mound of flesh on the floor. (Sánchez 2-3).

Julia has always thought that her sister dressed in an unflattering way and that she could have easily made herself look better, but she recognizes that she is angry, a normal part of grieving, with her sister for the way she would dress because it is easier to be angry at her than accept the fact that she has passed away. Her anger is justified as a coping mechanism because she confesses that being sad over Olga's death would destroy her. She uses the wording "warm mound of flesh on the floor," which is interesting because that would mean she would have no bones that provide structure to her body. Similarly, Olga provided a nice structure to her family by being "perfect" in the sense that she was calm, obedient, had a job, and devoted most of her time to the house and the people who live there. Without Olga there to soothe the family, Julia loses some of the stability in her life since her personality is the exact opposite of Olga's—rebellious, opinionated, and unruly. Without this structure, she is also a mound on the floor, so Julia is saying she will not be able to move. In other words, her sister's death is so shocking to her, that if she is not angry, the depression will reduce her to being immobile and not be able to get her life back on track.

Similar to Julia saying she would be a mound of flesh if she thinks grim thoughts about Olga, Amá is basically turned into that immobile mound when she grieves her daughter. She takes Olga's death hard and is seen throughout the novel crying, praying, and constantly remembering her oldest daughter. In grieving her daughter, Amá's mental health declines as she also struggles with depression evidenced through the lack of self-care and vanishing beauty of Amá. Julia states that "[a]fter the funeral, Amá doesn't get out of bed for almost two weeks. . . . She's been wearing the same loose and frumpy nightgown, and I'm almost positive she hasn't taken a shower this entire time, which is scary, because Amá is the cleanest person I know" (11). Amá going from a strong, female figure in the house to one that cannot take part in basic hygiene habits proves that her daughter's death is something that is leaving her a corpse of the person she

once was. The death of a child is heartbreaking to anyone, so it is understandable that Amá is having a reaction that makes her a completely different person than who she is as a way to grieve her daughter. The lack of self-care Amá stopped doing is further mentioned by “the sour smell” of “unwashed hair, gas, and sweat” present in the parents’ bedroom. Since Amá has been unable to leave her bedroom for a couple of weeks, the potent odors of her body have accumulated and produced an unpleasant smell. This is a direct contrast to the smells of flowers, cleaning products, and food that Julia mentions are always in her house throughout the novel. Amá’s beauty during this time in her life is, understandably, nonexistent. Her daughter’s death leaves her paralyzed to the point that all she can do is lay in her bed and cry. As a result, this contemporary novel shows depression consuming Amá as she becomes a shadow of the person she used to be.

Death and ways to cope with it are not limited to the Reyes family. Julia’s best friend, Lorena, is strongly affected by her father’s death at the border and uses her beauty to attract attention through the way she dresses in bright colors and crazy hair. Lorena’s other lifestyle choices such as doing drugs, having sex, and drinking are also a response to her father’s death, so it can be argued that her actions cannot not only be blamed on Lorena being a rebellious teenager. Part of the reason she is this way is because of the shock and depression her father’s death and absence has in her life. After a night of heavy drinking, Lorena confesses to Julia the way in which her father died. She says that on his way back from his mother’s funeral, he was robbed and dumped by the coyote in the desert, so he and everyone else in the group died of thirst. Eventually,

Border Patrol found them all two weeks after they were supposed to arrive on the other side, and shipped his decomposed body to his hometown in Mexico, where they buried him. Lorena and her mom never got to see him again. That’s when I started to understand why Lorena is so fucked up. (63)

Lorena’s father went through a common experience that many scholars have cited as dangerous: “The immigration process may involve risky journeys and perhaps victimization by smugglers”

(Lamberg 780). As a result of her father's death, Lorena's mother is affected and distances herself from Lorena and even lets her boyfriend who forcibly kisses Lorena live with them. The toll Lorena's mental health takes because of her father's death and her mother's actions result in her being an unstable teen who does not take seriously the danger she can put herself in through her actions. Lorena is portrayed as a pretty yet troubled girl who has unprotected sex with anyone, gets in cars with unlicensed and drunk friends, and takes part in underage drinking and drug use. The extent of her emotional problems may even be hinted at by the amount of alcohol she and Juanga, another troubled and abused teen, consume in the novel. For such a young age, the amount of alcohol they drink could consider them to be alcoholics instead of teenagers experimenting with alcohol.

One of the more serious topics in this novel revolves around Julia's depression to the point of suicide and her struggle with it. A close reading of the novel, though, shows that there have always been signs of Julia struggling with mental illness. The thing with mental illness, though, is that sometimes it cannot be physically seen. Julia's struggle, unlike her mother's struggle, is hidden and covered up under the guise of teenage rebellion and always being a difficult daughter. Troy Potter and Elizabeth Parsons quote Rosemary Garland-Thomson in saying that "appearance tends to be the most socially excluding aspect of disability" and comment that the "visual aspects of mental illness" impact how we categorize people who we think have a disability or mental illness and those who do not. As a result, we have a bias view of mental illness by thinking that only those who present something physically different or have such different behaviors are disabled or mentally ill. Potter and Parsons go on to suggest that the "invisibility of mental illness" is subjective since people choose whether or not to acknowledge mental illness. In Julia's case, small details of her behavior hint at her troubles with mental illness even before Olga's death. She even shows signs of the wounded adolescent girl trope. Elizabeth Marshall describes this trope as "the traumatized adolescent girl's metaphorical and literal placement on the outskirts of the soc[iety who is the] . . . simultaneous subject, object, and

opponent of cultural classification” (121). She goes on to claim that “adolescent girlhood and mental illness are naturally entwined” (121). Julia’s opposition to traditional views challenge the society she lives in, and her actions suggest the idea of a mental illness before it is confirmed later in the novel.

Julia’s battle with mental health is expressed through behavioral issues and shifts in mood that could be signs of an underlying struggle with mental illness and not teenage mood swings. After a confrontation with her gym teacher, Julia remarks that she has always had trouble thinking about things before saying them, and then addresses her mood swings at the moment: “I was in a particularly foul mood and didn’t want to deal with anyone. My moods shift like that all the time, even before Olga died. One minute I feel okay, and then all of a sudden my energy plummets for no reason at all. It’s hard to explain” (Sánchez 7). While it is easy to blame Julia’s adolescent hormones as the cause for her mood swings, they should not be discarded as such so quickly. The fact that she is fifteen and has been experiencing mood swings for her whole life, since she confesses that even as a kid she had problems behaving and watching what she said, is evidence that it is not only a phase and her changes in mood are not linked to her sister’s death. The novel shows that she exhibits signs that she cannot control her emotions and has trouble communicating her feelings. Having trouble communicating paired with mental illness being invisible to many people lead to Julia being undiagnosed and unable to seek help for a long time.

Throughout the novel, there continues to be little snippets of small warning signs that Julia is struggling with mental health through her comments on her emotions and actions. It is established early on in the novel that Julia has self-esteem issues by often comparing herself and her appearance to her mother and deceased sister. She makes it clear that she is the only person in her family who wears glasses, is darker than the other two women, and is more generously filled than her family and people her age. While she likes food, her relationship with it portrayed as negative through her comments linked to death: “Sometimes it’s like I’m eating to drown something yowling inside me, even when I’m not really hungry” (78). Her comment on her eating

habits raises two concerns—that she is eating to fill a void and the negative connotation of the word *drown*. It is concerning that Julia mentions that she eats when she is not actually hungry, which is something that we have all done at some point, but when that comment is preceded by Julia feeling like she has part of her she wants to drown, readers should take this habit more seriously. Drowning is an action that can eventually lead to death if it is not stopped, and the way Julia mentions she wants to stop the yawning is an indicator that she wants to kill whatever it is she does not like inside her.

Multiple examples of these small details related to death are sprinkled throughout the novel and may go unnoticed. Relating to her relationship with food and death, Julia continues to use food as an escape from her unhappy life after she disappoints her parents with her behavior during her quinceañera. Once she sees her tía talking to her parents following their unpleasant encounter in the bathroom, Julia narrates that “I sit at an empty table and eat the rest of my cake. It’s peach, the same color as my dress, and so sweet, it makes me sick, but I keep shoveling it into my mouth anyway. Maybe I can poison myself with sugar” (161). Red flags should once again be raised here to show that Julia is still seeing food as a connection to death and her loneliness even at her own party. With the latter, Julia is aware that she does not have many friends and only agrees to have a party to please her parents. Due to this, and aside from her fear of an upcoming fight with her parents, it makes sense that Julia is having a miserable time at her own party and chooses to sit by herself instead of interacting with her guests. Her loneliness in her own community is a struggle that affects her self-esteem and mental health. This loneliness is carried even further by Julia comparing herself to the cake through the similar peach color. She claims the cake “makes [her] sick” (161) which, through the link between the colors, could imply that there is something about Julia that she does not like about herself, further hurting her mental health. It is also concerning that Julia once again associates food with death. In a jokingly or maybe not so jokingly way, Julia thinks to herself, “Maybe I can poison myself with sugar” (161). Similar to her wanting to drown out her emotions, Julia now thinks of poison as another

option to get her out of the life she lives. She associates something sweet like cake with death, and it can be strongly inferred that she sees food as a vehicle to cope with and end pain.

These details in Julia's life have gone unnoticed by most adults. The few people who have mentioned counseling to Julia, like Mr. Ingman and Conner, are ignored. These signs, though, align with what Janelle Mathis and Polly Vaughan cite Hamrick et al. saying about troubled teenagers and their mental health: "students with emotional and/or behavioral disorders are more susceptible to suicidal thought" (289). Given this fact by the research, it makes sense that at one point, Julia's untreated mental illness affects her enough that she wants to take away her own life. Being unhappy with her life and who she is for a long time, leads Julia to want to be more than a simple housewife. She dreams of being a writer and leaving Chicago, but the tension her dream would cause in breaking away from the traditional motherly role and the toxic ideas of gender roles in her community is too much for Julia to handle and fight against. Eventually, Julia's pain pushes her to slit her wrists as a result of the constricted and archaic world she finds herself in. This action disrupts the social order and Julia by "represent[ing] the self-destruction of that order as its toxicity creates its own demise" (Saltz 36). In their own way, Julia's parents wanting what they think is a good life for her and the treatment her community gives her, negatively prompt Julia to want to end the life others have designed for her.

As heavily suggested, Julia's mental health issues are influenced by both the external and the internal. Her own negative self-esteem and thoughts coupled with the ideas of the family and community she is a part of negatively affect Julia by trying to tell her there is a well-thought-out and humble way she should live and act. There seems to be a notion that if things are done the safe way, they will lead to happiness, which can be a misconception. This is largely due to the idea of what happiness is to people. Scholars like Nerida Wayland would argue that "happiness [is] a social construct" that people have made it out as something great people should work for in their lives (86). Like dreams, though, happiness is individualistic to people, so what may be the safe way of living for some people, may not lead to the happiness people like Julia want. Julia's

character is shown struggling in her society because she is different and thinks in more radical ways than people think she should. The happiness others think she will achieve if she follows their ways will not suffice for Julia. Her awareness of her situation and her push to be something more than her parents gives her an “agency [that] is entwined with self-knowledge, individualism, and multiplicity rather than with the values of conformity and conservatism reinforced by normative happiness scripts” (87). These good qualities that can lead to Julia’s happiness, however, are also what cast her as an outcast in her community. As a result, Julia’s refusal to conform causes her tension and affects her sense of belonging.

Issues of mental health continue to play a large role in *I Am Not Your Perfect Mexican Daughter* through the way the weather parallels the emotions Julia is feeling. For most of the novel, the events take place in winter; even when Julia is at her lowest point of depression and later attempts suicide, it is freezing and there is gray slush outside. In one of the many instances of cold weather in Chicago, Julia is at Millennium Park and narrates

It’s still freezing, so of course no one is around, only a few annoying tourists who, for some stupid reason, thought it was a good idea to come to Chicago in the winter. The cold here feels barbaric, inhumane. Why would anyone want to come to a place like this? The snow is pretty when it falls, but it hasn’t snowed in about a week. All that’s left now is slushy and gray, or yellow from all the dog pee. I wish winter would pack its bags and get the hell out already. (Sánchez 209).

The parallels of winter here are a reflection of Julia’s feelings of loneliness. She feels as if her parents are cold and ignore her, while at the same time she does not think she has a great support group. The former is shown through the freezing weather since cold is often linked to feelings of sadness, depression, and loneliness. When a person is not caring, we often refer to them as cold. Julia’s parents do love her but struggle to show that love to Julia especially in comparison to their other daughter, Olga. Amá wishes for her daughter to be different while Apá is more distant than he was before, leading to Julia interpreting their behavior as cold. With the latter, Julia’s small

support group made up of people like Lorena, Juanga, Conner, and Mr. Ingman is represented by the lack of people there is at the park. Julia does not confide in many people and does not have many friends, resulting in her loneliness. There is also a hint of the advice to get help that some people told her about and she refused in the way that she mentions the “stupid reason[s]” and “good idea[s]” of the tourists who represent her friends. The coldness of her community is further pushed with the description of the cold being personified as barbaric and inhumane, paralleling the feelings Julia has of people trying to control her life and no one understanding her, leading her to question why people come to places, aka want lives, like that.

The last bit of the previous quotation can also have an inferred meaning to Julia’s community. While Julia recognizes that the snow is pretty at first, she then comments that the remnants of it are disgusting and dirty. This is similar to the happy music and traditions that are described throughout the novel, but the people who are behind the things she likes and dislikes in her culture are also those who want to keep “traditional gender-role attitudes among Hispanic Americans” such as a woman’s pureness, homelife, and submissiveness to others the same (Kane 424). Things in her community are tainted with “dog pee” based on old world views that are not the modern views of a new generation of immigrants (Sánchez 209). Mirroring Julia’s own wishes to leave Chicago and start her own life, she wishes that winter would pick up and leave already. This winter scene, therefore, is a direct comparison to the emotions Julia feels and her desires to have a different life.

After Julia’s failed attempt at suicide, her struggles with mental health are acknowledged and a way to help her cope with her problems is created. Similar to other types of journey stories, a return to Julia’s immigrant roots is needed for her to start healing. It is important to note that her problems are not immediately solved by going back to Mexico, rather, they give her a break from everything going on in her life and allow her to come back and work on the issues she was having. When Amá first suggests the idea of Julia going to Mexico after years of not being there, Julia is hesitant and does not see the point in it. However, once she arrives, she starts to see the

nostalgia she used to see in her culture and the nostalgia her family still sees in it: “Tío Chucho picks me up from the airport in the rusted and battered pickup he’s had since I was a kid. His hair is gray and wild, but his mustache is still black and neatly trimmed” (242). Julia’s tío is the first family member she sees when she lands in Mexico, so it is expected that the nostalgia of seeing her family members starts to hit Julia when she sees him. Remembering sweet little things like her uncle’s mustache and his truck start the process of Julia starting to heal and enjoy the things she used to as a child. Julia also takes a moment to look at the landscape and recalls that “[t]he day is bright with a few fat clouds scattered throughout the sky. The Sierra Madre mountains are so stark and impossibly tall” (243). Like the weather in Chicago previously suggested the coldness of her community, here it is sunny and bright with an occasional fluffy cloud. It is a lovely day and hints that Julia will enjoy her time and community here, furthering emphasizing “Mexico as a land of promise” (Socolovsky 398). Julia’s new community, while still members of the same family, give her more love and attention than her parents did back home. This is also referenced by the mountains having “Madre,” mother, in its name, carrying a warm and loving connotation to the landscape (243). Additionally, while in Mexico, Julia is also able to be around a few more people who are close to her age like her cousins and their friends.

