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Articulāte is a student-authored and student-edited journal sponsored by the English Department. The editors of Articulāte are looking for submissions that demonstrate original thinking and strong scholarly research in their analysis of literary and/or cultural texts. Essays should not exceed fifteen typed, double-spaced pages. However, longer essays of exceptional quality may still be considered. Please use MLA citations.

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Reimagining Queer Villainhood in HBO Max's *Search Party*

Sam Fujikawa

…

Introduction

Over the past few years, there has been a reclamation of queerness in villains, particularly Disney villains. In 2018, *BuzzFeed* uploaded a listicle ranking Disney villains "from least gay to most gay," characterizing antagonists not as evil but instead "queer icons… worthy of the gayest spot on this list" (Stryker and LaConte, "We ranked the Disney villains from least gay to most gay"). Other publications like *Vice* viewed this phenomenon of "gay" villains differently, highlighting Disney's tendency that follows a long history of positioning effeminate, queer coded men as the enemy, the villain (Ryan, "Why so many Disney villains sound 'gay'"). While these examples are only two out of many commentaries on the relationship between queerness and media representations of villains, a clear tension surfaces within even this small section of discourse, specifically a tension in whether queer villains can be reclaimed and celebrate queerness or instead project evil characteristics upon a marginalized community.

Pondering over this issue of representation, I found myself thinking about the queer characters and villains I found satisfying as a viewer, that is, those

whose identity was not demonized but complex and interesting, not sweeping in claims but representative of a slice of queer life in reasonably true approaches. Attempting to find multifaceted and productive representations of queer characters in turn meant looking for depictions with potential to challenge heteronormativity and reframe understandings that could oppress queer people in constitutive ways. With this potential of uncovering useful methods of depicting queer life in media, an opportunity opens to resist standardizing and harmful representations of queer people in subversive terms. Can villains be constructed in a way that resists heteronormative readings that lead to negative projections upon the queer community? In this paper, I look at how the HBO Max television series *Search Party* builds social commentary on queerness in the way the series portrays queer characters, specifically queer villains.

Description of *Search Party* as an Artifact

Search Party is an American, dark comedy television series created by Sarah-Violet Bliss, Charles Rogers, and Michael Showalter streaming on HBO Max. Starring Alia Shawkat, John Reynolds, John Early, and Meredith Hagner as Dory, Drew, Elliot, and Portia, respectively, a group of millennial Brooklynites, the series follows the friends as they search for a college classmate who goes missing and the events that ensues. As each season progresses, the program, while still following the same gang of characters, introduces new

plots and stylizations that pastiche notable genres of media such as the murder mystery, detective thriller, courtroom drama, and psychological thriller. With a prominent queer and female creative team and cast, *Search Party* is notable for its dissection of millennial life through marginalized lenses that were put into question amidst the cultural zeitgeist of its original airdate following the 2016 presidential election of Donald Trump. Yet rather than portraying queer or female characters in an overly sympathetic light, the series instead offers a biting satirical take on a symptom of self-absorption among Generation Y and the hipster culture of a gentrified New York City, providing acerbic characters who challenge a rhetoric of "good" and "bad" media representations vis-à-vis historically marginalized groups.

Although the show originally aired on TBS in 2016, the series was later picked up by HBO Max and has been streaming on the platform since its third season, gaining critical acclaim and a cult-like following for both subverting expectations of narrative and perspective when it comes to a genre exploring the lives of "entitled Millennials" (Syme, "'Search Party's brilliant, twisted portrait of a new lost generation."). In the fourth season, *Search Party* introduces a *Silence of the Lambs*-style plotline, with the series' anti-heroine Dory held captive by her superfan Chip, portrayed by Cole Escola, a character who, like the gendered figures of Buffalo Bill or Norman Bates, occasionally dons the appearance of a hegemonic woman while tormenting his female victim. Noting these "antiquated tropes of gender

themes," co-creator Rogers admits that Chip's strategy of drag is an attempt to destabilize a model of queer-coded characters holding a female persona as some form of realization of his apparent psychosis, since "Chip thinks it's strategic to go out in public as a 70-year-old woman" (McHenry, "How search party landed on that surreal season 4 finale."). With this reference to tropes of queerness in media, *Search Party* uses the character of Chip to reimagine a villain's relationship to queerness and queer sensibilities as something not inherently evil but tangential and—importantly—tactical.

Description of Method

While I recognize and affirm that queer can be a term used to imply homosexual attractions or identities, I refer to it in a broader way, what Halperin defines as "whatever is at odds with the normal, the legitimate, the dominant… [Queer is a] horizon of [possibilities for] reordering the relations among sexual behaviors, erotic identities, constructions of gender, forms of knowledge, regimes of enunciation" (62). Understanding queer as directly contrary to some stable notion of normalcy invites an analysis of queerness beyond purely sexual terms yet still with some ability to orient oneself in more accommodating ideological stances. Additionally, my analysis of queer villains relies on Edelman's research of how political enemies are constructed, specifically his differentiation between enemies and adversaries, which rests upon

whether opponents are vilified for their inherent nature or tactics and strategies (67). Applying this notion to queer villains can provide clearer analysis in whether characters' queerness or resistance to dominant culture are put into inherently negative terms or less restrictive strategic expressions. In relation to the terms in which queerness is conceptualized, specifically in humorous representations such as those on *Search Party*, I employ the idea of camp to analyze how audiences are hailed in their understandings of the show's premises and comedy. Wolf postulates that "we can conceive of camp as a queer decoding strategy, situating it in the broader framework of audience reception studies and thus beginning to explain the possible ways in which camp readings are motivated and deployed" (285). Recognizing camp—which is additionally tied to excessive performances of gender through theatrical tactics—as a specifically queer sensibility, I can then apply camp to evaluations of how representations position viewers in relation to queer characters, that is, whether they are rooted in heteronormative notions or queer camp (Wolf 285-6).

Focusing on season four of *Search Party*, I aim to provide an analysis of Chip, attempting to see how the depiction of his queerness functions in tandem with his role as a villain. By looking at both how he acts and how other characters perceive and portray him, I seek to see how the construction of his character functions in terms of representing marginalized persons. To do this, I watched and analyzed the entirety of *Search Party*'s fourth season, noting instances of scene, dialogue, or

imagery that have to do with either Chip's identity as a queer villain or a more general discourse of queerness within the universe of the series. Parsing these instances through the theoretical framework I establish in the previous paragraph, I furthermore rely on Burke's concept of identification and how "if an identification favorable to the speaker or his cause is made to seem favorable to the audience, there enters the possibility of such 'heightened consciousness'" (45). Thus, if connections are made to identify viewers with a queer sense of the world, perhaps there lies an opportunity to reconceive unconstructive understandings of queer characters and queer people.

Analysis

The fourth season's premiere of *Search Party*, "The Girl in the Basement," begins with the series' protagonist, Dory, held captive in a dank-looking location, her head shaven, body appearing weakened. Realizing her head is shaven, she asks her captor, Chip, about the condition of her hair, which he rationalizes by explaining that he needed her hair for his "Dory Doll," a facsimile reproduction that reveals an obsession with Dory. While bizarre, the moment is funny and subverts an expectation that would place the rationale behind Dory's shaved head in a realm of some demented or disturbed aspect of Chip's personality meant to frighten viewers or Dory. Instead, Chip shaved Dory's head simply to complete a Barbie-like doll, placing this instance of supposed harm toward Dory in a realm of

ridiculous strategies rather than some perverse or irrational need for female hair. This instance begins Chip's construction as a villain for viewers through his tactics rather than nature, a strategy that rhetorically distinguishes him as an adversary rather than enemy. Edelman describes this characterization of the enemy as based in inherent threats and thus markedly evil (67). By initiating Chip's role as villain with a humorous tactic in his antagonism toward Dory, *Search Party* resists connoting Chip in the category of enemy, which could entail in a projection of negative implications upon queerness or queer men in general. Instead, the series imagines a type of villain where queerness can be used as a strategy in achieving villainous goals rather an inherence that is rooted in some sense of evil.