Her new atmosphere is one that Julia enjoys more than her one back home and is evidenced by her appreciation of the music and parties she enjoys in Mexico that she hated back in Chicago. When at a party, Julia points out that the

music is tinny and crackly—partly because of the cheap sound system—but I still like it. The accordions are ridiculously joyful, even when the songs are about death. Tía Fermina and tío Raul dance cheek to cheek. Belén dances with Mamá Jacinta’s lanky next-door neighbor. I watch everyone’s jumpy little dances as the sun bakes me into a cocoon of laziness. (Sánchez 260-61)

The description of this party is a sharp contrast to the quinceñera Julia had back in Chicago where she hated being and commented negatively on her family members. Here in Mexico, she enjoys

hearing the music no matter how bad it sounds and loves seeing her family members dancing. An important detail too is that the music, in this scene, is joyful even when it is about death; so here, death is not as debilitating as it is in Chicago. Death is seen in a more positive light through song and that, in a way, saves people from depression, something that could have benefited the Reyes as they coped with Olga's death. The words used to describe the party are also more playful and positive. Back in Chicago, Julia would often describe things in a negative way like the clothing her aunt would wear that was too tight for her body. Here, though, words and phrases like "joyful," "cheek-to-cheek," "jumpy little dances," and "cocoon of laziness" are happier and delightful. The shift in the words that Julia uses to describe people and her surroundings are a sign that she is feeling better and is starting to have a healthy way of seeing the world.

Similar to the tiny details that hinted at Julia's struggle with mental health. Sánchez includes small details that point towards Julia finally starting to heal and feel like she will eventually belong somewhere. Julia is in her tía's backyard when she notices "[t]he white and yellow roses planted in old buckets are thriving despite the drought, because tía Fermina cares for them as if they were children. Their persistence makes me feel hopeful" (269). The flowers here can be taken to be Julia and her family, with a more important connection to Julia. The flowers are still alive and beautiful despite what the land is going through and possibly foreshadow that Julia and her family are going to be fine. While the family went through their own drought coping with Olga's death and dealing with their own issues of mental health, they, like the flowers, will be alright in the end. Something as life threatening as a drought can be compared to Julia's failed suicide attempt, so like the rose, Julia will be cared for and prosper in the future. This quotation also provides one of the few instances of hopefulness in the novel. Being a novel that centers around a teenager's struggle with suicide, anxiety, and depression, there is a gloomy tone and dark outlook to life for most of Julia's story; however, while in Mexico, she starts feeling hopeful again, bringing her to a state of peace and happiness that she did not have while in the United States.

One of the most obvious signs of Julia healing while in Mexico is the ritual of spiritual cleansing she goes through. A traditional cleansing with an egg involves praying while using a raw egg to trap all the negativity in a person's body. Then the egg is cracked to see what it pulled from the body, essentially cleansing a person of their negativities. Tía Fermina performs this ritual on Julia, and then "Tía cracks the egg into a glass of water and holds it up to the light. The water turns thick and cloudy, and when we look closer, we see a dot of dark blood in the center of the yolk" (278). What Julia and Tía Fermina see in the egg is Julia's struggle with her family and how that has affected her negatively, specifically her issues with depression and suicide. The thick and cloudy water shows how her relationship with her parents is tense and how they do not have the same clear goals for what Julia should do with her life. Julia is also often confused and has trouble with her emotions which can be taken to be shown in the foggy material in the glass. The yolk is the main part of the egg and can stand for life; having blood in the center of the yolk, which could symbolize the Reyes family, may represent Olga's death, Julia's attempted suicide, and possibly Olga's dead embryo. Olga's death is one of the reasons Julia and her family are struggling so much at the moment and serves as a catalyst for Amá's depression. Since Olga died by being hitting by a semi, it can be implied that there was a lot of blood involved. In the same way, blood was involved when Julia cut her wrists, resulting in her being hospitalized and her parents recognizing they could have lost another daughter. On the final page of the novel, Julia mentions that the ultrasound picture at times looks like an egg (340). Since all babies start off as an egg cell and the baby died as a result of Olga being hit by a semi, the dot of blood in the yolk could also represent the unborn baby's death. These representations, then, could suggest the yolk having blood in the center shows the ways death has marked the Reyes family.

After Julia returns from Mexico, she continues to get help from her counselor but also strives to fix her relationships with other people. In doing so, Julia reinforces how Farah Jasmin Griffin defines healing in Sonia Alejandra Rodríguez's article: "the healing is never permanent: it requires constant attention and effort. I am using the term healing to suggest the way in which the

body, literally and discursively scarred, ripped, and mutilated, has to learn to love itself, to function in the world with other bodies” (11). This notion of healing being an ongoing process is a realistic depiction shown in the contemporary novel since Julia is not magically healed once she is in Mexico. Julia has to work on herself for her mental health to improve. She realizes how she improves and is hopeful that she will continue to feel better: “I know I’ve come a long way, and though it’s hard, I’m trying to give myself credit for that. If I think about it, just a few months ago, I was ready to die, and now here I am on a plane to New York City all by myself” (Sánchez 339). In leaving Chicago, she is also achieving her own goals of breaking traditional gender roles and leaving behind issues that harmed her. Recognizing how far she has come in her healing process has also given Julia a boost of confidence and inspires her to keep living and live the way she wants to. Her parents, while sad that their daughter is leaving, are also working to understand their daughter and her aspirations for a different life. While it may not be the life they originally planned for Julia, they are still proud and supportive of her and what she wants to do in her life. Her parents and Julia are finally trying harder to understand each other and realize that you can have your own life and be there for family.

Through Julia and the female characters that surround her, Erika L. Sánchez manages to create a modern-day story that questions issues present today, such as the social order of things, by mainly focusing on the experience of a young, independent, and modernize girl wanting to break free of an old way of life and forge her own path to take control of her future. The emotional struggle of Julia’s opposing community and the death of her sister are intricately weaved throughout the story in a way that careful builds up to Julia’s breaking point showcasing how differing ideas and beliefs can harm people. Sánchez shows in her realistic and relatable novel that it is through understanding each other and healing individually and as a community that people will become more accepting of each other and our differing ideas and personalities.

CHAPTER VI

FROM THE SLAVE TO THE SINGER: CONTRIBUTIONS OF THE SORROW SONG, “LAY THIS BODY DOWN,” TO W. E. B. DU BOIS’ FINAL CHAPTER, “OF THE SORROW SONGS,” IN *THE SOULS OF BLACK FOLK*

Arguably, W. E. B. Du Bois’ most impactful work is his book, *The Souls of Black Folk*. In his book, he challenges what the United States has done for Black people and how the country has failed the promises made to the Black population after the abolition of slavery. Acting as a philosopher and historian, as well as retelling his own personal history and the collective memory of his people, allows Du Bois to point out how the Black community has been treated in the past, is treated in the present, and what needs to change for Black people to have a better future in the United States. One of the techniques that aids him in his critique is the use of songs at the beginning of each chapter and interspersed throughout *The Souls of Black Folk*. At the beginning of his final chapter, “Of the Sorrow Songs,” Du Bois includes lyrics and musical bars from the sorrow song “Lay This Body Down.” Du Bois purposefully incorporates “Lay This Body Down” into *The Souls of Black Folk* to present his final thoughts and further strengthen his argument of Black suffering by having the spiritual hymn act as an epitaph for slaves, show the lasting effects of slavery, and put the song in conversation with his prose.

In his chapter, “Of the Sorrow Songs,” Du Bois discusses the history of sorrow songs and their meaning to the black community. He starts the prose of his chapter by arguing that sorrow songs are the “black slave sp[eaking] to men” and are the “most beautiful expression of human

experience” (117). He explains that the songs’ melodies have gone beyond the Black Belt region and across the sea, and, therefore, the songs have reached a wider audience. Relating to the songs being heard overseas, Du Bois explains how George L. White formed the Fisk Jubilee singers as a way of making sure the world heard the slaves’ songs. As a result, the singers raised enough money to found Fisk University (117-18). Although Du Bois states that White’s efforts to share the sorrow songs are successful, he also points out that the sorrow songs have often been ridiculed in minstrel shows and caricatures, while often being misunderstood by audiences. Du Bois acknowledges that he does not know much about music, but he understands the message of the songs: “They are the music of an unhappy people, of the children of disappointment; they tell of death and suffering and unvoiced longing toward a truer world, of misty wanderings and hidden ways” (118). He knows how these songs are part of his own heritage and makes a case for the songs’ development in the Americas. Du Bois also describes the emotions and ideas present in the sorrow songs. While the songs may be short in length and feature similar lines, he claims readers and listeners can see the “monotonous toil and exposure” of the slave, their “inner thoughts,” fears, and sufferings (120). Themes of fatalism and not fearing death are present in the songs, and, therefore, contribute to their hopeful message. The hopeful nature of the songs sets up a foundation for Du Bois’ claims for equality between races since he believes the songs ask its audience to judge the souls of people and not the color of their skin. Du Bois continues to question the United States’ lack of progress in the post-Reconstruction era and expresses that the country has denied freedom of opportunity to Black people. He closes his chapter by claiming that Black people have brought three gifts to the Americas—story and song, sweat and brawn, and Spirit—and have been essential to building the country through their hard work and blood (122). Similar to the end of a sorrow song, Du Bois proclaims that if there is an Eternal good, he hopes that in America “the Veil and the prisoned shall go free,” leading to equality between the races (122).

Before the prose of his final chapter, “Of the Sorrow Songs,” Du Bois chooses to include the spiritual “Lay This Body Down” as an example of the themes and pain contained in sorrow songs. He continues to explain the meaning of sorrow songs in the Black community, their importance during slavery and post abolition, and the effects these songs’ melodies have on communities. While the lyrics included are only an excerpt of the whole song, its “haunting echo” (117) tells of the slave experience and the continued experience of Black people in the United States:

I walk through the churchyard
To lay this body down;
I know moon-rise, I know star-rise;
I walk in the moonlight, I walk in the starlight;
I’ll lie in the grave and stretch out my arms,
I’ll go to judgement in the evening of the day,
And my soul and thy soul shall meet that day,
When I lay this body down. (116)

One of the groups which can be interpreted to be described in this song consists of the survivors of the Middle Passage. These survivors were forced into slavery. Including this song allows Du Bois to create an epitaph of these survivors and their struggles living in the slave states.

Du Bois traces his own family lineage back to Africa and lets readers know his grandfather’s grandmother was captured from Africa by Dutch traders; His ancestor was forced to experience the Middle Passage as she made her way to the Americas as a slave (118). He recounts that music and songs play a pivotal role in his own heritage and the heritage of his community. Even if people may not know what the words to a song mean, they know what the music means and are able to relate to the emotions of the music. Kyla Tompkins’ idea of texts serving as a way to be in communication with our ancestors holds true in the ways Du Bois’ family passes down his ancestor’s song (Tompkins 439). While untitled, Du Bois’ family song still has the same

emotional impact as other sorrow songs. It carries feelings of fear and death while also soothing singers and listeners. As a whole, Du Bois describes these songs as “the music of unhappy people, of the children of disappointment; they tell of death and suffering and unvoiced longing toward a truer world, of misty wanderings and hidden ways” (118). If you use the song passed down in Du Bois’ family as an example of communication with your ancestors and apply this idea to sorrow songs as a whole, then “Lay This Body Down” can be interpreted as communication with the slaves and survivors of the Middle Passage. Specific lines of the song such as “And my soul and thy soul shall meet that day” speak about the slave’s soul meeting people he knew in life who passed away before him, meeting his ancestors, and future generations that their souls will meet too (116). Through songs and death, people of the same heritage share the experiences of hardships in life and the hope for a better future.

“Lay This Body Down” narrates a worn-out person who goes to a churchyard, often used for burials, to die in hopes of his soul later being free. Spirituals about death and the hope in death “enabled slaves to record a history marked by loss, separation, struggle, and possibility;” it can be argued that “spirituals are the cries of those who survived (the middle passage) and bear a kind of witness to those bodies that perished” in the journey to the Americas and those who died as slaves (Winters 12). Having the idea of suffering and death in mind allows readers to interpret “Lay This Body Down” as what the survivors of the Middle Passage experienced. Africans on the Middle Passage were forced on cramped and unsanitary boats after they were ruthlessly captured and torn away from their homelands. Upon arrival in the Americas, they were expected to take part in backbreaking labor and work long hours to provide for a race of people who considered themselves superior. The long hours slaves worked is evidenced in “Lay This Body Down.” The speaker of the song shares that he knows “moon-rise” and “star-rise” meaning that he works all day until the moon and stars come out at night (Du Bois 116). History also tells readers and listeners that slaves often started their day before dawn; thus, history, especially the history Du

Bois recalls, and the lyrics of “Lay This Body Down” are proof of the long hours slaves were forced to work.

It is also important to note that when enslaved people traveled via boat to the Americas, they were often laid on the ground side by side to maximize the amount of people traders could fit on a boat. These small spaces led to disease and death. People lying down next to each other on a boat is visually reminiscent of the layout of a graveyard—people horizontally laid out side by side. Many enslaved people in this situation passed away, and their arrangement on the floor was literally their grave. For others, how they were placed on the boat foreshadows their own death and eventual, possible, burial in a graveyard. Choosing to use a sorrow song about burial spots and death in his final chapter of *The Souls of Black Folk* allows Du Bois to create a connection between enslaved people on the Middle Passage and the fate of those on the ship—both those who died on the boat and those who survived. To be a slave is to be considered dead and unimportant while you are living.

The idea of being a slave who is considered dead while he is alive is also present in the lines of “Lay This Body Down.” Multiple times throughout the song, the narrator lies down next to a grave: “I walk through the churchyard / To lay this body down; . . . I’ll lie in the grave and stretch out my arms” (116). Even though the speaker is alive, he is foreshadowing his own death by going to a graveyard and willingly lying down in a grave. While laying down to rest at the end of the day is supposed to be relaxing, the images conveyed in “Lay This Body Down,” along with the actions of the speaker, create a morbid ending for the slave. The speaker goes to an actual burial site for rest and acknowledges the site’s connection to people he met in his life by referencing the soul of another person. His future self lying down in an actual grave implies that the slave will only get to rest when he is dead and creates a haunting image of a man who is alive resting in a grave: “I’ll lie in the grave and stretch out my arms” (116). The man, who can be said is a dead man based on the his slave status, is at ease in the grave and seems to accept it as a

proper resting spot. His actions allude to him knowing that being a slave will end in death through work exhaustion, sickness, or murder.