"The Girl in the Basement" expands on this idea of queerness as informative not inherent to villainhood with Chip's subsequent actions of control vis-à-vis Dory, which he justifies as necessary for her to be protected from her group of friends who he believes are bad people. For example, at the end of the episode, after Chip tells Dory he will take her home, Dory wakes up in what appears to be her apartment yet turns out to be a plush recreation of her Brooklyn home. This setting works to both show Chip's destructively attentive obsession with Dory—he attributes this fixation to the two of them having "the same lips"—as well as his care and attention to detail in a domestic sphere that commonly is situated as a feminine space. While the show originally sets Dory confined in a dank and typically standard space when one thinks of being held captive—such as the literal hole

in the ground Buffalo Bill keeps his captor held in *The Silence of the Lambs*—by the end of the episode, this new setting subverts expectations once again, having Chip place Dory in a space he clearly spent a lot of time, energy, and care into creating for her. The situation remains the same in her captivity, but Chip's domestic sensibilities, which can be tied to his queerness due to the hegemonically feminine role of such duties, invert the conditions to be shallowly more comfortable for Dory. His role of villain then becomes ambiguous, as certain queer markings to his antagonism, such as his creation of a comfortable model apartment for Dory, contrast his highly immoral acts of kidnapping and imprisoning Dory. Oliver and Ferchaud posit that this ambiguity troubles a simple reading of queer villains like Chip, providing depth to his character and subsequently resisting a reading that enables "viewers… to form associations between that group of people and the negative portrayal" (102). Through these acts, his queerness and role as villain are not necessarily separated but instead troubled in terms that question and resist normative readings that lead to homophobic conclusions.

Search Party additionally utilizes a performance of camp—a queer sensibility that invokes humor and excess into performances meant to make sense of the world through a queer lens—to resituate viewers into distinctly queer perspectives (Wolf 286-7). Given the series' status as a comedy, it becomes evident that while he exists as a villain, Chip is meant to be seen as a comedic character. His subversion of expectations,

such as through the Dory Doll and plush apartment, as well as his general air and villainhood provide a great deal of comic relief into a situation that is typically read as an immense tragedy and struggle for a protagonist, a subversion that is typical to camp readings and portrayals. Perhaps the most evident performance of camp can be seen in his disguise as his Aunt Lylah, whose house he is holding Dory hostage in. Chip employs this drag persona of his aunt to potentially ward off any suspicions about what he is doing at the home; comedically, the series pokes fun at the absurdity of the situation when Dory asks how old his aunt is and, upon Chip responding 70, replies, “Do you think people could think you could be in your 70s?” (“Something Sharp”). Despite the clear age difference between Chip and his Lylah persona, the gag generally works in the series, with the disguise fooling neighbors like Paula Jo, a character played by Ann Dowd who regularly interacts with Chip as Lylah. With just a gray-streaked red wig, gaudy clothes, and transatlantic accent at his disposal, Chip’s performance as Lylah highlights an excess of femininity in its theatrics, two features of camp that Wolf notes as resisting rigidity in gender norms as well as utilizing queer humor as methods of survival—or in Chip’s case, maintaining control (286).

Chip’s use of drag in his role as villain and the resulting acceptance of his feminine performance by other characters additionally problematize standard models of queer male villains’ drag as somewhat demented or deranged, as characters like Norman Bates

or Buffalo Bill may imply. Rather than using femininity and female gender as some intrinsic desire that leads to a deranged or dangerous behavior, Chip's drag is contiguous to maintaining an illusion rather than fulfilling some "wrong" desire within a queer body. Making drag tactically functional in his role as a villain rather than as inherent to his villainous desires, *Search Party* creates implications of queer characters and heteronormativity that veer away from demonizing the queer. Chip's practice of drag and characters like Paula Jo's acceptance of his female performance destabilize a heteronormative understanding gender as essential or constant; Chip's performance as Aunt Lylah "[imitates] gender, [and thus] drag implicitly reveals the imitative structure of gender itself" (Butler 330). To understand the comedy and conceptions of Chip in the terms of the series, a viewer must reposition himself then to resist reading Chip in heteronormative terms that essentialize gender or demonize queerness—to fully enjoy what is going on, viewers in short must identify themselves in the world of *Search Party* through a non-normative, specifically queer lens.

This requirement of identifying with a queer perspective to fully understand and enjoy the show's humor is apparent in more explicit ways as well, particularly in the characters' label of Chip as "the Twink," a term located within a decidedly queer lexicon and refers to a young (usually gay) man with a slight build. In "The Girl in the Basement," Dory's first words to Chip are, "Are you… the twink? From the wedding?" referring to the previous season's storyline where Chip

(then unnamed) pretended to work at her friend Elliot's wedding for a Twinkies Catering, a catering company whose staff was entirely made up of, namely, twinks. While Westerefelhaus and Lacroix note that certain media representations of queer characters can ultimately reaffirm a dominant power structure that center heterosexual conceptions of reality, *Search Party* forces viewers to adhere to queer rhetorical frameworks without any explanation to those outside of the know (440). I admit the series does eventually define a twink as "a young man with a slim build and supple, boyish qualities" though they tack on the decidedly queer humorous adage with, "But at a certain age, a twink becomes a twunk" ("The Thoughtless Woman"). This definition of twink, however, is offered in the sixth episode of the season, long after many iterations of the word are used in humorous dialogue, reaffirming queer perspectives as central to the show's sense of humor and worldview.

This queer sense of humor is also present in other characters' descriptions of Chip, such as when Elliot calls the catering company to find out more about Chip and is told, "He's 30 years old and mostly a bottom" ("Doctor Mindbender"). Relying on an understanding of sexual terminology revolving anal sex and refusing to explain so in its briefness, this example of humor within *Search Party* reaffirms queerness and queer perspectives as central. By centering queer perceptions and characters, the series challenges any readings that would allow viewers to project Chip's villainous traits to queer people in general, as Chip exists as one

representation among a setting where heteronormative perspectives are sidelined and thus queerness is no longer limited. Viewers are invited, and often forced, to identify with queer characters and perspectives, shifting narratives and conditions to reflect distinctly queer notions of the world. And this identification with a queer framework through unapologetically queer humor and camp, as Burke noted in his discussion of the power of the rhetorical world, has the potential to open a new awareness of queer people in positive ways.

Discussion

In looking at how *Search Party* portrays queer villains such as Chip, I have found that the series ultimately resists and subverts tropes of queer villainhood established by characters such as Norman Bates or Buffalo Bill. With Chip, the program offers a way of constructing queer villains that separates evil from an inherence to queerness and instead uses queer tactics to create a villain of camp who is complex and ambiguous in a binary of good and evil. *Search Party* resists heteronormative structures typical to mainstream representations of queer characters to provide a queer-centered lens and perspective in narratives that include both straight and queer characters. By centering a queer sense of the world, the series encourages viewers to embrace non-dominant narratives and language, providing commentary that allows for queer characters to be villains without worrying over whether they are "good" or "bad" representations.

Centering queer voices and conditions of the world within the world of *Search Party* allows for a multiplicity to be applied to queer characters. In multiplicity there exists more than one sole representation, more than one understanding that must therefore be projected upon a community that is marginalized and thus simplified to reductive quality. Through Chip's depiction and characterization internal to the series' world and perspective, *Search Party* provides a method of depicting queer lives in more malleable ways, outside of rigid discourses that force a binary of good or bad and instead see dynamic complexity in lives that can so often be construed in an unsophisticated essential form of villain. With these more complex and less sweeping methods of identifying with a queer sensibility, new opportunities to reconceive reality in ways that exist outside of the dominant can be unlocked, shifting perspectives to privilege historically relegated experiences and persons

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Conversation Through the Poetic "Song": Music and Poetry as Formal Perseverance

Riley Halpern

…

Poets have managed to remain in conversation with each other across time and space—a feat few art forms can claim, at least to the same extent. This is, in part, due to the accepted, and even encouraged, notion that poets borrow from and reimagine the works of their contemporaries and predecessors in order to attain the highest possible level of universal specificity in their own poems. Poets who live decades and thousands of miles apart echo each other so directly that it has to be something other than an eerie coincidence or mere instance of borrowed language. What follows will be an exploration of the use of musical language ("music," "song," "singing," etc. and their variations) across different poets' works along with the musical capability of the poetic form itself. For it is poetry's musical capability that allows and invites these conversations between poets that transcend time and space, and it is the conventional use of musical language as a flexible symbol for poetry itself that, together, work toward the ultimate perseverance and preservation of universally specific poetic language.

The historical relationship of music to poetry traces at least as far back as Sappho (c. 610 – c. 570 BCE) in ancient Greece who wrote in quantitative meter. Rather than simply counting syllables, true quantitative

meter relies on measuring the duration of each syllable, and rhythm is determined by the amount of time it takes to utter each line ("Quantitative Meter").
Quantitative meter was especially popular among Classical Greek and Italian poets, and the sapphic structure itself—any number of four-line stanzas in quantitative meter—was used widely by Roman and European poets to later evolve into a verse form for hymns in the Middle Ages ("Sapphic"). The form's reliance on poetry's oral tradition has caused it to fall largely out of use, and it never quite caught on in the English language as English pronunciation makes it more difficult to distinguish between long and short syllables ("Quantitative Meter"). However, just as the form evolved throughout the 5th century AD, the modern sapphic is "rendered in accentual meter determined instead by the stress and intensity of a syllable," approximating the original form "by equating long syllables with stressed ones, and short syllables with unstressed ones" ("Sapphic").
The sapphic's rigid structure and strict meter has allowed for its evolution while maintaining a connection to music and song, whether explicitly in its ties to hymns in the Middle Ages or implicitly in modern poets' knowledge of its origin.

Writers tend to recognize the intrinsic connection between poetry and music and attempt to somehow put words to that connection. In his discussion of "The Poetic Principle"—in his essay by the same name—as "the Human Aspiration for Supernal Beauty," Edgar Allan Poe uses the words "Poetry" and "Music"

interchangeably (198). He describes music as “the most entrancing of the Poetic moods,” explaining that the “Poetic Sentiment […] may develop itself in various modes […] very especially in music,” landing on the assertion that “it is in Music, perhaps, that the soul most nearly attains the great end for which, when inspired with the Poetic Sentiment, it struggles—the creation of supernal Beauty” (184). “And thus,” he concludes the section, “there can be little doubt that in the union of Poetry with Music in its popular sense, we shall find the widest field for the Poetic development” (184). For Poe, if the poet hopes to spark the manifestation of the Principle, to excite “by elevating the soul,” then music and poetry are not just connected—they are inseparable. “Song,” Jahan Ramazani writes, “is poetry’s *arche* and its *telos*, what it is and what it might aspire to be” (719).

Whether or not she was conscious of it, Emily Dickinson appeared to understand this relationship of poetry to music. She wrote primarily in common meter, a structure also referred to as “hymnal meter,” its alternating unstressed-stressed rhythm paralleling that of “Amazing Grace” and “House of the Rising Sun” among countless other songs. Comparable to the evolution of the sapphic poem, Dickinson allowed for exceptions to the common meter in her poems. Thus, even her poems that stray from a more metered, hymn like recitation are still reminiscent of the music from which they originate.

To effectively illuminate how poetic syntax and language transcend time and space, an important link

lies in Emily Dickinson's 372 ("After great pain, a formal feeling comes – ") and Robert Hass' "Faint Music." The last line of Dickinson's poem reads, "First – Chill – then Stupor – then the letting go –" (Dickinson 170). The last line of Hass' reads, "First an ego, and then pain, and then the singing" (Hass). These lines are so similar in syntax, tone, language, and theme that it is more than likely that Hass intentionally remembered Dickinson's last line from a poem on a subject similar to his—emotional pain, its lingering effects over time, and how we try to move past it. But the work these last lines do when considered together is far more significant than a conscious choice made by Hass. If the human soul is in a constant struggle for "the creation of supernal Beauty," and if it is music "inspired with the Poetic Sentiment" that allows for the creation of this type of beauty, and, finally, if Hass recognized that Dickinson—in her unparalleled use of language and rhythm—created this sort of "supernal Beauty" in #372, then why should he not borrow and reimagine "the best" instance of language and syntax to create his own version of "supernal Beauty?" (Poe 184). There is only so much language and so many combinations of words that exist. It is inevitable poets will borrow from each other. On the other hand, there is also *so* much language and near-infinite combinations of words that if one poet somehow manages to write "the best" line for a given situation, other poets *should* honor that first poet by borrowing their language and aiding its perseverance. Dickinson wrote #372 in Amherst in 1862; Hass wrote "Faint Music" in California in 1996; the two poems came into

existence over a century apart, an entire country between them. Yet 160 years after she wrote it, Dickinson's poem is still a fresh explanation of how we continue to move through the world even when bogged down by pain. And Hass' poem, regardless of how much he borrowed from Dickinson, is equally as fresh. For though the themes are similar, and the only way—besides familiarity—to discern which last line belongs to which poet is Dickinson's use of dashes, both poets employ drastically different specificity in image and narrative to convey their own impressions of what is, perhaps, the most universally discussed theme in poetry: emotional pain and what in the world we do about it.

And then there exists an entire conversation among three poets, one that spans two decades and 2,300 miles. Written in 2016 in Lexington, Kentucky, Ada Limón's poem "The Leash" asks, "Isn't there still / something singing?" (Limón). And though the speaker follows immediately with, "The truth is: I don't know," Jack Gilbert's poem "A Brief for the Defense"— 2005, Tennessee—answers Limón's question, saying, "We must admit there will be music despite everything" (Gilbert). Hass ends this brief conversation with a line toward the end of "Faint Music"—1996, California—by expanding on Gilbert's contribution and explaining what this music might be: "I had the idea that the world's so full of pain / it must sometimes make a kind of singing" (Hass). What is crucial to note about this conversation is that it moves backward through time, which means the explanation for its existence is not as simple as saying Hass intentionally answered Gilbert who intentionally

answered Limón. Something else is at work here. Two somethings, actually.

First, it is possible that I am perceiving a conversation where there is none—that I am grasping at straws, looking for some truth (or capital-T Truth) that will help me move through this devastating, chaotic world a bit easier. Poe addresses this, writing, “And in regard to Truth— if, to be sure, through the attainment of a truth, we are led to perceive a harmony where none was apparent before, we experience, at once, the true potential effect” of the Poetic Principle (198). If we are too eager, too searching, we will create truth (or Truth) out of what is really just harmony. But this does not make the emotional effects of the perceived harmony any less valid; the point is the perception rather than the truth—truth that, according to Poe, is overvalued in poetry when
we should really be looking for that “supernal Beauty,” that elevation of the soul instead. “The value of the poem is in the ratio of this elevating excitement,” not in any “truth” it might reveal (Poe 178).

Second, it is likely that I am looking too far outward, too much at the universal and external forces, when I should be looking inward. Poe continues to debunk the notion that poems have to be written and exist for elaborate reasons:

> The simple fact is, that, would we but permit ourselves to look into our own souls, we should immediately discover that under the sun there neither exists nor *can* exist any work more thoroughly dignified—more supremely noble than

> this very poem—this poem *per se*—this poem which is a poem and nothing more—this poem written solely for the poem's sake (182).

There was no intentional conversation or interaction between these three exceedingly different poets who each wrote a decade removed from the next. Rather, all three simply wrote for the sake of writing, unintentionally creating harmony that certain discerning readers perceive as a capital-T Truth. And if what Poe says is true, that poems are written as manifestations of what is in the poet's soul, then these poets' souls contain the same stuff. And each reader who recognizes this particular harmony, their soul holds the same stuff as each poet's and we are holding on to this harmony for all it is worth, trying to force it into the same mold of some capital-T Truth.