Having “Lay This Body Down” as the final sorrow song that opens a chapter in *The Souls of Black Folk* creates an epitaph for slaves that focuses on death but also inspires hope in death. Will Kynes states that “spirituals, in particular, testify to a hermeneutic of resistance that finds ‘the growing edge of hope in the midst of the most barren and most tragic circumstances’” (297). Studies in slave narratives and the history of slavery tell of the atrocities slaves had to endure such as the separation of families, physical and sexual violence, and intense discrimination among other things. It makes sense, then, for slaves to channel their pain into music and song as a way to cope with their circumstances. The melodies create a form of resistance which allows slaves to continue living in their situation with the hope that the pain will soon be over and they will be reunited with their loved ones. Thus, spirituals can be said to be a testimony of the faith slaves had in a higher force or being that would liberate them from their condition and way of life, similar to the themes of liberation in the Bible. Hope in the future is seen in the final lines of “Lay This Body Down.” The speaker of the song states, “I’ll go to judgement in the evening of the day, / And my soul and thy soul shall meet that day, / When I lay this body down” (Du Bois 116). The future tense of the auxiliary verbs the speaker uses in these lines points to his predictions and expectations of what will happen to him in the future. He also uses the word “judgement.” Since sorrow songs have biblical themes, the word “judgement” could be a religious reference to Judgement Day. Religious beliefs tell that on this day some higher being will judge people and determine what will happen to their souls for the remainder of their afterlife, and so, including the word “judgement” in the song is a way of resisting what men on earth have determined is the slaves’ position in the world. The song states that a higher being will determine what happens to Black lives, and, thus, the song carries an element of faith that the soul will live a happier life than the physical body.

The mention of souls in the previously stated lines from the song also hints at the hope in “Lay This Body Down.” The song’s speaker claims that “my soul and thy soul shall meet that day, / When I lay this body down,” providing an idea that the body is temporary, but a soul lasts forever. In other words, the song is again a form of resistance to the slave condition because the speaker of the song, a slave, knows that his life on earth and with a body is hard and violent but will not last long. The speaker is hopeful and sings about a day in which his soul will be free to meet with his loved ones. His soul, then, is something that will last forever, and while his life is temporarily difficult, he is hopeful that a higher being will let his soul will be after his death on earth. Souls are also mentioned in the title of Du Bois’ book, *The Souls of Black Folk*, which is already a book of resistance arguing about the injustices done to Black people. The idea of resistance souls presents in “Lay this Body Down” further works to make the title be even more impactful as a way of persuading Black people to be faithful in the hope for a better future because they have souls. While there may be a history of enslavement and current racism on earth, Du Bois describes in his book that the souls of the enslaved and Black people can look forward to a more satisfying future. There is hope that souls will reconnect with family members and all the pain their bodies endure while living on earth will be gone.

Epitaphs work as a memory of a person who has died and tell something about the life of the deceased. When reading “Lay This Body Down,” the sorrow song works as an epitaph of the lasting effects of slavery. As previously mentioned, sorrow songs are passed down through generations with many having unclear origins. Such is the case for “Lay This Body Down” since there is not a clear writer of the song and there are many close variations of it. The version of the song Du Bois includes in *The Souls of Black Folk* is one that strays away from other versions that feature African American English. When looking at other versions of “Lay This Body Down,” common phonetic differences are seen in words where a voiced alveolar stop “d” sound is in the place of an unvoiced alveolar stop “t” and dental fricative “th” sounds: “Lay dis body down; / I walk in de moonlight, I walk in de starlight” (Bartleby.com). These lines can be compared to the

lines provided by Du Bois, “To lay this body down; / ... / I walk in the moonlight, I walk in the starlight,” as evidence of how word sounds change over the years to fit new generations and audiences (116). The change in phonetic sounds demonstrates what happens to a song, such as “Lay This Body Down,” over the years as it is passed down to people and is changed to fit the mainstream vernacular of the country. The phonetic differences also show the influence people who write down songs and provide a written record of them have on sound and songs. What Du Bois presents in his book, *The Souls of Black Folk*, is a version of the song that fits more with the White audience he expects will read his work. In doing this, Du Bois allows the words of the song to be in a language variation that is more relatable and easier to understand for the White audience since it is presented in a way that is more similar to his audience’s way of speaking. The deliberate change to a more standard version of English proves significant in showing how Black people can be as intelligent in the use of standard English as White people despite both varieties being effective ways to communicate.

While there may be phonetic differences in other versions of the song, the fact that it remains in use is proof of the remaining history and memory present in “Lay This Body Down.” When reading the song, it is clear that the speaker believes death is better than slavery since he will be free of the burden of being a slave. In doing so, the song’s speaker talks about his own death and turns the spiritual into something that will remain and be preserved in the community for generations to come. This action lets the song be a piece of rebellion against slavery even after slavery is abolished by giving a voice to the “speaking dead” and “mak[ing] a claim on the future precisely through constructing rhetorical structures that outlive death and take death as their origin or occasion” (Haslanger 420). Slaves are able to outlive death through their memory and struggles living through the melodies they created and sang. This preservation of slave life through song is a lasting effect of slavery post-abolition. The songs work to show the history of the treatment of a race who was treated as less than human and forced into grueling labor and cruelties. Additionally, the songs still being heard and sung by people as well as being preserved

and studied allows the sorrow songs to continue their lasting impact on the people who listen to them, and the songs also continue to show the emotions of the enslaved people and slavery's consequences.

A close reading of "Lay This Body Down" continues the idea of slaves having a claim on the future, even in death, through the use of future tense auxiliary verbs and adverbs. The auxiliary verb, "will," and the adverb, "when," predict the future of the slave speaker and his plans in and after death. He claims that "[he *will*] lie in the grave" and that "[he *will*] go to judgement" (Du Bois 116; emphasis added). The slave is still alive when he sings his sorrow song, but he has some control over his future by claiming what he *will* do. While his plans for the future are morbid, in a way, predicting the future allows the speaker to have some agency in knowing what will happen to his body. The song also takes a more optimistic tone by hinting at the speaker's faith in life after death. The word "when," similar to "will," allows the slave speaker to have plans for the future and, again, gives him some agency in knowing his fate. In addition to referencing the future, the word "when" provides the song the ability to have some temporality and live in a liminal space. In spoken and written English, "when" is used to describe time in the past and future. "When[']s]" inclusion in the song allows the speaker to play with the temporal nature of the world and use his life to impact the future. In this way, "Lay This Body Down" contributes to the impact of sorrow songs Du Bois' mentions in his final chapter, "Of the Sorrow Songs," by proving through future predictions how impactful and relevant the song still is. The future being referenced in the song is an example of how slave life affects the fate of the slave and how its emotions and struggles are relatable and felt by Du Bois' readers and listeners.

Cheryl A. Wall states in her work that "[t]he present is eerily continuous with the past" (220). Keeping this idea in mind while reading the lines of the sorrow song, "Lay This Body Down," lets readers see yet another reason this song continues to show the lasting effects of slavery and why the song strengthens Du Bois' intended argument. Du Bois makes mention of the

sorrow songs impact in his time period, a time in post-reconstruction America of great inequality, by claiming that

by fateful chance the Negro folksong—the rhythmic cry of the slave—stands to-day [sic] not simply as the sole American music, but as the most beautiful expression of human experience born this side the seas. It has been neglected, it has been, and is, half despised, and above all it has been persistently mistaken and misunderstood; but notwithstanding, it still remains as the singular spiritual heritage of the nation and the greatest gift of the Negro people. (117)

Du Bois' quote places "Lay This Body Down" as an example of the spiritual heritage of the country, making the song still be in conversation with his readers and foundational to the beliefs, attitudes, and history of the United States.

As the heritage of slavery in the United States, the song, "Lay This Body Down," showcases the "cry of the slaves" Du Bois describes and provides raw emotions of what life was like for slaves (117). While this specific sorrow song does not contain clear images of the cruelty of slavery and the foul misconceptions people of his time had about race superiority, it does still supply readers and listeners with a way to know about the sorrowful and painful experience of slave life through its intense images of walking through a graveyard and only wishing to rest. The first lines of the song begin by describing the speaker going to a churchyard while the rest of the song describes what he does at the churchyard: "I walk through the churchyard / To lay this body down" (116). The speaker being in a graveyard creates an ominous tone and introduces a theme of death. The speaker then continues to be reflective of his own life and what he has experienced by stating that he knows "moon-rise" and "star-rise" and has walked in "moonlight" and "starlight" (116). After a hard day of work, all the speaker wants to do is lie down and rest. His wish to rest is shown in the way the speaker "stretch[es] out [his] arms" and lies down to rest in a grave (116). The speaker's actions and attitudes towards being willing to sleep in a grave are a result of the tiresome work the slave can be assumed to have done during the day. His cry to rest

in any place, especially a place as eerie as a graveyard, is a testimony to the extent slaves are overworked. The slave in the song is willing to lay down next to dead bodies if it means he will get to take a break from the strenuous work he does every day.

The feelings of pain and tiredness experienced by slave and Black bodies in “Lay This Body Down” are still felt in the time Du Bois is writing in. The sorrow songs work as artifacts to provide readers and listeners with glimpses of the life of a slave through its music and lyrics; however, Du Bois also urges his audience to acknowledge that the nation was built by slaves and how this claim has connections to the sorrow songs he presents. The product of slave labor, specifically with sorrow songs, is brought up by Du Bois when he states that singing sorrow songs allowed buildings like Jubilee Hall to be built: “when I came to Nashville I saw the great temple builded [sic] of these songs towering over the pale city. To me Jubilee Hall seemed ever made of the songs themselves, and its bricks were red with the blood and dust of toil” (117). Scholars such as Cheryl A. Wall recount the historical context behind Jubilee Hall by asserting that Jubilee Singers were crucial to building places like Fisk University (Wall 223). The Jubilee Singers sang sad melodies across the nation and overseas about being oppressed and their hardships in life, but the words they sang were not paid attention to by their listeners. Instead, their melodies were taken advantage of as a way to gain money for the school (224). It is through the misuse of songs about slave labor and Black life that places like Jubilee Hall are built. The effect of slave labor creating sorrow songs leading to the sorrow songs being used to gain money to then build Jubilee Hall gives reason as to why Du Bois sees suffering when he looks at the building. Not only were the sorrow songs influenced by the relentless work slaves had to endure, but then the songs were used as a tool for monetary purposes by making Black singers recount their communities’ suffering for money. The bricks that were used to build Jubilee Hall were able to be purchased based on the continued efforts of generations of black labor, from the slave to the singer. Enslaving Black bodies was not enough for White society, and they intentionally misused the slaves’ song and culture.

In similar ways, much of the infrastructure and historical sites in the United States can be traced back to the blood and work of slave labor. Du Bois ingeniously makes the connection of sorrow songs to slave labor and its effects by including excerpts of songs at the beginning of each of his chapters and weaves other excerpts through the middle of his chapters as well. Including “Lay This Body Down” reinforces Du Bois’ claim of sorrow songs still having an impact post-abolition because it provides an example of a type of song that expresses pain and sorrow that could have been further taken advantage of by White society. In the song, one of the major ideas, as has been repeatedly stated, is that the slave speaker is weary and tired. As stated previously, the extent of how long the slave speaker works is shown through him knowing “moon-rise,” “star-rise,” “moonlight,” and “starlight,” meaning he works countless hours until it is dark outside (Du Bois 116); however, it is important to look at the actions the speaker is doing when he mentions starlight and moonlight. The speaker, at the beginning of the song, indicates that he is walking when he sees things such as the churchyard and the moonrise: “I *walk* in the moonlight, I *walk* in the starlight” (116; emphasis added). While the action verb “walk” can be easily looked over, it is not far-fetched to suggest that walking is the only way the slave speaker and other slaves could travel. Many slave narratives showcase how slaves and escaped slaves travelled by foot, so it is reasonable to assume that the speaker in “Lay This Body Down” also walked everywhere he went. Considering that the slave speaker works long hours, walking home or to other places adds to his already tired body. The tiredness of the slave’s body and soul further influences the melodies and lyrics in the sorrow songs. Due to people profiting off the songs to build buildings and sites, as well as the songs still being in circulation, the impact of the slave walking to and from work and travelling by foot still remains visible through the physical buildings built off of the song. The slave speaker’s song and music entraps the emotions of a long day of work. Therefore, “Lay This Body Down” and the other sorrow songs Du Bois includes serve as artifacts and ghostly echoes of the voices and painful songs that helped build our country.

The song, “Lay This Body Down,” works to show how slavery affects graveyards. Scholars such as Diane Jones suggest that graveyards are places heavily influenced by slavery and are places in which slaves had some control of the landscape (227). Jones argues that “cemetery grounds are of national significance, as they preserve and sustain history by revealing the past ancestors who experienced slavery. . . and [the] unnamed freed slaves who contributed untold sacrifices towards the improvement of the human condition” (227). Knowing how significant cemeteries are for the Black community as places of meditation and reflection as well as African American cemeteries being highly significant to American history adds another important layer as to why Du Bois’ choice to use “Lay This Body Down” to open his final chapter in *The Souls of Black Folk* is highly impactful. As established, the tone of the sorrow song, “Lay This Body Down,” and the location of the speaker in a churchyard burial ground affects how the song is perceived by its audience. Being knowledgeable about the significance of burial grounds to the Black community allows readers and listeners to understand more about what the Black community deems as important and how cemeteries and family play a vital role in their life. Though the mention of a cemetery and dying is macabre and leads “Lay This Body Down” to be interpreted as such, there is also a beautiful association with cemeteries when readers and listeners think of cemeteries as places where the slave speaker can connect with his ancestors. A feeling of reunification is present since families that were separated by slavery can be together when descendants visit them in graveyards and when their souls meet in the afterlife. This thought on the focus of family allows Du Bois to use his final sorrow song as a way for slaves and Black people to be humanized in the eyes of people who think of them as less than human.

The lasting effects of slavery evidenced through burial sites also work to point out how slaves built graveyards that serve as historical sites and monuments. These areas contain the culture and history of slaves, so their “cultural meaning must . . . be preserved” since slaves and Black people work(ed) to “creat[e] and retai[n these] spaces for memory, nature, and ritual”

(Jones 239). A close reading of “Lay This Body Down” reveals that the slave speaker not only retains the history of his life and community through the passing down of the song, but also, he creates an image of preservation by physically imbedding himself in history through his actions in the lines of the song. The idea of preservation creates a new meaning in the song for what the slave predicts he will eventually do. The slave speaker is in the churchyard and imagines his future self physically placing himself in a grave: “I’ll lie in the grave and stretch out my arms” (Du Bois 116). The action of lying in a grave while alive, a place that scholars have argued maintains the culture of communities, creates an image and idea of the slave speaker preserving his life and memory through a grave. In doing so, he creates through his own body an artifact of his life that future generations can remember and look at. His action also works as a constant reminder to slave holders and Du Bois’ readers of what this country does to Black bodies. Du Bois’ inclusion of the song brings to light how the slave speaker’s act serves as a reminder of the injustices done to Black people through the way he physically buries himself in the ground of the country that has caused him tremendous harm and stripped him of his identity by treating him as a lesser human.

Building on the suffering of slaves and the lasting effects of slavery that “Lay This Body Down” alludes to, Du Bois’ addition of the sorrow song in his last chapter helps readers make connections of the words of the song to his prose. Close readings of the chapter show how the words of the song, “Lay This Body Down,” reinforce the ideas and subjects Du Bois mentions in “Of the Sorrow Songs.” Du Bois creates a forward-thinking ending of what steps the United States needs to take to create racial equality and provides a call to action to make changes in society. In the prose of “Of the Sorrow Songs,” Du Bois states that

[t]he silently growing assumption of this age is that the probation of races is past, and that the backward races of to-day [sic] are of proven inefficiency and not worth the saving. Such an assumption is the arrogance of peoples irreverent toward Time and ignorant of the deeds of men. . . . So long as the world stands meekly dumb before such questions

[relating to race], shall this nation proclaim its ignorance and unhallowed prejudices by denying freedom of opportunity to those who brought the Sorrow Songs[.] (122)

In his quotation, Du Bois makes it clear to his readers that there needs to be racial equality for Black people in the country because the abolition of slavery is not enough. He proclaims that even though there are constitutional amendments to improve Black lives, there is still terrible inequality between the races. Du Bois holds people who do not acknowledge the racial prejudices and discrepancies in opportunities between the races accountable for being ignorant of what is going on in the country. The sorrow song Du Bois includes in his chapter forms a connection that works to strengthen his point of continued inequality towards Black people from the time of slavery to his post-Reconstruction time period.