Poetry and music—as forms—are inherently, inescapably intertwined. But the question becomes, what is this singing, this music that Limón, Gilbert, and Hass are going on about? Unsurprisingly, we find this final answer in the work of two other poets—Emily Dickinson and Walt Whitman. Dickinson and Whitman harness the flexibility of musical language as a symbol and synonym for poetry, specifically the act of writing poems. And what quickly becomes clear is that the inciting incident for their use of musical language—Limón, Gilbert, and Hass included—is intense emotional pain.

The first line of Dickinson's #372 is most telling: "After great pain, a formal feeling comes –" This "formal feeling" Dickinson's speaker names is,

explicitly, the shock and numbness that sets in after whatever "great pain" a person experiences—grief, heartbreak, etc. But the word "formal" is particularly important to note; though it explicitly applies to emotional pain, it implies a poem's form as well. #372 goes on to say, "The Nerves sit ceremonious, like Tombs – / The stiff Heart questions 'was it He, that bore,' / And 'Yesterday, or Centuries before'?" And while these three lines are an elaboration of that "formal feeling," they are, in fact, in form as well; each line of the first stanza is ten syllables, and the rhyme scheme is in couplets—AABB. But then the poem falls out of any form it held initially, the next seven lines neither in any exact rhyme scheme nor made up of ten syllables. It is as if Dickinson *wanted* to write a poem in form in order to work through the pain she named in the first line, to try to make it "formal," but she ends up failing due to the intensity of that pain. Yet in the last two lines, Dickinson returns to the ten-syllable line and rhyming couplet: "As Freezing persons, recollect the Snow – / First – Chill – then Stupor – then the letting go –" Dickinson seems to take a breath after the preceding line, collecting herself before she returns to writing in the form in which she started. And though #372 is not in consistent common meter, rhythm is not lost on Dickinson as she starts in and returns to a loose version of iambic pentameter.

Dickinson's #270 works beyond the formal implications of music and poetry, diving deeply into the aforementioned explicit musical language. The first line simply says, "I shall keep singing!" As with "formal" in #372, the notable word in the first line of #270 is

"keep." It implies that the speaker was singing before and that she will continue to sing despite whatever just happened or whatever she anticipates will happen. The exclamation point is also significant as the rest of the poem's lines end with dashes or no punctuation at all—the speaker is wholly determined to keep singing. The rest of the poem reads as follows:

> Birds will pass me
> On their way to Yellower Climes –
> Each – with a Robin's expectation –
> I – with my Redbreast –
> And my Rhymes –
>
> Late – when I take my place in summer –
> But – I shall bring a fuller tune –
> Vespers – are sweeter than matins – Signor
> Morning – only the seed of noon – (121).

Time will go on; Dickinson's speaker is saying. *The birds will fly south for the winter, but I will wait patiently for summer and continue to sing in the meantime. For it is later times that will be sweeter, and I am just waiting for summer to bloom.* And although Dickinson writes that she will "bring a fuller tune" when she takes her place in summer, she will keep singing until then in order to get through the winter, through months which, though lacking hope, are not entirely useless. Rather, they are seeds she can use as inspiration for her work. Dickinson could have left her readers with mystery, forcing us to look closely to understand that

“singing” refers to writing poetry, but she chooses instead to include the word “Rhymes” in the sixth line, not leaving anything to chance. It is important that we are certain of the fact that Dickinson is using “singing” as a stand-in for writing poems. And in the melancholic tone of the first stanza, it is evident that Dickinson is not looking forward to when the birds leave and nature temporarily dies; the changing of the seasons means she will not be able to garden as she usually does, so she will be leaving her home even less frequently. But she again uses poetry and musical language to examine and understand that pain, ultimately ending on a hopeful note, resolved to keep singing and writing despite the emotional pain she is about to experience.

Whitman’s “Sometimes with One I Love” makes even greater use of musical language as it relates to pain:

> Sometimes with one I love I fill myself
> with rage for fear I effuse unreturn’d love,
> But now I think there is no unreturn’d love,
> the pay is certain one way or another, (I
> loved a certain person ardently and my love
> was not return’d,
> Yet out of that I have written these songs) (114).

In the first line, Whitman describes the pain—manifesting in rage and fear—of knowing the person he loves does not love him in return. But in the last three lines, he comes to understand that there is no such thing as truly unreturned love; even the pain of heartbreak is a gift, paying Whitman in poems he wrote after the fact.

Like Dickinson, Whitman uses “songs” to refer to his poems, specifically the poems he writes that are inspired by pain. Whitman wrote this final version of “Sometimes with One I Love” in 1867 in Washington D.C.; Dickinson wrote #372 and #270 in 1862 and 1861, respectively, both in Amherst.

While they lived and wrote at the same time and relatively close to each other, geographically speaking, Whitman and Dickinson never met, nor did they read each other’s work. Yet both understood the significance of using musical language as a synonym for poetry and poem writing to explore how they might process their pain through poetry. And a century and-a-half later—on both sides of the country—we see Limón, Gilbert, and Hass doing the same thing. “The Leash” is based around the central question the speaker asks: “How can / you not fear humanity?” Limón is searching for something still singing amid the pain and fear so prevalent in the world—pain and fear sparked by other humans. “A Brief for the Defense” starts similarly, acknowledging the horrific reality of humans lacking humanity: “Sorrow everywhere. Slaughter everywhere.” But Gilbert is more certain than Limón, certain that there will be music despite all of the sorrow and slaughter. And when Hass explores the effect of heartbreak, he sees it nearly driving a person to suicide. Still, his ultimate conclusion is, perhaps, even more hopeful than Gilbert’s: the singing *is* the pain. If it is true that there is sorrow and slaughter everywhere, that the fear of humanity spans across seven billion people on seven different continents, then everyone’s pain must come

together to create this haunting harmony. So at least no one is truly alone in their pain. It is the most universal thing. And what all three poets—whether intentionally or unintentionally—imply is what Dickinson and Whitman said explicitly in their work: the poems themselves *are* the singing, the music despite everything. For neither Limón nor Gilbert nor Hass would have written their specific poems about their personal relationships with pain had some "great pain" not sparked this "formal feeling" in the first place. Decades apart— centuries apart—countries apart—poets are searching for how best to write about individual pain. And the connecting factors across the board are musical language and poetry's musical capability that allow poets to achieve the universal aspect of "universal specificity" and ultimately remember and recall the poets who came before them.

But it is not just poetry's musical capability or music inspired by "the Poetic Sentiment" that aids language's perseverance across time and space. There is a "thirst" in humans, more than a "mere appreciation of the Beauty before us"; it is "a wild effort to reach the Beauty above," to find "those divine and rapturous joys, of which *through* the poem, or *through* the music, we attain to but brief and indeterminate glimpses" (Poe 184). There is a reason we go searching and probing more aggressively than we should for those harmonies within or between poems that we mistake for truths. All of human life revolves around the pursuit of and longing for connection. The universal specificity of poetry gets us as close to that connection— "those divine

and rapturous joys"—as anything else. But the music and singing are necessary to achieve this ultimate goal, and Whitman understood this more than most. In his 1865 poem "When Lilacs Last in the Dooryard Bloom'd," Whitman embarks on a journey to find the language he lost amid the death and destruction of the Civil War and President Lincoln's assassination. His search for language also implies a search for music; he says at the end of section four of the lilac elegy, "If thou wast not granted to sing thou woud'st surely die" (277). Because if Whitman loses language, he loses singing, music, song, all intimately tied to the way he conceives of his poems. ("These songs," he calls them in "Sometimes with One I Love.")

Whitman understands that he must rediscover language if he is to survive in his world. Otherwise, what good is all of the pain he experiences, if not to serve as inspiration for his poems—his songs? He, of course, discovers language again in the singing of the thrush after pain and grief render him speechless. The thrush is hidden, withdrawn at the beginning of the lilac elegy. It is singing, but its throat is bleeding, and Whitman has not yet found it. After sections five through eight, after Whitman watches Lincoln's funeral procession and begins to process his grief, to remind himself of the regenerative power of nature in the spring, he focuses back in on the thrush. "Sing on there in the swamp, / O singer bashful and tender, I hear your notes, I hear your call, / I hear, I come presently, I understand you"—but Whitman is still detained (279). He can hear the song more clearly now, but he still cannot see the

thrush. He still does not know how to construct sufficient language to honor Lincoln. By section thirteen, Whitman is encouraging the thrush, urging it to continue singing. It is only after he enters the swamp where the thrush is hiding and familiarizes himself with "the knowledge of death" and "the thought of death" that he is finally able to find the thrush halfway through section fourteen: "And the singer so shy to the rest receiv'd me, / The gray-brown bird I know receiv'd us comrades three, / And he sang the carol of death, and a verse for him I love" (281). Here, Whitman himself begins to sing with the thrush. It is only then—with this infusion of music into poetry and poetry into music—that Whitman finds the language he needs to speak about his pain and work through his grief.

It is significant that the music Whitman turns to is *natural* music. In his poem "The Eolian Harp"—written across the sea in the U.K. and 70 years before Whitman's lilac elegy— Samuel Taylor Coleridge similarly finds music inspired by "the Poetic Sentiment" in nature:

> And what if all of animated nature
> Be but organic Harps diversely framed,
> That tremble into thought, as o'er them sweeps
> Plastic and vast, one intellectual breeze,
> At once the Soul of each, and God of all?
> (Coleridge).

As Poe would say, Coleridge "recognizes the ambrosia which nourishes the soul" in nature (198). And if this

"intellectual breeze" that is ever-present in nature is simultaneously the soul of each person, and if *all* of nature is "organic Harps diversely framed"—if all of nature is *music*— then this music must be in the soul of each person. So when this concept of nature takes the form of the thrush in Whitman's lilac elegy, the bird is not simply Whitman's source for his renewal of language; its song serves as a vehicle for past poets' language from which Whitman can draw to achieve that elevated level of universal specificity.

Poetry's origin in music—and the long-lasting relationship between the two before their paths diverged ever so slightly—allows it to hold and speak universal pain over centuries and thousands of miles due to both musically-related form and the use of musical language. Poets whose paths never cross write on the same themes with near-identical language and/or syntax, and poets and readers desperate to make more sense of the world (i.e. myself) discover these similarities, these harmonies, and internalize them as capital-T Truths. But these Truths are mere instances of universal specificity. In the case of the half-dozen poets referenced in this essay, the universal concept they address is the emotional pain of moving through the world.
The specificity comes in with each poet's particular poem in which they write about their own relationship with that universal pain. As readers, we find comfort in knowing someone else is also experiencing such intense pain—so much so that they've created a beautiful piece of art out of it—and from knowing how they perceive it so we can consider and understand our own pain in the

context of theirs. And for poets, the discovery of these universally specific poems that manage to connect and harmonize means more work and ideas from which we can draw to help illuminate our own work, as in the case of Hass likely borrowing from Dickinson. And when this "borrowing" does not happen chronologically—as in the case of Limón to Gilbert to Hass—it only adds to the relief of knowing one's pain has been, is, and will continue to be felt in similar capacities across time and space.

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The Monster Within

Elijah Weiner

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In both Laird Hunt's *In the House in the Dark of the Woods* and Maria Dahvana Headley's translation of *Beowulf,* the protagonist actively seeks out the monster's home. While seemingly in search of shelter or renown, these glimpses into the monster's lives allows the similarities between them and the protagonists to shine through. As each tale progresses the distinction between the two becomes increasingly hard to define, causing us to question whether there truly are any heroes at all. Through subtle comparisons and violent encounters, each author makes clear that the real monster is ultimately the one inside of us.

The similarities between Hunt's *In the House in the Dark of the Woods* and Headley's translation of *Beowulf* are surprisingly numerous. Both stories begin with a character besieged in their own home, one from a terrifying creature and the other from traumas of the past. In both stories, the monsters are not so different from the heroes they battle, and in Hunt's novel they even seem to be one in the same. However, what remains most similar between them is the darkness that both the heroes and the villains contain. In Theodora Goss's essay "Listening to Krao: What the Freak and Monster Tell Us," Goss notes, "[w]e fear the monster, as we fear Frankenstein's creation, Dracula, or the Creature from the Black Lagoon, but we are also attracted to it.

That is because the monster allows us to escape from the categories that structure our understanding of the world. We are attracted not only to the monster, but also to what it represents: the chaos underlying meaning," perhaps providing an explanation both to why we have always been enthralled by stories centered around monsters, as well as to why both Beowulf and the protagonist in *In the House in the Dark of the Woods* cannot stop themselves from venturing into the monster's den (152).

Continuing her analysis of what it truly means to be monstrous, Goss claims that "the monster is a monster precisely because we cannot distance it from ourselves. It is not outside the natural order but both inside and outside, both other and us," a sentiment expressed many times throughout *In the House in the Dark of the Woods* (149-150). While the protagonist's transformation into the new Eliza in the house in the woods seems nothing short of a long expression of Goss' statement, it is stated most clearly by the old Eliza as she discusses with Captain Jane her commitment to never return, "'I won't come back,' I said. 'Of course not, deary.' 'I won't. Not like you. Not like the others.' 'Storm and still, knife and quill, we all say we won't and then we almost all of us sooner or later will.' She said this with a laugh as if it were a small and light thing to say after all those screams - the new Eliza's, mine, hers, the others before - a trifle there in the morning sun" (Hunt 191). In this passage Hunt emphasises the similarities between the women's journeys, and how regardless of their intentions to deviate from the path they almost always follow in the

footsteps of those that came before. While each of the different women in the tale appear monstrous at some point in the story (Granny someone's appetite for flesh, Captain Jane's brutal murder and her boat of corpses, Eliza's familial violence, etc.), it becomes impossible for any of the women to separate themselves from each other, as they are all a part of the same cycle.

In a quote seemingly written for the protagonist in *In the House in the Dark of the Woods,* Goss states "[w]e are drawn to the darkness that the monster represents, because that darkness is also freedom from the constraints of our ordinary lives (152). From the outset of the story, the protagonist's desire to escape from her monotonous lifestyle is clearly evident. She loathes spending all day cooped up inside her home, forced to do the cleaning and the cooking. We even learn that most visitors are sent away by her husband, regardless of her desire to meet them. This is why, even after the horrors she witnesses in the woods, when she asks, "what will happen to Eliza if I don't go back?" Captain Jane simply replies "[o]h, you'll go back" (Hunt 165). As Goss succinctly put, the freedom that the darkness provides is too alluring to resist, and despite the dangers she knows exists within the wood the protagonist does indeed go back. As mentioned earlier, the same can be said for each of the women in the woods, as all of them inevitably return despite their misgivings. Captain Jane is even certain that the old Eliza will return, regardless of her new lifestyle outside of the woods, because the allure of power will be too much to resist.

Another similarity between each of the women in *In the House in the Dark of the Woods* is the violence each of them inflicted in their own lives before they became a part of the woods (the protagonist commits matricide, Captain Jane poisons her brother, etc.). However, the protagonist's murder is not revealed until late in the novel, similarly alluding to the darkness hidden within each of us. Additionally, this inner turmoil can be seen as a struggle between two identities within a single person, as Christopher Clausen argues in his essay "From the Mountain to the Monsters." While discussing Robert Louis Stevenson's Strange Case of *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde,* Clausen quotes "[a]ny man, he concludes, "is not truly one, but truly two," even perhaps multiple. "I saw that, of the two natures that contended in the field of my consciousness, even if I could rightly be said to be either, it was only because I was radically both (243). This is perhaps most apparent in the protagonist's love for her family, juxtaposed with her visions of burning their home to the ground and stabbing her husband to death. While these violent fantasies may seem appalling at first, I believe they serve as yet another reminder of how little separates us from the monsters we hate most, as the protagonist's aggression towards her husband can be directly linked to her mother's murder of her father.