As suggested before, sorrow songs work as a way of remembering slave life and its atrocities. The songs' continued presence in the time Du Bois is writing in makes them foundational as texts that prove the injustices done to the Black community and its effects on various groups of people. Therefore, Du Bois' use of "Lay This Body Down" is a tool to help remember the past and keep learning from it. Cynthia B. Dillard urges her readers to remember the history of various communities and learn from them so that the same mistakes can be avoided: "*we must learn to re-member the things that we've learned to forget*" (89; emphasis in original). Including "Lay This Body Down" is Du Bois' way of keeping the past in the present by "[re-membering]" the horrifying truths of the slave condition (89). These truths can be seen in "Lay This Body Down" through the words on the page describing the weary yet hopefully life of the slave and the musical bars that Du Bois purposefully includes in his book. In contrast to the words providing a narrative of the exhausting day-to-day life of a slave, the musical bars work to provide a juxtaposition and disconnect between the words of the song and the music tied to it. Listening to the bars of music prove what Du Bois states in his prose of the songs' meaning not being understood by White audiences: "[The song] has been neglected, it has been, and is, half-despised, and above all it has been persistently mistaken and misunderstood" (Du Bois 117).

When listening to the song's musical bars, there is an aural difference between the lighthearted notes and what is described in the song. The music masks the message being sent in the song and lends the song to being misunderstood. Instead of long and lower notes that show sorrow, the music provides quick notes on middle to higher level octaves, leading to the creation of happier sounds. The jovial tones in the music cause listeners to misunderstand the song and for there to be a stark contrast between what is meant to be said and what is interpreted aurally. Thus, the incorporation of the song's lyrics and notes in Du Bois' *The Souls of Black Folk* aids him in retaining the song's original meaning and in making a case for how slavery's effects are still felt by the community. The inclusion of the song further pushes Du Bois' readers to realize the disconnection between "Lay This Body Down" being heard as cheerful with words that were inspired by Black pain and performed in buildings that were built by Black labor.

The song also functions to keep the past continually in the present and works as a way to showcase what Black culture has brought to the United States. "Lay This Body Down" adds to *The Souls of Black Folk* by lending itself as a vessel to transport music and the voices of people who have been marginalized and abused by others. In doing so, the sorrow song forces the country to recognize how it has achieved success by exploiting Black bodies. Du Bois includes "Lay This Body Down" as an example of the "singular spiritual heritage of the nation and the greatest gift" his community and ancestors could have given the United States (117). Hidden in its lines and music is a beautiful and heartfelt message about how the Black soul will persevere despite the catastrophes done to its body. The slave speaker provides a voice to the hardworking body that ensures the faith he has will lead him to have a pain-free life in death, further inspiring him to have a hopeful mindset about his slave condition. This message in the song provides a connection of the culture of faith slaves brought to the Americas that Du Bois mentions in his prose. Relating to the previous paragraph, the sounds and musical qualities provided by "Lay This Body Down" show an example of the influence Black culture has on the country. Additionally,

traces of the sorrow songs' influence and Black culture, according to Du Bois, can be seen in White America through songs like "'Swanee River' and 'Old Black Joe'" (119).

Du Bois including both the lyrics and notes to "Lay This Body Down" in his book allows the sorrow songs to reach a wider audience. Cheryl A. Wall presents an argument that *The Souls of Black Folk* places itself in a soundscape by combining words with lines of music, allowing songs such as "Lay This Body Down" to do more than only words on a page can do (218). The musical bars in the song can represent the voices readers of 1903 cannot hear leading to people who have never heard these Black voices before to musically read and hear them on the written page. For this chapter specifically, "Lay This Body Down" adds an ability to convey themes of pain and hope across the color line by providing readers with a transcript of a slave song. Higher levels of musical literacy and more exposure to musical instruments at home also facilitate the ability for readers of *The Souls of Black Folk* to read and play the songs on their own. This exposure to songs and their melodies further pushes the idea that people outside of the Black community are now able to read songs such as "Lay this Body Down," and, therefore, Du Bois' readers can hear the suffering and injustices done to slaves and other Black people. Further, the inclusion of musical bars and lyrics of "Lay This Body Down" provide another avenue to help spread Black culture.

In his prose, Du Bois also makes a case for the history of the country being built by Black blood. He argues that sorrow songs tell the story of the development of the country and that Black bodies are responsible for its achievements. Du Bois rightfully points out that

Before the Pilgrims landed we were here. Here we have brought our three gifts and mingled them with yours: a gift of story and song—soft, stirring melody in an ill-harmonized and unmelodious land; the gift of sweat and brawn to beat back the wilderness, conquer the soil, and lay the foundations of this vast economic empire two hundred years earlier than your weak hands could have done it; the third, a gift of the Spirit. Around us the history of the land has centred [sic] for thrice a hundred years. (122)

His assertion of Black blood shaping the country is enhanced by the narrative in the lyrics of “Lay This Body Down.” In the song lines, readers see the “sweat and brawn” slaves had to go through by the suggestion of the slave speaker being tired of working and wanting to rest (122). The speaker echoes the action of laying his body down three times in the eight lines of the song, and, similarly, the common name for this song, is “Lay This Body Down.” Laying down, as stated previously, is synonymous with tiredness and the end of the day. Knowing that the speaker is a slave in the sorrow song allows readers to assume his hard work enabled the country to grow and sustain itself.

Apart from the physical labor done on plantations by slaves, Du Bois indicates in his prose that there is a blood-brotherhood between Black and White people because both races fought together on the battlefield, and he suggests that America would not be as successful without Black people. Du Bois makes a claim for equality between races because “[a]ctively we [Black people] have woven ourselves with the very warp and woof of this nation,—we fought their battles, shared their sorrow, mingled our blood with theirs . . . Our song, our toil, our cheer, and warning have been given to this nation in blood-brotherhood” (122). This quotation makes Du Bois’ audience reflect on contributions by Black people outside of the plantation and reminds his readers that Black people have also fought in wars for the United States. The quote also graphically depicts the blood of Black and White people mixing on the battlefield through the wounds and injuries both races sustained fighting the country’s wars. Likewise, both races of people celebrate the tragedies and successes of the country as if they are one family of Americans. Connecting back to “Lay This Body Down,” the death of Black bodies this country has seen is shown in the song through the churchyard the speaker is walking through and will eventually be his burial spot: “I walk through the churchyard / To lay this body down; / . . . I’ll lie in the grave” (116). Having the speaker walk through the churchyard and having the song take place around graves alludes to the ideas of death common in the Black community. Black people knew that to be a slave is to be dead while alive, and similarly, in the era Du Bois is writing in,

Black lives are still thought of as less than White lives. Black bodies who died in wars are also alluded to by the setting of the song being in a graveyard. Death is a constant reality Black people face. Additionally, the graves the speaker sees are likely those of people who may have died as slaves providing resources for the country through their work. The bodies of those who died on the battlefield most likely decomposed back into the ground. Ground that later provides resources for the country.

Through the inclusion of songs in his book, *The Souls of Black Folk*, Du Bois is able to convey feelings of sympathy in his readers. Doing so fortifies a connection between the prose Du Bois writes and the emotions felt in “Lay This Body Down.” Walter Scott Stepanenko suggests that Du Bois creates meaning from the songs “through the practical effects it has on the speakers and receivers, the emotions they invoke, and the objects they direct our attention to” (182-83). In *The Souls of Black Folk*, Du Bois generates sympathy in his readers through mentioning in his final chapter that the sorrow song “tell[s] in word and music of trouble and exile, of strife and hiding; they [slaves] grope towards some unseen power and sigh for rest in the End” (120). Du Bois continues to give examples of the hardships of Black and slave life by stating that in songs

[m]other and child are sung, but seldom father; fugitive and weary wanderer call for pity and affection, but there is little of wooing and wedding; the rocks and the mountains are well known, but home is unknown. Strange blending of love and helplessness sings through the refrain. (120)

His examples of slave life are present in “Lay This body Down.” Du Bois references family separation in his prose when he mentions that there is a “mother and child” but usually no father in the sorrow songs (120). In “Lay This Body Down,” the separation of loved ones is also referenced by the speaker when he shares his hope that his soul will be reunited with a loved one: “And my soul and thy soul shall meet that day, / When I lay this body down” (116). In these same lines, the “[s]trange blending of love and helplessness” Du Bois describes can also be seen in how the song’s speaker longs for his soul to be reunited with the unnamed loved one after he also dies

(120). The speaker has to continue suffering as a slave on earth until he is able to meet with another soul. Additionally, the “weary wanderer call[ing] for pity” can be seen in the song, “Lay This Body Down,” as well (120). The action of the slave speaker walking through a churchyard looking for a place to rest makes him a wanderer. His wish to rest after a long day and then hope to be reunited with his family in death creates feelings of pity in the song’s readers and listeners. Small connections between “Lay This Body Down” and the details in the prose Du Bois writes further highlight Black suffering.

Du Bois brilliantly including the sorrow song “Lay This Body Down” in his final chapter of *The Souls of Black Folk* adds depth to the ideas and themes he presents in “Of the Sorrow Songs.” His integration of the song and meticulous detail in describing Black life works together to allow Du Bois to present the depiction of suffering in the life of a slave in the past and the life of Black people of his time. Utilizing the song, “Lay This Body Down,” as an epitaph for slaves, presenting the lasting effects of slavery in the country, and having the song work in conjunction with his prose allows Du Bois to create a powerful narrative detailing injustices done to Black people and requesting that the country do better. He conveys in his White readers empathy for the Black race they have treated as inferior and challenges them to make the necessary changes in society to achieve equality between the races.

CHAPTER VII

REPRESENTATION OF MINORITIES AND SOCIETY THROUGH THE EYES OF WILLIAM HOGARTH

For my project, I chose to analyze digital images of the 18th century provided by the archives of places such as the Lewis Walpole Library and The British Museum. I tried to stick to images by William Hogarth since I think containing my images to his work might provide a more detailed representation of what he was thinking and saying about the society he was living in. This project has taken a completely different turn than my proposal and what I first thought I wanted to do, but I still tried to find images around similar themes. At first I tried to contain this project to Black representation and slavery and had a formal argument, but as I dug through the archives, there were images that focused on social class that also drew me in. I also found that I wanted to branch out a bit more and simply present what I found instead of arguing a certain point. Now, my image analyses is a little broader as I will be analyzing the images and focusing on the representation of minorities in contrasts to other groups to show how society is both critiqued and represented by William Hogarth.

I took some more liberties with this project than I usually do with other more “formal” projects. Instead of sticking to four to five images and providing 400-500 word descriptions of the them, I found myself deeply analyzing them which resulted in, what I think, are more thorough and longer readings of the pieces. As a result, I came up with three images with closer readings talking about society, women, and people of color. I put more emphasis on my own analysis of

the images but did include some light and more informal research through peer-reviewed articles and some websites to back up some of the claims I make throughout my analysis. This paper is informal and very much the beginning steps to a project that can be expanded more and, as we talked about, be turned into a gallery. For now, though, due to time limitations and end-of-semester burnout, I am keeping the presentation format simple and limited the images I included. I can see this project going further, and, hopefully, I can pick it up later. For now, though, below are the images I have selected for the beginning phase of a much bigger project. The images focus on a critique of society and its consuming habits and how minorities such as women and people of color are being represented in them.

Image Analyses

Image 1: William Hogarth's, *The Industrious 'Prentice Grown Rich and Sheriff of London*.
London, 1747.



In this image, William Hogarth can be said to critique society and the gluttony high society shows towards eating. This image is about a man named Goodchild and his wife hosting a banquet for members of high society. There is a divide in the groups of people present which can be assumed to be high society and important guests, shown through those who are seated and eating; servants, shown by those who are walking around bringing food to guests and especially through the dark complexion of the man on the left side of the foreground; and lower-class people who are excluded from these gatherings, shown by the people barred at the door. In the foreground and to the left, white men are shown in an unattractive and unflattering way as a servant is waiting on them, alluding to Hogarth's critique of this part of society. You can tell they are members of a higher class because of the clothes they are wearing and their wigs. Their clothes appear to be of a better quality than the average person because of the small details like the multiple layers, handkerchiefs, ruffles, fancier hats, etc. The wigs the men wear look more meticulously styled and have curls in comparison to the straight hair and shorter hair of the people at the door and the servant. The men at the table are also eating their food in a way that is not visually appealing while having snarling and greedy looks on their faces. These men may show a critique Hogarth has on the food habits and meaning in high society. Scholars such as Troy Bickham suggest that food carries a certain power in society and can be a symbol of status instead of simply nutritional value (74). Viewers can see the empty plates and the way some of the men are eating all the way to the bone of their food. One man is even stuffing a whole chicken leg in his mouth. Meanwhile in the back, you can see servants bringing out even more food, therefore, Hogarth is showing the high consumption and gluttonous way of eating by the members of the feast.

On the right side of the foreground, you can see a parish beadle working as a person who receives messages and admits who can come into the feast. His role in this situation may also be Hogarth critiquing religion and how it is consumed by different classes. In this situation, the beadle is working for the higher classes and more than likely is preaching in favor of their way of

life and why they are were chosen to lead this lifestyle. The beadle's higher position is also shown through the clothes he wears and the accessories he uses. The vestments he uses are ornate. He also carries a staff which is a symbol of power showing he is in command of certain people, and the staff is probably made of gold or some other precious metal, showing the consumption of wealth religion has through being able to provide costly objects. The twoness of religion favoring the rich rather than the poor in contrast to themes in the Bible can be seen through the beadle's role. Hogarth can also be said to be critiquing the excessive spending of religious men because he is said to have "harbored a distaste for excess or gaudy ornamentation" (Molineux 496). Including the details and lavish way of dress of the beadle could be Hogarth's way of satirizing religious people and their spending habits.

There is a glimpse of the hypocrisy of religion present in this image as well. Much of that hypocrisy is due to the beadle's role in being fine with such parties. However, I think the way Hogarth utilizes the biblical quote at the bottom of his image also points to the way religion is misconstrued in favor of the rich. Proverbs chapter 4 verses 7-8 state that wisdom is more valuable than material possessions; however, the quote at the bottom seems to purposefully exclude the beginning of the verse that mentions wisdom. Instead, the verse reads, "With all thy getting get understanding. Exalt her, and she shall promote thee: she shall bring thee to honour, when thou dost embrace her." The lack of the idea of wisdom might point to Hogarth thinking high society is ignorant to their ways of eating and consuming the world in terms of food, resources, and economy. Ignorance of society is seen in the way party goers greedily eat their food while others are banned from entering at the door. Hogarth was a great satirist, so including a verse that promotes honor and greatness while at the same time giving a negative depiction of the people in the image may be his way of further critiquing British society.