While discussing the development of fictional monsters over time, Clausen notes "[i]ndeed the similarities between the scientists who are the protagonists of Frankenstein (1818) and Dr. Jekyll and Mr Hyde two generations later suggest that once a fictional scientist had succeeded in creating a quasi-

human horror, the obvious progression was for a later researcher to transform himself into one," which is perhaps an even stronger comparison to *In the House in the Dark of the Woods* (241). As mentioned previously, the protagonist's transformation into the new Eliza can be seen as a transformation similar to that of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde; from man to monster. However, as Clausen makes clear, Dr. Jekyll does not simply become something divorced from himself when he becomes the murderous Mr. Hyde, but rather allows the violent version of himself to take control. I believe that this is the case too in *In the House in the Dark of the Woods* in regard to all of the women, as the monstrous actions they perform do not simply manifest out of thin air; they were already a part of themselves. Captain Jane's lust for power clearly existed before she became the woman of the woods, as evidenced by her willingness to murder her brother for his inheritence. Similarly, the protagonist's willingness to aid Captain Jane in her dispatching of the blonde-haired man when she learns of his misdeeds is not unlike her murder of her mother once her father was slain. In both cases, each of these women simply allowed their more violent and vengeful traits to surface.

Clausen's essay can be similarly applied to Headley's translation of *Beowulf,* as the similarities between the tales and the messages they portray are many. In the age-old tale, the violent and bloodthirsty Grendel is unmatched in physical strength and brutality, seemingly unstoppable, until Beowulf arrives. Surprisingly, despite their oppositional status, Headley seems to make clear that Beowulf and Grendel are not

unalike one another. As Clausen notes when discussing Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's, *The Hound of the Baskervilles,* "Stapleton is the most formidable adversary Holmes ever faces, precisely because they are so much alike… One has the feeling that Holmes and Stapleton are equals who understand each other all along" (249). In this passage, Clausen is suggesting that the reason Sherlock Holmes has so much difficulty facing off against the villain in the story is because they are so similar. From their intellect to the "dry glitter" in their eyes, both villain and hero share exceptional physical and mental characteristics, seemingly differentiated only by their oppositional goals (249). This too can be said of Grendel and Beowulf, as right from the outset their strength is rivaled only by each other's. So too do their violent tendencies coincide, from Beowulf's dismembering of Grendel to his decision to use his own kinsman as bait. In both cases, both the hero and the villain are shown to be eerily similar, highlighting the evil hidden within even those we see as the best of us.

Goss' essay can also be applied to Headley's *Beowulf,* perhaps even more convincingly, as she even mentions the classic tale herself, stating "[t]he monster always means. Its body is a text that can be read, but how it is read depends on the reader. For Beowulf's medieval compositor, Grendel represented outer darkness, the chaos that exists outside the social order of Heorot. For John Gardner, he was the outsider who could perceive the underlying corruption of society" (153). Setting aside her reference to Gardner's *Grendel,*

Goss sees the original Grendel as a representation of "outer darkness, the chaos that exists outside the social order of Heorot," leaving us to wonder what Beowulf represents. When the previous comparison between Grendel and Beowulf is taken into account, it stands to reason that Beowulf would represent something similar, but perhaps much more subtly. If Grendel represents outer darkness, then I believe that Beowulf represents an inner darkness, and the chaos that exists within Heorot Hall. Beowulf'sinner darkness can be easily seen in his violent actions inside and out of Heorot Hall, but perhaps the chaos inside of Heorot that he represents can be seen most clearly in a speech made by Hrothgar's wife, Wealtheow. Shortly after Beowulf dispatches Grendel, Hrothgar announces that Beowulf is now a son to him. Fearing for her family's safety, Wealtheow quickly remarks:

> Accept this cup from me, my lord of rings, and lift this golden goblet… I hear you've chosen a brand-new son, this Cain-cleansing warrior. I know you know that life is short, that you are mortal-the blessings you bask in today are boons for bequeathing. I ask only that you gift
>
> the kingdom
>
> to your kin, before your sword is sheathed in smoke. (Headley 52)

This passage highlights the danger in accepting Beowulf as an heir, as it is likely that he would kill off Hrothgar's sons in order to ensure his rise to power. This may have been avoided because of Wealtheow's quick thinking, but it is undoubtedly an example of chaos hidden within Heorot Hall.

As for Goss' description of Gardner's Grendel as the "outsider who could perceive the underlying corruption of society," this sentiment is quite easily found in *In the House in the Dark of the Woods* as well (153). While the protagonist initially sets out in search of berries and perhaps a reprieve from her tedious lifestyle, she is quickly made aware of the inadequacies her life possesses. When Eliza shows her the notebooks she reads and writes in, and encourages her to do the same, the protagonist soon realizes how oppressive her husband and her mother's rule against literacy truly was. Additionally, when the old Eliza returns home, she immediately takes charge of the household, removing the woman who had taken her place and ordering her husband around the house. While Hunt does not specifically address this, it seems likely that she too learned how oppressive societal views of the household really were and chose to rectify them in her own life.

When discussing the power of monsters, particularly in Bram Stoker's *Dracula,* Goss states "[t]hey represent both what frightens us and what would transform us if we gave in to their allure. Dracula's bite turns Lucy into a monster, but it also frees her to express her repressed desires—to be the self she has always been, under her civilized veneer" (153). In this sense

Beowulf is not unlike Lucy, as his confrontation with a monster allows him too to shed his “civilized veneer.” As mentioned previously, his encounter with Grendel is extremely violent and portrays Beowulf as just as much of a monster as Grendel. Additionally, his decision to follow Grendel’s mother down into the mere to kill her is certainly not something a civilized man would do. It was more than revenge; it was seemingly something he had been waiting for his whole life. The encouragement he receives to do the deed from Hrothgar could also be seen as representative of the desire for violence within all of us, as even someone who cannot commit the deed wishes to be a part of it.

Another similar aspect between the two stories is the way that they end, or rather how they don’t end. At the conclusion of *Beowulf,* the hero of the story has far from saved his country; in fact, he seems to have doomed it. While attempting to slay yet another monster he dies in the process, leaving his people a horde of cursed treasure, and the countless enemies out for revenge are now left unchecked. Headley describes the situation adeptly in one of the last stanzas of the poem, stating:

> Then another dirge rose, woven uninvited
>
> by a Geatish woman, louder than the rest.
>
> She tore her hair and screamed her horror
>
> at the hell that was to come: more of the same.

> Reaping, raping, feasts of blood, iron fortunes
>
> marching across her country, claiming her body.
>
> The sky sipped the smoke and smiled. (135)

As she makes clear, the cycle of violence that began the story is far from over, and it is unlikely to change. While the conclusion to *In the House in the Dark of the Woods* is slightly more optimistic, Hunt too highlights the continuing cycle of violence. The protagonist of the tale has now replaced the old Eliza in the house in the woods, showing her similar inability to change it. While her son sets out to find her, Hunt ends the novel with an image of flames, very similar to the smoke described in the quotation above, saying "[f]or as it rose, the good sun lit a line down the middle of the long field I found before me and seemed to set the air of the trees in the distance, and the whole wide world beyond them, to burn" (214).

In a similar vein, both Goss' and Clausen's essays too end in an almost identical fashion. Clausen concludes saying "[a]s Wordsworth had hinted eighty years earlier, the nightmare mountain, the apelike double, the undead bloodsucker, the implacable hound emerging out of the wall of fog - all the world's horrors - slumber uneasily within us. Symbolic victories over such specters, to the nineteenth-century literary minds that dreamed them up so graphically, are likely to be temporary and partial at best" (250). As for Goss, she states "[m]onster needs to be used in a more specific sense, to identify what crosses the boundaries between self and other, stability and chaos…in which we

recognize that the division between self and other has always been arbitrary, and that the freak and monster are always ultimately about us" (Goss 15). In both cases, each author emphasizes what both Hunt and Headley seem to be arguing: that the monster is within. Clausen's final words in particular seem to match up with the ongoing endings in both *Beowulf* and *In the House in the Dark of the Woods* previously discussed, as he highlights how any "symbolic victories" are "temporary and partial at best," just as how any triumph over the monsters in both tales are equally fleeting. Goss' final statement, however, seems to be more of a call to action, as she argues for recognizing that the monster has always been about us, and that there truly are no differences between those we see as freaks and ourselves.