On the same side of the foreground, poorer members of society can be seen. In contrast to the men on the left wearing wigs, these men appear to not be wearing wigs and most men appear to have straight hair. The pose of the man closest to the beadle shows one of submission as if he

is lower than the other guests at the party. The man here has his simple hat in his hands and has a sort of begging or humbling look to him since it seems as if his hands are clasped together behind his hat and is glancing down. The men on this side of the portrait appear to not have as detailed clothes as the men on the left. Some of the men do have cuffs on their jackets, but they are not as extravagant as those who are feasting. Their outfits resemble the outfits worn by the two servants in the middle of the drawing instead of the men on the left. The faces of the men on the right are not fully visible either. One of the more visible faces is the man who appears to have a look of horror or shock on his face. While it is not clear what is causing this man's expression, it could be his reaction to the note handed to the beadle, the beadle not letting him into the feast, the crowdedness of the lower-class people he is with, his disgust with the way the men on the left are eating the food, or something else.

The background of the portrait also provides a lot of details about the way of life of the feast goers. Viewers can see high ceilings and windows in the banquet hall. There are even visible trees in the back suggesting there may be a garden. The walls and ceiling of the hall are highly decorated with intricate carvings and engravings. A statue of Sr William Walworth Kt can be seen along with two large portraits of King William III. In the top left of the background, there are musicians who work to show the money the hosts are able to spend on the feast. The two hosts of the feast are seen under the second portrait of King William III. While not as detailed as other people, the hosts can still be seen to wear fancy clothes and wigs. Their wealth and how they consume their wealth is also shown by the chairs they are sitting on. The chairs are elegant and are not the benches the other feast members are sitting on. Therefore, while this feast is for higher members of society, the hosts are showing their own wealth and status compared to the feast-goers by their extravagant home and chairs.

On the left side of the foreground, there is a Black servant who seems like he is waiting on one of the men eating. This can be assumed through the way he is holding a glass in his right hand and his line of sight is towards the men. While it is not clear if the young man is a slave or a

servant, the way he is standing behind the men and none of the men are noticing him is a good indication that he is considered of a lower class or possibly a lower human being since racism was highly present in eighteenth century London. It is interesting to note that the young man is the only person of color in the image and looks very young. Perhaps he is in his teen or early adult years. The Black man has a kind look to his face which is a stark juxtaposition to the men eating who have snarls and grotesque looks on their faces. He also has his natural hair showing and is not wearing a wig which again points to him not being a member of a higher class. Hogarth was thought of to be against these types of social gatherings and its connections to slavery:

“Hogarth’s primary concern was not the oppression of black slaves, but rather the harmful effects he perceived in his fellow Londoners’ desire for foreign goods” (Molineux 495). As a result of his ideas, I would argue that the difference in facial expressions is not really meant to humanize the Black boy or contrast his kind and pleasant face to the sinister or grotesque expressions of the people he serves. Perhaps the difference in facial expressions is Hogarth’s way of criticizing the eating habits and social systems of the rich, especially when it comes to consuming foreign goods that make systems like the slave trade successful.

The frame that Hogarth draws around the image also has a lot to say through its detail and by visually dividing noble and slave society. On the left, a mace, sword, and the monarch crown can be seen. They are symbols of the highest levels of society and the England people like to see. On the right, there is a rope, some manacles, and a whip. These items are associated with slavery and are used to punish, torture, and kill slaves. This is a darker side of history and society than what is shown on the left, so, therefore, Hogarth is creating a physical divide in his image to contrast the two completely different sides of London and England at large. It could also be his protest against societal structures since we have two different depictions of how people live and are treated when they are at the top or bottom of society.

Image 2: William Hogarth's, *Qui Color Albus Erat, Nunc Est Contrarius Albo*. London, 1743.



In this next image, Hogarth titles his etching with the Latin quote, “*Qui color albus erat nunc est contrarius albo*” which roughly translates to “Which color was white now is the opposite of white.” While this image was found in the Lewis Walpole Library database, The Royal Collection Trust site actually provides more context for the image. The site states that the quote is a line from Ovid’s “*The Metamorphosis*” in which a raven has been turned black as punishment for telling Apollo about Coronis’ infidelity, leading him to kill her. In Hogarth’s etching, actor, John Highmore, finds a “Black woman in his bed rather than the mistress he expects” (RCT.uk). With the context of the image in mind, a few different interpretations can be made of the drawing and what it says about race, sexuality, and consuming sexuality.

When looking at the colors in the image, the viewer is drawn to the Black woman in the center and the black inside of the bed canopy. Regarding the woman, there are two possible interpretations of what is going on with her which both involve the idea that being sexually active is seen as being impure and being impure is to be black. The Royal Collection Trust mentions that the actor, John Highmore, goes to visit his mistress whose portrait is on the wall on the left side

of the image. When he goes to her room, instead he finds a Black woman lying in her bed as a joke. This interpretation shows the common views of the time of White people believing themselves to be superior to Black people. That the other men in the room think switching the women is funny and will make the man visiting his mistress be disappointed and frustrated shows the disgust men of the time had towards black skin. This disgust can be seen in the scowl John Highmore has on his face while making direct eye contact with the man on the left closet to the woman. He is also clenching his left fist showing his frustration towards the men's joke. The grotesque and problematic views of the time towards Black people are suggested in the way John Highmore is furious at the joke and how the woman is used as an object that can be made fun of.

Another possible reading of the image aligns more with the story of the raven in Ovid's "The Metamorphosis." As stated before, the raven, who used to be white, is turned black as a punishment. With this idea in mind, the portrait of the woman on the wall could be taken as what the Black woman in the center of the image used to look like. As a result of being sexually active/wanting sex and not considered "pure" anymore, her skin got darker, and she is now considered impure. Her skin color reflects the color association, of the time, of black as sinful and impure. The transition from light to dark skin is a result of her tarnished virginity. Instead of being a nicely dressed White woman with neat hair, the sexually active woman is now turned into a Black woman with loose clothing in an unmade bed and bonnet. If the woman is working at a brothel or providing other sexual services, her having sex with multiple men could be another reason that led to a change in her skin tone. This observation could tie in to the sexist views of the time, and even today's views, that women should not have many sexual partners if they want to be considered respectable. This interpretation could be Hogarth's critique that makes fun of the views society had towards sexuality and purity. He chooses to take the quote from Ovid's piece seriously and depict it in his engraving as a way of calling out the unreasonable ideas of England towards sexuality and women.

Additionally, the majority of the bed is etched in dark colors with the woman and the inside of the canopy being black. The use of shadows and color in the image speaks to the ideas of sex being impure and visiting brothels as something only the lower class takes part in. The bed, a place where sexual acts can happen, is dark and the woman performing sexual actions has dark skin further pushing the idea of sex being considered impure. While it can be said that the dark colors are a result of the image being etched, Hogarth is able to add dimensions and slightly different shades to other areas of his image, so making the bed black is likely a purposeful decision. The darkness of the bed and how it resembles a void, since not much can be seen in it, could also signify the fall of the people who succumb to sexual temptations. The woman is, after all, trying to lead the man on the right to the bed and is strongly suggesting him to have sex with her.

The woman lying in bed can be taken to be a sex slave/prostitute. She appears to be wearing a single layer of flowing clothing and is in a seductive pose. Additionally, she is tempting the men to come closer to her, especially the man who is supposed to be John Highmore by touching him and pulling him closer by the chin. She also has a breast exposed and does not seem to care that the men can see her breast, instead she is smiling. Her arms are also spread out and open as if inviting the men to come to her bed for sex. Looking at the canopy of the bed the woman is in, the flaps of the fabric are open, also creating an inviting feeling. Interestingly though, the canopy resembles a vagina. The flaps on the outside and the interior of the canopy seem to be a vaginal opening, and the woman is in the center of it. Her place in the center makes her representation of female sexuality in that she is the one who seems to be coming out of the vagina but is also a highly sexual being wanting to lure men to have sex with her.

There are four men in the image. All the men can be taken to be part of a higher class based on the clothes they are wearing. The four men have extremely fancy clothes with multiple layers and ruffles. Their coats also have multiple buttons running down the sides and bold cuffs similar to the previous image by Hogarth. Additionally, the class of the men can even be seen in

the wigs they choose to wear. They cover their natural hair and choose to go for a more pompous, high, and curly-haired look. The actor in the image even has a large bow in his hair. It is interesting that there are multiple high-class men in this image because it seems like Hogarth is pointing out the hobbies, in this case going to see mistresses, that higher class men have but are not talked about. As with many other things, such as sex, perhaps going to seek sex with mistresses is seen as taboo and not something that is considered proper in their society. Creating this image then, could also be Hogarth's way of ridiculing the ideas society has towards hobbies and taboo subjects.

Further, three of the men seem to not be bothered by the semi-nude woman on the bed. While one of them looks away. All of the men are disrespecting the woman by either being frustrated that the woman is Black or by being pleased that John Highmore is frustrated. While the man on the far right is holding Highmore back, his face reveals that he is enjoying the situation. He has a slight smile on his face and while one hand is gripping the actor's coat, the other is lightly placed on his shoulder. Not having a tight grip on his frustrated friend is a sign that the man is enjoying the situation and does not care about the actions his frustrated friend may make. The man on the left closest to the woman, does have a more serious look on his face and his hand is pointing to the woman's breast. It seems like the man is wanting the actor to go on and have sexual relations with the woman, insinuating that he is disrespectful towards the woman and sees her as an object for pleasure. The man farthest to the left and closest to the dresser is looking away from the situation and the brightness of the candle he is carrying acts as a shield to block him from the situation, perhaps keeping him pure. However, I would argue that the man is not innocent or pure because he takes part in this situation and seems to be enjoying it. He has a slight smirk on his face and is also pointing to the woman's breast. He too, then, is also disrespecting the woman and treating her as a sexual object by being present in the room and allowing the conflict between the men to happen.

With this image, Hogarth seems to be judging how society takes part and consumes sexuality by depicting men in a way that reveals their treatment towards lower-class and Black women. It seems as though when it comes to sexuality, White women are preferred and treated as pure while Black women are treated more like impure sexual objects who disgust White men. Sexuality, then, is treated as taboo and something that tarnishes you, and in this image, the woman is literally tarnished for having a high libido. Black skin is once again seen as inferior and as sinful in the inclusion of a seemingly promiscuous woman being the focal point of the image and sexual desire. Hogarth is showing a racist and sexist side of British society by depicting and calling out the treatment of minorities, in this case women and Black people, and how British society has distorted views of who is valued and who is an object.

Image 3: William Hogarth's, *Morning*. London, 1738.



This last image is nostalgic for me of the first archival project I ever did. Back then I had never heard of digital humanities, so I consider it an important project that influenced who I am

as a scholar and how I analyze things. In that project, I analyzed Hogarth's *Noon*. I suppose I either did not find *Morning* in the archive I was looking at or found *Noon* more interesting, and, so, I chose the latter for my project. Nevertheless, for this project, I went back and read what my younger self had to say about *Noon* before providing my own analysis on *Morning*. I chose this image as a way of going back to that project and seeing a more complete representation of Hogarth's series of four images as well as seeing my own growth in my analysis skills.

When looking at most of Hogarth's engravings, they are all reflected vertically due to the process of reproducing them; such is the case for this image that started off as an oil painting with all the people facing the opposite way. However, even though the image is reflected from the original way Hogarth painted it, it does not affect what Hogarth captured and is saying about society. Hogarth was probably aware of the printing and engraving process, as well, so the reflection of the image does not get in the way of the ideas conveyed in *Morning*.

This last Hogarth image represents various groups of people and has many things going on in every part of it. Starting with the center of the image, the viewer is drawn to the woman in a fancy dress. Like the previous two images, the status of this woman can be seen in her clothes. Again, we see multiple layers of clothes, and there is volume in the dress as well. The volume in the dress is an indication of layers such as petticoats and crinolines. The woman also seems to have multiple bows and intricate sleeves on her dress. In her pocket by her right elbow, there seems to be some kind of pen or fancy item with a person's face on it. That person may be the current King of England, George II, and may show her loyalty to the monarchy. It could also be the portrait of a friend or family member; nevertheless, there are small details in the image of the man that point to him also being of a high class, mainly, the details that can be seen on his clothes. Additionally, the fan the woman carries in her left hand and her hair also point to her status. Her hair seems neatly styled with curls framing her forehead. Most of her hair is exposed, and there is a long flowing ribbon attached to a hair piece. This hair piece resembles a fascinator. Traditionally, these small hat-like accessories are a status of class and are meant to show upper-

class etiquette. If the hair accessory is truly a fascinator, then that hair piece is a key component of her attire that reflects her social standing. There are some spots on her face as well that could be beauty marks but could also be scarring or spots from disease, like syphilis, a common venereal disease at the time whose cure had not been discovered yet. Sophie Carter's research on eighteenth century prostitutes and the men who associated with them details the social anxieties around venereal diseases such as syphilis and how they were common in all classes of people (76). While the article deals with prostitutes, the research also presents higher-class married men as having affairs with prostitutes that masquerade as higher-class women. As a result, the men contract a venereal disease, and, I would assume, they later infect their wives. Perhaps such is the case for the woman in the painting. The spots on her face may be a result of contracting a venereal disease from her husband.

Continuing on with the physical position of the upper-class woman in the painting, there is a visual divide of the classes present in the image. There is an empty section where the woman is walking through that is clearly not as crowded as other parts of the image, and on both sides of those sections there are people of a lower class. This addition forms a sort of separation of the two different worlds these people live in. Perhaps the woman being the only one of a different class compared to the other people in the image is a visual representation showing how small the upper-class is in comparison to the lower-classes. The only person who seems to be close to the woman, and therefore able to be part of her world, is the small servant boy she has with her. Though he is of a lower class, the fact that he works for her allows him a peek into her lifestyle. He has the face of a disgruntled man, but maybe his face shows the hard work and lifestyle he is expected to have from a young age to provide for himself and possibly family due to his social standing. His clothes are somewhat better than the women by the fire but more closely resemble the clothes of the men showing public displays of affection towards the other women. Similar attire links the servant boy to these other men as symbols of status; further, under his hat, his hair can be seen as straight and not as well-groomed as some of the other men we have seen in the

previous images. His hair looks more like the hair of the lower-class men in Hogarth's *The Industrious 'Prentice Grown Rich and Sheriff of London*. The boy is also carrying a book which, based on what The British Museum says about the image, is probably a Bible (BritishMuseum.org). However, it is also possible that working for a high-class woman gives the servant boy some access to books and education.

Moving on to the people closest to the viewer in the foreground, there are two women warming themselves by a fire and a man, or possibly woman based on the rope around his waist, who is facing the other direction where viewers cannot see him. Obviously, the women are suffering from poverty which can be seen in the way they are dressed and how they are desperately trying to warm themselves up by the fire. It is interesting to note, though, that the only person of color in this image is a beggar woman. The woman is visibly darker than everyone else, is hunched over, and is holding out her hand for money as she looks at the rich woman. The woman's inclusion in this image works to show how race affects the class you belong to, and Hogarth is trying to drive that point home by making her a beggar. Not only is this woman poor like the other woman by the fire, but she is willing to beg for money—something the other woman does not do. The person whose face cannot be seen appears to be digging through trash shown through there being bins with bags in them and trash littered on the floor. This person's role in the image works to show the extent people's hunger would drive them to. Through these women, Hogarth is also critiquing the social division of society in which you have well-to-do people walking around poor people and refusing to help them out. The stark contrast between the women by the fire and the rich woman walking through with a nasty look on her face and avoiding eye contact shows how the country refuses to help those who are suffering from poverty.