In conclusion, despite the fantastical elements and larger than life characters present in both books, each of them serves as a message about ourselves. As both Goss and Clausen argue, since time immemorial monsters have served as a representation of what we find ourselves unable to confront; that which is within. When looked at closely, we find that Grendel is not so different from his murderer, and that all of the women in Hunt's novel share much more than the names they inherit from one another. In both stories the authors highlight these similarities in order to emphasize the thin line that separates all of us, and how it takes very little to uncover what is hidden beneath. Ultimately all four authors, Headley, Hunt, Goss, and Clausen, conclude their works in an almost identical fashion: with the message that monsters have been, and always will be, about us.

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Race, Ideology, and *Kindred*

Claire Woodard

…

It is strange—perhaps impossible—to envision a world devoid of ideological influence. Ideology is simply everywhere, employed by both institutional structures and individuals in the name of societal order and ideals. Though often promoted as indisputable realities, to suggest that any given ideology is equivalent to truth would be completely misguided. They are paired with such intense enforcement for this reason, unable to exist without interpellated subjects and powerful structures upholding them. The lack of tangible evidence that tends to define an ideology leaves them susceptible to scrutiny, solidifying their equivalency to mere representations of humans' relationship to the actual conditions of life. Considering this notion when situating race as an ideology, it becomes clear how arbitrary many of the narratives dominating policy implementation and conceptualizations of race are.

Octavia Butler's *Kindred* exemplifies race not only as an ideological construct, prone to destabilization, but also how the institution of slavery weaponized it in order to concretize white supremacist attitudes and spout its depraved agenda as the way things should be. Specifically, I argue that *Kindred*'s rendering of race directly contextualizes it as an ideology and is consistent with Louis Althusser's

argumentation that ideologies are inadequate in wholly signifying truth. Butler demonstrates this by depicting a complication of the characters' racial perceptions and prejudices, the plain unfoundedness of these classifications, and the severe methods required in preserving slavery's status as a supposed necessity. I will use Louis Althusser's *Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses* and Barbara Fields's "Slavery Race, and Ideology in the United States of America," to emphasize my claims, keeping their focal arguments in conversation with the textual evidence. Overall, my paper aims to communicate the urgency of questioning the powerful ideologies that govern us, leading to more inclusive and desirable societal conditions.

Before commencing my discussion on *Kindred*, I will provide a brief summary of Althusser and Fields's main arguments, hopefully elucidating their relevancy and utility when exploring ideological presence in the literature. Althusser's concern primarily lies in the inherent nature of ideologies, describing them as "the imaginary relationship of individuals to their real conditions," insinuating that a single ideology is incapable of encompassing absolute truth (Althusser 450). This does not negate the immense weight they possess—regardless of being similarly categorized as facades and easily critiqued, they are inescapable, with established authority in our lives before we are even born. Furthermore, they are only able to exist "by the subject and for the subjects," insinuating the crucial role people and systematic enterprises—like ISA's and RSA's—have in ensuring their continued dominance by

means of violent indoctrination (Althusser 455). Matters of race particularly become intriguing, albeit disturbing, when considered ideologically. This is exactly what Fields profoundly does in her essay, expanding upon and putting into practice Althusser's declarations.

Through her identification of race as an ideology, Fields troubles the assumption of race being a result of the observed physical differences of people, framing it instead as having intentionally arisen from a historical context in which the justification and implementation of enslavement was pursued. As she declares, "ideologies are real, but it does not follow that they are scientifically accurate, or that they provide an analysis of social relations that would make sense to anyone who does not take part in those social relations" (Fields 110). Consequently, the narratives and categorizations dominating racial discourse are not rooted in any incontestable facts—racial ideology and its many components are manmade, generated in the name of promoting specific schemas and policies. Butler exhibits how institutional slavery embedded within itself, under the guise of truth, tenets like these to achieve legitimization. However, her novel reflects how shakable these notions are, leading characters to question not only the legitimacy of slavery, but their own perceptions of race as well; her framing of race suggests that it is ideological in nature, supporting both Althusser and Fields's theses, principally through her ability to concurrently accentuate the ideology's immense sway and insecurity.

Kindred is centered around Dana and Rufus's complicated yet undeniable kinship, inciting in Rufus especially reconsiderations of race and what qualifies a person as Black. Equating Blackness with specific traits that transcend a purely a physical basis, he finds these assumptions completely problematized through Dana. She embodies everything he has only ever, up until this moment, associated exclusively with whiteness. Upon first meeting and conversing with her, he is completely taken aback by how blatantly her manner contrasts with the other Black people in his life, all of which are slaves or are essentially treated as such regardless of freed status. He remarks, "You don't talk or dress right or act right. You don't even seem like a runaway," meaning she does not act congruent to the slavery-induced characteristics Black people at this time have been assigned (Butler 25). Of course, this is largely attributed to the time period she is coming from; Black people are no longer enslaved, having greater access to educational opportunities and other necessitous resources that were previously reserved for white people. It is baffling for Rufus to witness—Dana's manifestation is in many ways the antithesis of what racial ideology and slavery have taught him about Blackness and the limitations that have been put on its expression. She represents a United States rid of slavery, where Black people are legally permitted to strive for and outwardly present the same things as whites, and this is entirely inconceivable for him up until now. As their relationship deepens, this confusion only grows stronger, despite her attempts to undo much of the learning racial

ideology has instilled in him. Enslavement and Black identity, for the most part, remains completely equated for him, and because she does not exhibit the traits expected of slaves, her Blackness comes into question at several points in the story.

As mentioned before, Rufus's conceptions of Blackness are only troubled as his kinship with Dana comes to further fruition; strangely, his views towards her grow more dehumanizing as his love for her intensifies. Interestingly enough, it is not the circumstances of their meeting and her ability to travel through time, reaching him only at the direst of times, that is the most inexplicable to him. Even with this in mind, he cannot wrap his head around her behavior as a Black individual, constantly comparing her to white people and questioning her identity. Her manner of speech, intellectuality, and unflinching stances are features of being he has only ever associated with whiteness. In their final confrontation, Rufus shares with her, "Daddy always thought you were dangerous because you knew too many white ways, but you were black," emphasizing the anxiety her existence alone stimulates in white slaveholders and the explicit belief that there are 'white' ways, and there are 'black' ways of being (Butler 262). This statement exemplifies race as an ideology through its implication that supposed differing races have inherently dissimilar attributes, directly actualized via the institution of slavery. Additionally, race is being addressed ideologically here in the way this statement reflects the contestability of white supremacy and race as a whole.

Dana is Black yet capable of matching, perhaps surpassing, the surrounding white people in articulating the qualities that allegedly vindicate their authority. She is downright frightening to people like Rufus's father, for she directly exposes the flaws in the ideologies they adhere to and the institutions they benefit from.

Throughout the story, Tom Weylin is the primary vehicle in which this notion is demonstrated, signaled through his continual wariness towards Dana because of her unapologetic and intimidating level of intelligence. Not only does her intellect make him insecure about his own as a white man—the prospect of a Black woman outsmarting him is likely appalling in his mind—but she poses a threat to his authority on the plantation and the arbitrary rationalizations behind slavery. The education of slaves is what he fears the most, and the punishment for being caught reading without permission incredibly severe, for one of the first things he tells Kevin is a "warning that it was dangerous to keep a slave…educated…as far north as this" (Butler 78). He acknowledges that reading has the potential to lead slaves to question their positioning, thus inspiring yearnings for freedom and ideas of how to obtain it. Furthermore, if his slaves were able to read, write, and acquire reasoning that rejects their inferior status, they would equalize themselves with him in some regard, for his claim as the smartest or most esteemed on the plantation would be diminished. Dana is motivated to educate the slaves, like Nigel and Carrie, with the hopes that they will undo the thinking racial ideology promotes about Blackness, and also to

give them the ability to forge documents that will aid them in efforts towards freedom, boosting their chances in making it out successfully.