Behind these people are two couples. While scholars such as Carter point to the promiscuity of society during the time period (62-63), here Hogarth is making this idea more obvious that people were interested in sex and were not confining their love from society. People

were consuming sex and actively taking part in sex culture. In the image, you can see two men kissing and caressing the women. The couple on the right are kissing and caressing themselves in public. They have no distinctive facial features, so their facelessness almost works to represent a larger portion of society that might take part in sexual adventures. It makes the couple more accessible for viewers to be able to see themselves or others in their place. Moving to the couple on the left, both the man and the woman have slight flirtatious/mischievous looks on their faces. They seem to enjoy being in close proximity of each other. The man's hand is even going inside the woman's dress as he touches her breast while she does not seem to mind. The sexual exploration of their bodies is being displayed publicly which shows how society was interested in sex and how people were being more open about it. The rich woman, on the other hand, seems to be eyeing them and disapproves of their public display through the look of shock and dislike in her face.

The corners of the foreground of the image show trash and food littering the ground. The messy streets push a narrative of the "dirty" lower class when in reality there were dirty things about all classes. It is common knowledge that makeup products and other lifestyle objects were incredibly unhygienic. Texts like "The Lady's Dressing Room" by Johnathon Swift, another great satirist of the time, show the misconceptions of cleanliness and dirt society had through dirty makeup tools and full chamber pots. Perhaps Hogarth is both adding depth to his image and pointing out the misconceptions of only the lower class being dirty through the inclusion of dirty streets. On the bottom left side of the drawing, by the bread and on top of a mound of dirt, mushrooms can be seen growing. Going back to the beginning of the semester, the mushrooms are once again proving they can grow anywhere and will always be around.

Looking at the midground of the image, on one side you can see a coffee house while on the other there is a large crowd. In the coffee house, it looks like there are men with swords inside, and some of the men can be seen at the entrance. The British Museum claims that there is a fight going on in the coffee house (BritishMuseum.org). Troy Bickham also points out how

coffee houses are a sign of British Imperialism and became a staple of eighteenth-century life (72). In the middle of the midground there are some people leaning on what appear to be wooden beams, while on the right side of the middle ground people are seen carrying signs and baskets. These people can be taken to be of a lower class due to the way they are dressed and the labor of what appears to be a woman carrying a large basket on her shoulders. Small children can also be seen in the image. A man advertising a sign that the British Museum claims advertises “Dr. Rock’s remedy” can be seen (BritishMuseum.org). A quick Google search shows that one of Dr. Rock’s remedies is an antivenereal disease pill. The reference to the famous doctor is Hogarth’s way of pointing out the gullibility of people who thought the doctor’s pills worked. His reference, though, also ties in the idea of how society was consuming sex and publicly displaying sex. The man with the sign is looking in the direction of the wealthy woman with questionable spots that could be a result of syphilis, and the man is also looking in the direction of the couples who are taking part in sexual actions.

Finally, looking at the background of the image, there are small details that relate to the setting of Hogarth’s Covent Garden London. In the top right corner, there is a clock reading 7:55 in the morning corresponding to the title of Hogarth’s piece, *Morning*. On top of it, it appears there may be an angel. The inclusion of the angel is a little ironic considering the amount of sexual energy coming from the image, but maybe that is Hogarth’s point in that society is changing its views on things that are considered taboo according to texts like the Bible. That clock could also be St. Paul’s Church that the middle-aged rich woman is going too, further building on the hypocrisy of religious people by having the woman ignore the beggar and the opposite views of society by having fights and sex acts outside of the church. While this image was created right before the Industrial Revolution, there are small hints of advancements in society that led to those types of major events. Tall buildings can be seen with multiple windows and stories. They are also close together. The closeness of the buildings paired with the crowded streets work together to show a growing population in London. The gates seen in the image work

to keep Covent Garden a separate part of London, but given the amount of lower-class people present in the image, the gates also work as a way to bar the lower-class society from the higher-class with limited mingling between the groups. There is also smoke coming from the coffee house chimney and another chimney in the background. These chimneys are creating gray skies and could be Hogarth's way of pointing to the infamous smog problem in London. As literature and history tells us, air pollution and contamination have always been a problem in London and images of the Industrial revolution along with poems about chimney sweeps show how bad the problem got. These small details in the background work to provide Hogarth's depiction of London and the lifestyles he critiques.

To be continued?

As stated before, these image analyses seem like the very beginning of a much bigger project, and as a result there is no clear or nice ending/conclusion that sums up the arguments presented because there is so much more than can be done. (Also my brain is fried :). However, I hope, Dr. Hall, you can see some of the running themes present in the images that I found. If I choose to go forward with this project, these same ideas will form the basis of a more cohesive and thorough argument. Overall, though, I am very grateful for the opportunity to dive deeply into archives and analyze images relating to our class themes more closely. I truly had a lot of fun and took my time carefully looking at these images (and yes, I do the same when I look at museum exhibits. Haha). Thank you again, Dr. Hall, for this opportunity and a truly flavorful class.

CHAPTER VIII

PUSHING WHITENESS AND RECOVERING OWNERSHIP IN “PART TWO: MEXICO” OF LESLIE MARMON SILKO’S *ALMANAC OF THE DEAD*

Almanac of the Dead is filled with Eurocentric language regarding race and status, making it clear that Western society favors white qualities over more Indigenous qualities. Leslie Marmon Silko painfully reminds readers of the extent Eurocentric values control both individual and group lives from acts of individual racism to structural racism controlling who actually has power and status over others. In detailing how colonialization by Europeans has endangered Indigenous lives and culture, Silko creates a narrative of the eventual uprising of Indigenous groups against those who have placed them on the margins of society. In Silko’s section that takes place in Mexico similar themes regarding race are brought up and later revisited in other sections of the novel. Her focus on colorism, proximity to whiteness, and capitalism point to the dangers of Eurocentric ideals and influences on anti-Indigenous attitudes that favor whiteness, metaphorical and physical movement, and land ownership. Silko uses these elements to look at the relationships Indigenous characters have among themselves and the land to create a narrative that suggests the negative effects of European categorization and a refutation of Eurocentric ideas on capital.

In this section of the novel, Silko initiates conversations on the racist ideas of white favorability through her character of Menardo. Menardo lives in Mexico and remains there as an adult; however, European influence in Mexico, like the US and other spaces, has created an anti-

Indigenous country, valuing white and some mestizo bloodlines over Indigenous ancestry. Silko opens up book one, "Reign of the Death-Eye Dog," in part two with a young Menardo realizing his shame in having an Indian nose. While Menardo has many insecurities as a child, his biggest vulnerability is being called Flat Nose by other boys: "[t]he older boys had found a far worse name. For the rest of his life Menardo could hardly think of it, let alone whisper it. . . . Flat Nose. A slang name the Indians were called. 'Flat noses that dogs don't even have'" (258). Menardo is instantly dehumanized by other boys comparing him to less than a dog based on his facial features. The nickname of Flat Nose as an insult based on a seemingly unattractive and unfavorable feature, since it shows a connection to Indigenous ancestry, pushes an idea that the shape of a person's nose signifies Europeanness as superiority and non-Europeanness as inferiority, thus, Menardo's Indigenous nose marks him as a non-European and inferior to others. Silko, then, suggests that society prefers white facial features and sees them as more agreeable to societal standards over more Indigenous ones. Further, Silko implies that the hatred of indigenous features is a learned behavior by depicting Menardo as not aware of his facial features being linked to his Indigenous roots and his nose being unfavorable until the taunts of other boys teach him to be ashamed of his ancestry. Silko strategically uses the narrative of childhood bullying to insinuate that notions of whiteness being the preferred race stem from peer approval through Menardo's character who demonstrates how feelings of inferiority are socially enforced and learned. Critic Özlem Savaş contends that people need a "collective sense of belonging and position themselves in . . . relation[to their] materiality and aesthetics" (314). Relating to Menardo, the same sense of belonging Savaş mentions is present in that Menardo wants the aesthetic feature of his nose to not be a characteristic that ostracizes him from his peers. Also noteworthy is how Silko bluntly states that views of preferring whiteness and European features are not solely promoted by white people but also people of mixed ancestry since the bully who nicknamed Menardo Flat Nose is "dark skinned himself" (Silko 258). These details help Silko create a narrative which conveys that white people are not the only ones promoting views of

white supremacy, but even people who are not white, and marginalized themselves, agree with Eurocentric views and push against Indigenous features. Menardo's character, therefore, exhibits how Indigenous people are subject to bullying and verbal violence from white people and other mixed Indigenous people due to European notions of whiteness being widespread in the Americas. This views lead his character to believe that having a European nose will help him be more likeable to the boys he is around.

Silko continues to portray the anti-Indigenous attitudes caused by the negative effects of white favorability through Menardo blaming his lack of peer approval on his grandfather and continuing to feel shame in his ancestry by obsessing over his nose. Shortly after the children at school point out Menardo's Indigenous nose, he makes the "horrible discovery" that his grandfather has a flatter and wider nose than him, and Menardo purposefully avoids visiting and being seen with his grandfather so that others will not know that his ancestors and family "were in fact Indians" (Silko 259). Additionally, the narrator remarks that Menardo could possibly pass as having "*sangre limpia*" if it were not for his nose, which is Silko's way of pointing specifically to absurd ideas of race superiority (259). Jane Olmsted argues that "[t]he idea [of] blood purity ... is another aesthetic dimension that represents a fetishization most explicitly associated with racism" and can be seen in "Menardo's internalized racism" over not being more European (478). Menardo's self-hatred and need to hide his own ancestry go to the extent of him rejoicing in the fact that his grandfather passed away and making false claims about why his nose is flat. After the death of his grandfather, Menardo is "relieved once they got [his grandfather] buried because he had studied the shapes and sizes of the noses of all his uncles and aunts and cousins; the only one with a suspicious nose was Menardo, and ... the evidence that the flat nose was inherited had been buried;" Menardo, then, is able to claim that his flat nose is a result of a fighting injury and not ancestry (Silko 259). His obsession with his nose is proven to be a fetishization of Eurocentric views by Silko carefully detailing how Menardo took the time to compare the noses in his family. Menardo being tormented by his looks and making excuses for his features show how Silko

creates characters that embody the need to be and feel more European. She guides readers to see how society teaches Menardo to favor whiteness and hate his Indigenous ancestry, further taking power away from Indigenous peoples. By negatively addressing Menardo's desire for European features, Silko bluntly addresses the dangers and harm of pushing whiteness as the most favorable race and, as a consequence, leading to Indigenous features being regarded as inferior. She also further fleshes out a narrative of self-hatred by using the metaphor of a fighting injury as an excuse for Menardo's flat nose. Her metaphor of a Menardo having a fighting injury gives readers a glimpse of the inner struggle Menardo is facing when he rejects his own ancestry and makes strides to be close to white society, a society that continues to discriminate him all his life; thus, Silko continues to show how the prevalence of white supremacy eats away at one's sense of self, taking further power from Indigenous peoples.

The negative effects of European categorization pertaining to physical characteristics continue to impact Menardo into his adulthood as he constantly fears his physical characteristics will mark him as an Indigenous outsider. Adding to Menardo's own self-conscious thoughts about himself are Eurocentric stereotypical views of people of color being dangerous. Both the inherent racism of white people and Menardo's negative awareness of himself as Indigenous are presented by Silko when Menardo is in Tucson, Arizona working out a deal to purchase and smuggle guns across the US-Mexico border:

The owners of the gun shop are all white men who wear guns and holsters in their shops. They unconsciously touch their holsters when Menardo walks in their doors. He knows they will call the police if he raises the subject. ... Menardo is once again self-conscious about his flat, thick nose; his skin looks darker in Tucson too. (264)

Silko structures her novel to demonstrate the racist attitudes people, and specifically in this instance white people, living in the United States have towards people who do not fit European characteristics of whiteness. She utilizes the gun shop scenario to show how Menardo is considered dangerous, even before they are aware of his private army, to these white owners, so

the gun shop owners turn to the possibility of becoming violent themselves as a result of this assumption. Not only does the action of the white owners touching their guns imply that they are willing to be violent around a person of color, but Menardo also acknowledging that the police will come and arrest him if he calls out the men on their prejudices, points to how people of color are seen as inferior by white people and, specifically, in the United States. The action of knowing the shop owners consider him a threat and the justice system not protecting him casts Menardo as an outsider, at least temporarily, in the gun store. His own hatred of his skin color and nose continue to cause a heightened awareness that he is not equal to the members of white society. It is also important to note that when Menardo crosses over into the United States, a place with a higher concentration of people with European ancestry, he looks darker now that he is around more people with lighter skin tones, and Menardo is further differentiated from others to suggest that he is even more out of place in white society when he is in the United States than in Mexico. Silko carefully including this detail points to the hostility and dividedness Eurocentric views of favoring whiteness has on groups of people.

Along with the bias views Silko's characters have towards people of color and Indigenous features, Silko continues to show Eurocentric views favoring whiteness through small details in color; Color hints at the idea of white favorability, especially in regard to Menardo. When Menardo and his wife, Iliana, a higher-class woman who has ties to Europe and its conquistadors, are getting dressed for a visit to the Governor's Palace, the narrator lets readers know of Iliana's anxieties towards Menardo's clothing: "[Iliana] knew Menardo did not like to wear the brown suit to the Governor's Palace ... [n]aturally Iliana understood the importance of these details ... so her parents and relatives would find him more acceptable" (269). Silko's way of pointing out society's negative view towards brownness is subtle, but at the same time, that subtlety indicates how racism and views of white supremacy are hidden in society. She expertly weaves a narrative in which colonist views of exterminating Indigenous connections are still prevalent hundreds of years after initial European contact. Having Menardo avoid wearing brown

to a society function with important people there connects to the history of whiteness being favored, especially in issues of government and higher-class, as Menardo metaphorically strips himself of his brown skin and race when he crosses the threshold into higher society. Iliana being the person who chooses what Menardo gets to wear turns her into a gatekeeper figure when she helps Menardo cross over into her society and be accepted by her class of people. Additionally, similar to her conquistador ancestry, in the same way that her ancestors deprived Indigenous people of their cultures and traditions in favor of European views, Iliana is taking Menardo's brownness away and replacing it with her whiteness by giving him a "ruffled white shirt" (269). As suggested by James Cox's readings of a colonized Mexico, Iliana can be said to "encourag[e Menardo] to overcome Indian-ness and to adopt mestizaje ... [since m]estizaje in the Mexican context, therefore, is a rejection of the [I]ndigenous" (5). Menardo's own willingness to marry Iliana as a way of becoming "whiter" signifies how he wants to remove his brownness to be closer to society's ideal of whiteness and, thus, positions him as complicit in stripping his Indigenous heritage away. Silko's utilization of color and clothing to mimic the actions of colonists' desecrating the Indigenous people's way of life adds to the subtle ways she is refuting Eurocentric views even in moments in which she is not bluntly or violently speaking out against colonialism.

Silko further highlights how Eurocentric and capitalist views, along with what percent "white" a person is, influence the relationships between people. Even though Menardo is a successful insurance man who moved up in social status, Iliana's family looks down at him from a position of white privilege because he does not come from their same ancestry. One of the reasons Iliana is excited about her new house is because she wants to prove wrong those

who had been skeptical about her marriage. ... Menardo had money, and her family had lost much of its wealth over the years. Still Iliana had been reminded, every day since she was three years old, that her great-great-grandfather on her mother's side had descended from the conquistador De Oñate. (Silko 269)

While Menardo is financially superior to Iliana's family and can provide for her, at one point he even gave money to the family, Iliana's family members still do not approve of her marriage and do not think the two are a good match. The family's prejudice towards Menardo stems from his ancestry, and they discriminate against him because of his Indigenous background. However, the family's distaste for Menardo due to his ancestry is not as important because Iliana's family values more capitalist views that favor wealth over ethnicity. In this way, Silko brutally shows how European ties and ideas of capitalism influence how some people think who is better suited for marriage. In describing how every day Iliana is reminded of her ties to De Oñate, Silko simultaneously asserts how whiteness is favored in higher classes and ridicules this notion by having the family obsess over the origins of a deceased ancestor to the point that they mention their origins every single day but also overlook family origins in favor of money. Thus, Iliana's family, though below Menardo in financial status, demonstrates how no amount of social mobility is enough to change Menardo's background or gain him full acceptance from white aristocracy; however, at the same time, Iliana's family shows how money is a powerful contributing factor to help him at least be partially accepted into white society. Silko, then, uses the self-contradicting values of Iliana's family to parallel Menardo's own views towards his ancestry and the need to be white to create a turncoat-like narrative of people who are willing to accept others and their views when they benefit from interacting with the other group of people. Both the family's and Menardo's contradictions show how European notions of capitalism and power are more influential in causing people to stray from their own beliefs when there is something to be gained.

In the same way that colors help Iliana's actions embody whiteness and its transferring, Silko relates certain colors to Alegría to show her cleaner ties to European ancestry over Menardo, further pushing a narrative of whiteness and white qualities being favored over Indigeneity. When Silko describes the first encounter between Menardo and Alegría to her readers, the "lovely blue silk dress [Alegría] wore was protected by a starched, white smock that

gave her appearance a certain authority” (266). Clothing and color, once again, work together to give and take power and skillfully remind readers of white supremacist Eurocentric views.

Alegría’s whiteness is shown through the large white smock that covers her body as if it serves as a giant target to show that she has European blood and, therefore, is superior to Menardo. Her superiority over Menardo is further shown by how the white smock gives her a “certain authority” (266). Without realizing it, Menardo sees a piece of clothing as giving Algeria more power. The fact that the smock is white alludes to how race and ethnicity influence who has power. The dress Alegría wears further pushes the idea of her clothing showing her ancestry since one noticeable European feature is blue eyes. The smock can also be interpreted to do more than protect Alegría’s clothes. Silko is intentional with her words, and so, using the word “protect” to reflect the relationship between Alegría’s dress and smock gives the impression that the smock metaphorically protects Alegría’s whiteness. Having Menardo notice the dress and smock creates a sense that Alegría is someone who Menardo is not supposed to interact with. Later in the section, Menardo starts an affair with Alegría, leading to the end of her career and negatively affecting her reputation as an architect. Silko’s inclusion of this storyline suggests the prejudice Eurocentric view that people of different races should not mingle as if they are equal in class and heritage. Blue and white then, two colors heavily associated with Europeans through common eye and skin colors, serve as markers of difference between Alegría and Menardo. Paralleling Iliana helping Menardo cross a threshold, Alegría aids Menardo in crossing another threshold into white society by having a sexual relationship with him even though she is “protected” by her whiteness, leading to Alegría’s whiteness and protection transferring, at least to a certain extent, to Menardo (266). Her affair and later marriage to Menardo also show how Alegría treats people as a means to gain power and live the life she wants. Alegría is willing to use her whiteness to help Menardo raise in status and fit in more with white society if it means she can live an extravagant life filled with clothes, money, and other expensive items she may desire. Silko uses Menardo’s relationship with Alegría as another way to help Menardo reach the

status and acceptance of white society he has wanted since childhood and show Alegría's ulterior motives of being involved with Menardo.

Silko further shows whiteness and proximity to whiteness being favored through integrating ideas of different levels of indigeneity into her novel through the differences between Menardo and his Indian chauffeur, Tacho. Though both men have roots in Indigenous heritage, each treats his ancestry differently. Menardo rejects his connection to Indigenous groups in an attempt to be part of the powerful Eurocentric world, while Tacho embraces his heritage through caring for the sacred Macaws and believing in what Menardo describes as superstitions. The rejection of Indigeneity leads to his accidental death at the hands of Tacho, and Tacho's embrace of Indigeneity, on the other hand, leads him to be a leader of his people and live to help Indigenous people reclaim their lands. Characters like Alegría and Mr. Portillo work to show how others see the difference between Menardo and Tacho, but they also recognize that Menardo is not as white as higher status people would like. Recognizing difference as a way of categorizing people, even within the same ethnicity, aligns with scholar Eva Cherniavsky's claim that "at the heart of the novel more generally, lies a critical analysis of ... ordering of the world along lines of identity and difference" (114). When Alegría is picked up at the airport, her thoughts about Menardo are narrated to the readers: "[Alegría] decided the Indian chauffeur must be Menardo's way of keeping in touch with his humble origins. ... [Menardo] was 'self-made,' as Mr. Portillo put it delicately, which meant here was a man of darker skin and lower class who had managed to amass a large fortune" (Silko 277). Alegría automatically, and correctly, assumes that the only reason Menardo has someone like Tacho working for him is due to Menardo wanting to be connected to his origins. She acknowledges, through her assumption, that Menardo is of a lower class than her by relating the two men together and using the words "humble origins" as a way of lightly saying Menardo is not white. Further, Alegría and Mr. Portillo's thoughts on status are revealed by describing Menardo as "self-made" to imply he is not someone who was born with a higher status. Describing someone who has money but had to work for it separates and places

people who make their own wealth below those who come from wealth, thus, contributing to the classist Eurocentric idea of money and, more importantly, ancestry determining a person's worth. The difference between people of the same class, in this case Menardo and the architect firm partners, illustrates white and white passing people as favored and shows how Eurocentric the professional world is.

Alegría's continued comments on Tacho when he picks her up from the airport exhibit how a colonist mindset causes her to dislike Indigenous people and think of them below her. Prejudice views of white supremacy and favorability cloud her judgement of entire races of people and its individuals. Alegría believes that

the Indian chauffeur exemplified the worst characteristics possessed by an Indian. He had listened to every word Menardo or Alegría said ... [h]e not only made eye contact with his social superiors, this Indian alternately had mocking, then knowing eyes. Alegría hated what he had said with his eyes[.] (278)

The above quotation reveals how belittling Alegría's beliefs are towards Tacho. Her views on class superiority bluntly express that those inferior in class should not even make eye contact with those above them or even be aware of the conversations of the higher class. Her hatred towards people overstepping their social categories further fuels her anger of Tacho looking at her and knowing what she will do in the future. Interacting with Menardo but not wanting Tacho to even look at her highlights Alegría's difference between her treatment of two men of the same ancestry but different classes, therefore, showing her classist views influence by a Eurocentric mindset. In addition, the specific language Silko chooses to employ when Alegría thinks about Tacho continues to indicate the racist views of Alegría brought on by believing in racial superiority. Alegría describes Tacho as "the Indian" and "this Indian" creating a sense that she does not see him as fully human (278). Her view of a world that favors whiteness and status causes her to dehumanize others, such as Tacho, who she considers inferior and not white enough. Failing to call Tacho by his name demonstrates how Alegría thinks of Indigenous and lower-class people

more as things or objects rather than human beings, further strengthening Silko's argument of the negative effects white favorability and colonialism causes on society.

Silko continues to build on Eurocentric ideas of white favorability and the need to not be Indigenous by detailing how Menardo differentiates himself from Tacho. Silko frames Menardo as someone who is ashamed of his own history but accepts Indigenous ideas when he can gain something from them, thus, simultaneously connecting Menardo to his Indigenous roots and suggesting the heavy influence of European capitalist ideas on Menardo's way of thinking.

Olmstead observes that "Menardo hates his own Indian blood yet values Tacho as someone who understands 'Indian' secrets" (469). Tacho explains to Menardo the importance of blood and what it represents to Indigenous people, especially regarding human sacrifices. In doing so, Tacho details a history of his people that Menardo is interested in but then ridicules. When Tacho mentions that "[h]uman sacrificers were part of the worldwide network of Destroyers who fed off energy released by destruction[,] Menardo laughed out loud at Tacho. Tacho believed all that tribal mumbo jumbo Menardo's grandfather had always talked about" (Silko 336). Tacho only starts talking about blood because Menardo wants to have "conversations with Tacho he would never have dared with a white man" (336). Though Menardo has grotesque conversations with Tacho because he thinks of Tacho as lower than himself and white men, the confidentiality he has in Tacho proves to be a ploy for Tacho to gain inside knowledge about the higher class that will later help his Indigenous uprising. Tacho lies to and manipulates Menardo as a way to learn about Menardo's deals and connections to powerful white men. An unsuspecting Menardo, on the other hand, continues to reject his own ancestry and Tacho's ancestry by regarding the history of blood for Indigenous people and the stories Tacho tells as fantasy. Menardo, under the influence of Eurocentric views, thinks less of other people's history and differentiates himself from Tacho in that he does not believe the stories past down by their common ancestors. However, Menardo continues to consult with Tacho about his nightmares because his paranoia about dying leads him to always wear a bullet proof vest and accept certain parts of Tacho's Indigenous dream-reading

culture, at least when it makes Menardo feel better about his dreams. The relationship between the two men is Silko's way of stating how categories of whiteness and the need to be white cause people to find differences between one another, while in the same chapter, Silko also starts another plot point in her novel that works to refute these notions by secretly having Tacho work against the people who think of him as an inferior working class man.

Furthering aiding Silko in presenting the negative effects of European categorization is the concept of metaphorical movement. Metaphorical movement such as social mobility suggests capitalism and accumulated wealth as factors that lead Indigenous people to being more acceptable to white society, however, she is also careful to show how powerful people, like Menardo, are still vulnerable to anti-Indigenous racism in white society. Menardo's metaphorical mobility in social class and his understanding of how class views work is once again limited due to his ancestry and not being born into the class he is now a part of. His wealth has elevated his status, but Menardo still does not understand that having an affair jeopardizes higher status careers, like Alegría's architect partnership. When Alegría and Menardo continue their affair, she starts having anxieties of being with an Indigenous man who thinks of himself inferior in class to her and is employing her. Alegría mentions that their affair could ruin her career and life, but Menardo disregards her concerns by thinking his higher social status will allow him to provide Alegría a new job. The narrator describes how "Alegría had looked at the brown moon face and flat nose and the shining dark eyes and thought how little he knew or understood, despite the wealth he had begun to accumulate" (286). Alegría realizes that Menardo has an optimistic view that money will solve all of their problems; however, his short exposure to higher society and gained status means that he does not know how higher-class society judges people based on their behaviors. Alegría noticing that Menardo not believing that her firm and her social class would end her career if they found out about her affair with Menardo suggests that she blames his ignorance of upper-class thinking for not understanding how society works. Alegría thinks that Menardo's lower-class and Indigenous origins, and possibly Iliana's family's acceptance of him,

are at fault for Menardo's incorrect idea of the power of money being what controls how people see a person and his opportunities for employment.

In an instance in which the narrator of *Almanac of the Dead* mentions Marxism and Indigenous people, Silko's narrator bluntly comments on Indigenous education and its effect on people wanting equality, continuing one of Silko's main arguments of refusing European control over Indigenous people through the use of education as a means to move up in social class. Issues of education influencing social mobility are referenced when the narrator recounts that "Guatemala had too many educated Indians. It was the fault of the Church. From the beginning priest treated them like human beings" (321). It is important to note though, that the church is partially to blame for the spread of colonialist ideas and the oppression of Indigenous people. While some priests may have treated Indigenous people as human beings, they also could have had ulterior motives leading to the establishment of European control and the genocide of Indigenous people and cultures. The former ambassador reinforces the malformed views of treating Indigenous people as human beings by stating that "[n]owadays you educate an Indian and he becomes a Marxist" (321). While Indigenous people have received an education, their educational mobility is portrayed as negative because they, as suggested by the candidly racist views, are closer to being human and equal to white people. The separation created between Europeans and Native people as humans and non-humans is explicitly noted when the church is blamed for treating Indigenous people as human beings. In this moment, Silko is voicing the belittling views white people have of other races, in this case regarding Native people. She seems to suggest that Europeans consider Indigenous people ignorant and want to keep them that way by limiting their exposure to education. Silko's claim continues to be developed by the former ambassador remarking that education leads to Indigenous revolution. The former ambassador wants to keep Indigenous people, from what his Eurocentric views determine as smartness, ignorant and therefore making Indigenous people more susceptible to control and manipulation. He wants Indigenous people to not have radical ideas about racial equality so that Europeans can

still be the dominant race. Silko's narrative sets up the ambassador's fears to be true by having his claim be proven correct through characters like Angelita La Escapía being educated in Marxism and being a major contributor in the revolution to reclaim Indigenous lands.

Silko utilizes the physical movement of Europeans to the Americas to showcase instances in which issues of class negatively affect how people are treated by wealthy Europeans. Marxist views and stories in *Almanac of the Dead* clearly show these issues. La Escapía is enthralled with Karl Marx and his writings. Even though she is horrified by the idea of Europeans using lower class children to work brutal jobs in their factories, leading to their deformed and dead bodies, La Escapía acknowledges how these stories must be true since the Europeans who came over to the Americas exhibited the same merciless treatment towards Indigenous women and children. To Indigenous people,

Marx's stories told the truth. The Indians had seen generations of themselves ground into a bloody pulp under the steel wheels of ore cars in crumbling tunnels of gold mines. The Indians had seen for themselves the cruelty of the Europeans toward children and women. ... Marx was reliable; his accounts had been consistent with what the people already knew. (312)

After European contact, having Indigenous people work dangerous jobs for the Europeans implies that Europeans thought less of Indigenous people and were willing to sacrifice their bodies for capitalistic gains. The gory imagery Indigenous people have of European contact is emphasized by the "bloody pulp" Indigenous bodies were turned into (312). While the story La Escapía recalls is from the initial contact of the Europeans, her community still feels the pressures of white people considering Indigenous people inferior. La Escapía's community is also aware of the materialistic greed of white people and abuse of Indigenous lands and bodies, sparking the need for a revolution.

An attitude of Europeans coming to the Americas and pillaging the Indigenous people and their histories is continued to be seen in moments where Silko's narrator depicts European

violence, adding to Silko's portrayal of the negative influence and remnants of European contact. The narrator states that Europeans used violence on Indigenous bodies and their knowledge systems as a way of erasing Indigenous existences and making way for European control. European movement to the Americas resulted in "crimes of slaughter and slavery committed by the European colonials who had been sent ... to secure the raw materials of capitalism—human flesh and blood. ... The Europeans had destroyed the great libraries of the Americans to obliterate all that had existed before the white man" (315). The details Silko includes in telling the history of colonization, adding to the novel's epic quality, once again point to Europeans favoring their own people and culture over Indigenous people and culture, leading to the destruction of Native bodies and knowledge. The libraries which contained ancient texts being destroyed points to the need for Zeta and Lecha to transcribe the pages of the ancient almanac since it is a way of preserving one of the few things their people have left of Indigenous ways of life and knowledge. European destruction harms Indigenous bodies which are turned into a commodity for European exploitation and, thus, "the violation and reconstruction of bodily borders" leads to "[d]ismemberment and slaughter metastasized into [European's] own kind of capitalist-colonialist production, yielding an uncanny harvest" (Brigham 308-09). Ravaging bodies is not enough for colonists, and to ensure control over Indigenous people, colonists destroy any avenues of knowledge Indigenous people may have. Colonists, like the former ambassador mentioned previously, maintain that they are the dominating race and ideas through keeping Indigenous people's awareness of the past and education limited, often achieved through the destruction of materials and bodies.

The physical movement of guns and drugs between borders works to highlight both Eurocentric ideas of capitalism and land ownership while, at the same time, also defying the rules of the border. Silko uses different characters to reinforce and dismantle the US-Mexico border. Menardo smuggles guns out of the United States to provide "security of a different sort" to his clients and makes risky deals with arms suppliers who break laws to provide "the best even when

‘the best’ was unavailable anywhere else” (Silko 266). His illicit negotiations to purchase boxes of rifles reveal the negative effects of capitalism. However, in taking part in the illegal action of smuggling guns, Menardo reinforces the US and Mexico border, a border that is the product of a Eurocentric ideology, since he commits this crime to supply firearms as a means to protect the border and the men who implement the division between the countries. As a way to keep himself and everyone involved in his private army ploy updated, Menardo is a member of El Grupo which is made up of powerful figures, like General J, interested in keeping Mexico poor and stop Indigenous uprisings: “Things were veering out of control in their region, and the entire meeting of the shooting club would be devoted to a discussion of recent developments that might aid their ‘joint interests,’ as General J. so delicately describes their business deals with one another” (330). On the other extreme, Silko having other characters like Zeta and Calabazas cross their drugs and weapons across the border deconstructs the rules and ideas of an international border. Francisco Delgado claims that “acts of trespassing can disrupt and dismantle colonist ideology. As an international smuggler[s],” Zeta and Calabazas refuse to follow the laws of international borderlines; therefore, “smuggling flattens the differences between the nations by ending all differentiations imposed by colonialist rule via borderlines” (153). Having these characters cross into the United States to sell drugs and buy firearms to then import into Mexico aids Silko in disregarding border laws. These differing views on crime present characters like Menardo who want to keep established European rules and characters like Zeta who goes against European laws of control as participating in an ongoing battle of power and land ownership. Silko works to dismantle European notions of who and what belongs where while also rebelling against colonists’ rules.

Silko’s most powerful demonstration of movement as a means to refuse European control in *Almanac of the Dead*’s “Mexico” and her other parts of the novel revolves around the map that she prefaces the text with and intertwines with the narratives she tells. In her map, she chronicles her character’s movements across abstract country and state borders. While she includes her

white characters on the map, the movement of her Indigenous characters in all parts of the map serve to acknowledge and start conversations of Indigenous people reclaiming their lands in a defiance against colonist-set borders. Silko's excerpts of a prophecy "fortell[s] the disappearance of all things European" and the Indian Connection states "[t]he defiance and resistance to all things European continue unabated. The Indian Wars have never ended in the Americas. Native Americans acknowledge no borders; they seek nothing less than the return of all tribal lands" (Silko). Through her map, she starts a process of recovering agency of Indigenous peoples' lands and fortifies her views of the future through the stories she tells about her characters wanting to "retake their land from the white man" (326). Silko's ingenuity of creating an abstract map that virtually has no borders is an attack on Western notions of mapping. Alex Hunt quotes Silko in an interview with the Coltelli as explaining that "Western European maps are used to steal Indian lands, to *exclude*, to imprison, to cut off, to isolate even segments of the human world from one another" (262, emphasis in original). Her map lacking traditional boundaries is a statement of her belief of land belonging to everyone and not having ownership. Silko's novel is itself already an argument against colonial borders even as it shows that European colonialism has persisted across the globe. The map and excerpts demonstrate taking back power from a Eurocentric world and foreshadow the preparation of taking back tribal lands in part 2, "Mexico," and the rest of her novel.

Silko includes sacred macaws to make predictions and guide Indigenous people in reclaiming their tribal lands and practices. Through the macaws, people close to their Indigenous heritage, such as brothers Tacho and El Feo, receive instructions and predictions for the future. The spirit macaws tell Tacho that "'Big changes are coming!' ... The macaws kept reading off lists of orders, things that Tacho-Wacah must do" (339). The sacred birds as animals who predict the future and speak to Native peoples is a nod to the fantastical element of the novel through the magical realism seen from a European perspective. Having the macaws tell Tacho orders regarding reclaiming Indigenous lands allows Silko to connect the land and the future of the land

to Indigenous people. The macaws know that the land will return to the rightful owners and help the Indigenous men who embrace their Native heritage prepare to take over the land. For Indigenous people to regain their tribal lands, they must revolt over their colonizers. The macaws also demonstrate the unity of Indigenous people by the twin brothers both communicating with the macaws and living in different countries. Using the macaws to symbolically connect the brothers “foregrounds the interconnections among Indigenous communities that [play] a prominent role in Native politics” and share “revolutionary identity based on histories shared by Native peoples across cultural and national boundaries” (Huhndorf 360). A spirit of solidarity for a common cause is also shown through the brothers’ transnational communication and the transnational aspect of the novel connecting Indigenous people from all over the world in an effort to push back against European control and influence. Silko, then, is utilizing the macaws as animals who tell the future of the land and as a way to join Indigenous communities together for the same cause of regaining their lands.

Negating European ideas of land aids Silko in making a case for Indigenous land ownership through her connections of land being able to predict a future in which European control ends and Indigenous people retake their tribal lands. She uses land as a tool to refute European ideas of capital and land ownership through subtly hinting at the removal of Europeans from Indigenous lands. The white marble staircase shaped like Indigenous relics, betrays the more European woman, Iliana, who had the stairs built, when she fatally falls from them, foreshadowing how Europeans will be responsible for their own fall of power. The marble staircase is added to the mansion because “Iliana had wanted something grand for her mansion, and the cascade of white marble stairs had been exactly what Iliana wanted. Guests would be forced to notice the conservatory, filled with her latest interests” (Silko 280-81). The stairs are a way for Iliana to show off her wealth and the money she spends. The white-colored stairs, along with being a symbol of her wealth, represent her own European origins and the need to show her own whiteness. When Iliana falls and dies, the detectives blame the engineering of the stairs,

which Tacho later reveals that the shape of “[t]he marble stairs were imitations of the temple staircases the Indians had built,” therefore, the shape of the stairs resembling Indigenous land predicts how Indigenous lands will remove European influence from itself (339). Iliana’s vanity leads her to appropriate Indigenous engineering into her home, and her only purpose of the stairs to prove her superiority to others. Both actions reflect the same attitudes towards appropriation and classism that greedy colonists had during and post contact. Silko’s detail about the stairs being an imitation of Native architecture subtly shows how Native land will never belong to Europeans when Iliana falls from them. The land controlling who lives on it works to refuse the European control.

Silko continues to go against European ideas through suggesting that the importance of the relationship between land and people proves to be one of the reasons Europeans lose their power in the stolen Native lands. When Silko opens part two of *Almanac of the Dead*, she emphasizes how Europeans had no land because of “their abandonment of the land where they had been born. ... They failed to recognize the earth was their mother. Europeans were like their first parents, Adam and Eve, wandering aimlessly” (258). Europeans do not have a connection to the land like the Indigenous people, and Europeans have trouble recognizing their relationship between the land and their inhabitation on it. When crossing over to the Americas, Europeans abandoned their land in favor of taking the land of other people. Still, their relationship with the land is marked by their brutal behavior towards Indigenous people and the decimation of the land for capitalistic gains. Europeans stole and appropriated Indigenous lands by “deploy[ing] racial logics that worked to construct [I]ndigenous peoples as uncivilized, unfit, and inevitably bound to disappear in the face of modern civilization” and instead placing their own views of race and class on the Americas in which whiteness and Europeans are indicators of control and power (Speed 788). Silko discredits the idea of European land ownership since they, more importantly, do not have claims to Indigenous lands because the spirits of their ancestors are not there: “In the Americas the white man never referred to the past but only to the future. The white man didn’t

seem to understand he had no future here because he had no past, no spirits of ancestors here” (Silko 313). A connection to the land is important in maintaining ownership of it, and without actual ancestors or a past in the Americas before European contact, the prophecy Silko includes on her map will come true. Land is tied to identity, and having a history and appreciation for the land is key to regaining Indigenous lands. Silko, once again, presents land as a means to push back against European control.

Contrary to Europeans not recognizing the earth and land as their mother, Indigenous people, such as El Feo, recognize the earth as its mother and provider, further strengthening Silko’s idea of Indigenous people reclaiming their lands. While La Escapia is talking about the Marxist revolution, El Feo daydreams about the land’s past: “The thought of retaking all tribal land made him happy; El Feo daydreamed about the days of the past—sensuous daydreams of Mother earth who loved all her children, all living beings” (313). El Feo, unlike the Europeans, sees the “land as the key to tribal identity” and recognizes how the land unifies its people through the love it gives them via food and other resources (Harder 103). A feeling of community between transnational tribes is provided by the earth as Indigenous people from different villages share their resources. For Indigenous people, “[c]ommune and communal were words that described the lives of many tribes and their own people as well. The mountain villages shared the land, water, and wild game. What was grown, what was caught or raised or discovered, was divided equally and shared all around” (Silko 314). An attitude of community is what differentiates Indigenous people from Europeans and influences the ideas of Karl Marx. While Europeans valued money and greed, Indigenous people shared what they had. Europeans exploited Indigenous bodies and resources while Native peoples valued each other and the earth that provided for them. In detailing the different attitudes towards the land, Silko provides evidence of why the Europeans do not deserve and will not keep the lands that they stole. She seems to suggest that the land will go back to its caretakers and people who take care of each other.

In another effort to go against ideas of European land ownership, Silko utilizes bodily memory and ties to land to further present a narrative of Indigenous peoples' rightful ownership over their land. Critic JoAnn Thom suggests that people, land, and stories are all interconnected (224), and since bodies are tied to land, bodily trauma stays in the land. The violence on Indigenous bodies told in history and retold by Silko devastatingly points to the remembrance of the cruelty Europeans show on Indigenous lands and works as a catalyst for the land to remove Europeans and their influence. Even though General J is torturing prisoners, his idea of the body remembering pain relates to the experiences of Indigenous people under European rule: "General J.'s main thesis was that only the body remembered. ... Tortured nerves and veins had a memory ... [bodies] carried cruel memories" (Silko 338). The idea of the body remembering pain relates to the toll Indigenous bodies suffered to feed the capitalist greed of Europeans. Indigenous bodies were overworked and mutilated to provide material goods for white people. Europeans also destroyed villages and murdered Indigenous people. All the pain the Indigenous people suffered stays in the land they are from. Their spirits, as suggested by their stories, stay in the land. Bodily memory and bodies being connected to land support the claim of Indigenous people gaining back their land, even in death. European history of violence gives reason to Silko's idea of refusing to follow the colonizer's ideas because of the harm they have caused on others for their own gain. Additionally, Silko's narrative provides a literal take on bodies remembering a culture's past through the consumption of the pages of the original almanac. The children she describes at the end of part one in *Almanac of the Dead* eat the pages of the almanac to not go hungry, but before doing so, they make sure to memorize what is on the pages so they can later rewrite those pages for the new almanac (246-53). Silko's narrative, then, suggests that land remembrance and the pain of Indigenous bodies remembering acts of violence will help the land remove all traces of Europeans and restore the tribal lands to Indigenous people.

Silko further invalidates European ideas of ownership on Indigenous lands in *Almanac of the Dead*, through the lands of Indigenous peoples remembering stories and history. She suggests

that different lands of people are connected through these stories and histories. An emphasis on Indigenous people telling the stories and histories of the land and its people aids Silko in connecting land and stories to reclaim Indigenous history and ownership of tribal lands. In *Almanac*, the narrator retells a story containing powerful spirits that will avenge Indigenous people and recover their tribal lands:

The stories of the people or their “history” had always been sacred, the source of their entire existence. If the people had not retold the stories, or if the stories had somehow been lost, then the people were lost; the ancestors’ spirits were summoned by the stories. ... [W]ithin “history” reside relentless forces, powerful spirits, vengeful, and relentlessly seeking justice. (315-16)

Silko’s inclusion of the story above links Indigenous people to their past and Indigenous identity, while at the same time provides Indigenous people with a spirit of hope in regaining their land. Remembering stories is a way to pass on beliefs and promises. As the narrator recites, stories and history are sacred, and the disregard of Indigenous history by Europeans is reason enough to rebel against their control and ideas. Europeans violating the Indigenous way of life and exploiting the resources of the land fuel the anger of Indigenous people. While Europeans replaced Indigenous cities with their own and tried to destroy all Indigenous history, the stories connecting Indigenous people to the land continued to be passed on. An example of Indigenous histories being passed on despite European efforts to destroy them are the almanacs Silko mentions in her novel and the almanac she creates through writing her novel. The survival of the stories and the displeased spirits of Indigenous history allow Indigenous people the hope that one day they will regain agency over the land.

Stories about the land and who controls it further the claim of European disappearance from the Americas and Indigenous people restoring their land. Older Indigenous people have stories that “it was only a matter of time and things European would gradually fade from the American continents. History would catch up with the white man whether the Indians did

anything or not. . . . The most complete history was the most powerful force” (316). The stories of the elders predict the fall of the Europeans on Indigenous land and serve, like the prophecy Silko includes on her map, to show who is actually the owner of Indigenous lands. The story passed on through generations of Indigenous people seems to suggest that even if Indigenous people do not revolt against their oppressors, the land will find a way to restore itself to its rightful owners, thus, signifying land as a powerful force. Silko also helps in completing the history the story mentions. In Silko’s efforts to create an almanac that captures the history of multiple people as thoroughly as possible through her details, Silko manages to add to the Indigenous history and further complete it. The amount of complete Indigenous history as told by Silko adds to the novel’s quality of an epic. Silko actively completing the history gives force to the Indigenous movement to reclaim the Americas.

Emphasizing the relationships people have between each other gives Silko the opportunity to portray how Eurocentric views negatively affect our treatment of one another and cause people to categorize themselves based on race, status, and power. These distinctions many times perpetrate ideas of white supremacy and casts people of color, specifically Indigenous people in *Almanac of the Dead*, as inferior to people of “purer” European ancestry. Silko’s characters work to create a narrative that shows how aspects of racial identity become markers of difference that are then used to justify an anti-Indigenous mindset in countries such as Mexico; some characters, like Menardo, exhibit a mindset of internal colonialism to the point of self-hatred. Silko then, in her version on an almanac, effectively shows the dangers of categorizations through European standards, especially regarding race, borders, class, and land ownership, and provides reasons to demolish European influence on Native lands. Her vision of the future and Indigenous solidarity in overthrowing colonist oppressors makes a claim for the return of Indigenous lands to its people.

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Image 2: William Hogarth's, *Qui Color Albus Erat, Nunc Est Contrarius Albo*. London, 1743.



Image 3: William Hogarth's, *Morning*. London, 1738.



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