Not too long after she arrives, she realizes how daunting, yet undeniably crucial, this undertaking to teach others will be. It is not just urgent for her to teach Rufus to be less like his father in order to make life easier for future slaves but witnessing the inescapable presence of racial ideology and how it has implemented a slave-mindset in their lives ultimately makes Dana feel it is her responsibility to give as many slaves as she can the tools to undo these mentalities. This pivotal decision is marked by an encounter with a group of slave children—firsthand, she is showed how early ideology interpellates subjects through a seemingly harmless game they play together. However, the game is the product of something far more sinister than mindless, innocent play. A young slave boy beckons a young slave girl to a make-believe auction block, calling out, "She worth plenty money. Two hundred dollars. Who bid two hundred dollars?" (Butler 99). Just as Althusser proclaims about the nature of ideology, this instance highlights how the presence of racial ideology and slavery's utilization of it is inescapable and solidified before birth, playing a major role in the developmental stages of a person's life. What Dana finds so disturbing about this display is this very notion; even without much experience as a slave, the children are already wrapped up in the mindset of being one, and as she puts it, preparing themselves for the ostensibly inevitable path they will soon take.

Her presence on the plantation warrants suspicion from people like Weylin, for he is aware she has the power to steer them away from this reality, or at least afford them the utility to decide whether or not their enslavement is representative of the way things should be. The weaknesses in the logic of slavery and racial ideology in general are readily available, especially made known through figures like Dana, who is an obvious example of these inconsistencies. Given this, enforcers of ideological practices, including subjects like Weylin, must resort to violent and aggressive means to ensure the ideology is maintained and believed. If racial ideology as slaveholders know it is certainly equivalent to truth, it would not necessitate such extreme methods of preservation; the ideology would speak for and uphold itself, without a reliance on the subjects.

Public whippings are Tom Weylin's primary method of instilling fear in the slaves, sending an unmistakable message of what happens when someone rebels against the behavior that is expected of them. According to Dana, this is a horribly effective mode for the most part. Although it does not deter her completely from pursuing her anti-slavery and educational endeavors on the plantation, it certainly imparts upon her a significant dread, one that forces her to acknowledge how lightly she must tread unless she hopes to meet the same fate (of course, she eventually does). After watching him make an example of the man, she laments, "It served its purpose…It scared me, made me wonder how long it would be before I made a mistake that would give someone

reason to whip me," highlighting how actions like this encourage subjects to police their own behavior, aligning it with what is ideologically expected of them (Butler 91). This description of Weylin and the impact it has on the slaves directly relates to Althusser's proclamation that ideology is by and for the subjects. As a slaveowner, he is a subject of racial ideology, adhering to within a slavery context, and he keeps it alive through whippings and adamantly conserving the disparities between him and the slaves, whiteness and Blackness. Again, these discrepancies are not inherent, nor is there any tangible evidence beyond skin tone to suggest that race and white supremacy are anything but an ideology.

Fields elaborates on this when she states that nothing could "keep race alive if we did not constantly reinvent and re-ritualize it to fit our own terrain," and this is exactly what happened in the time period *Kindred* takes place in to fulfill legal slavery (Fields 118). The association of inferiority with Blackness, as well as the supposed intrinsic incapacity of Black people to achieve the same potentials and socially desirable qualities as white people, is backed by no real substantiation—only by a manmade ideology that was created in order to validate practices like slavery. This is why Weylin and other subjects in support of slavery must continually act to foster a fearful environment, manipulating their slaves through this until they believe, or at least appear to believe, these notions about themselves and Blackness, thus allowing slavery to continue and 'order' be maintained on plantations.

Even with her efforts, Dana cannot prevent Rufus from ideological interpellation, and in the end, proves he is unable to fully shed the prejudices he obtained at a young age. He too is guilty of perpetrating malicious behavior as a means of upholding slavery and spewing racist ideology. Even his familial ties to her, a concept that is far more biologically sound and evident than what governs racial ideology, is not enough to dissuade him from succumbing to what is expected of him as a white slaveowner. Regardless of all she has done for him and her unique circumstances, the pressure and power of ideology are too great, pushing him to treat her as a slave to the point of their relationship being gone beyond repair. The facts of her constantly saving his life are also indisputable and far more believable than the suggestions that she, as Black, requires enslavement and is not worthy of being deemed an acceptable human being, inherently incapable of functioning in society as a white person would—Dana herself exemplifies this clear as day for Rufus. Nonetheless, the power of ideology cannot be understated and often surpasses the influence of other factors, leaving subjects in situations as these. His final wish is for Dana "to stop hating," him but the behavior he is encouraged to display as a slaveowner and subject of racial ideology are impossible for her to love, even with their shared kinship (Butler 267).

Octavia Butler's *Kindred* reminds us to continually question racial ideology, highlighting not only the harm that can be caused when it is weaponized, but also the unignorable presence it has in human dealings. Like Althusser, she demonstrates subjects'

complicated relationship to ideology, and the lack of truth these ideologies are capable of presenting. Because ideologies are so insecure, they must be enforced with great intensity and violence. Furthermore, through her ideological portrayals, she highlights Fields's thesis that race is an ideology, constantly being reshaped in the name of certain agendas. She shows us that change is possible, that we can push back against harmful ideologies and reject the institutions that utilize them until they are no longer able to exist.

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Rebuilding Economic Foundations for a Stronger Future

Jack Reaney

…

"Sometimes, you need a good earthquake to show you what's earthquake-proof."
—Anonymous

Earthquakes do more than just crumble foundations. These disasters are a complete shake-up; they exploit and emphasize the existing structural weaknesses. Under the attentive spotlight which follows those moments of great drama, they reveal the deeper complications which might have otherwise appeared later on. When architects, engineers, and city planners are forced to face the destructive wakes of tremendous quakes, they are better positioned to recognize and address the rotten roots of the rubble. That same disruption applies to the study of pandemics, famines, and all other economic disasters. One fact perpetuates those topics; even if a threat is "non-selective" by nature, institutions, power figures, and social norms tend to direct the worst impacts toward less-privileged groups, who then suffer in higher proportion. Afterwards, authorities can decide whether their society chooses to address certain fundamental disparities. But in a democratic society, at least, the scores of impact-analyses should highlight the truth: like poorly-built homes that crumble when shaken, disadvantaged groups will

somehow be affected by disasters in different, unfair ways. The COVID-19 pandemic is a modern reminder that when populations throughout history are struck by disaster like the infamous Black Death, the ensuing research might reveal underlying trends of economic inequality and demographic inequity, which could serve as an impetus for positive change and explain beneficial disruptions to obsolete norms.

I will discuss three historical phenomena derived from research of the Black Death: the advancement of women in labor systems, the pattern of governing bodies to protect elitist power, and the societal tendency to use panic to target and scapegoat vulnerable groups. These issues connect to COVID-19 because women were—alongside every group *except* educated, white males—particularly shocked by the social and economic chaos of pandemic which suggests there is work yet to be done in the name of equal opportunity. Furthermore, the existing social safety net was not yet prepared to handle that unequal distribution of hardship or mental health challenges from isolation. Finally, I note that "Asian hate" emerged as an alarming reminder that American education and media is still failing to build a national ideology based in truth and fact.

Before discussing these narratives, it's important to acknowledge that post-disaster research may not *always* reveal systematic flaws related to class, race, gender, etc. which are useful for societal growth. In the case of Cholera, for example, the disease was non-selective—anyone exposed faced the same risk. It was even less selective than most pathogens, because the

cause of spreading was unknown and somewhat random. Epidemiologist John Snow eventually confirmed his suspicion that Cholera transmitted through the infection of local water sources—water being an essential resource for all socioeconomic classes, this disease did not select the poor (Ambrus et. Al 482). Ironically, income-shocks from the cholera outbreak created long-term problems; the affected area suffered depressed rent-prices and reinforced the condensation of urban poverty, as struggling neighbors applied negative externalities to the blocks as a whole and five percent of families plunged into poverty (476). Cholera could be seen as a disaster which created long-lasting problems rather than illuminate existing ones.

Another important note is that these eye-opening studies might not appear until long after all eyes have closed in those affected historical populations. In the last century, we have used more efficient analytical tools—and researchers with unprecedented time and resources—to learn more about historical disasters than the original affected populations ever possibly could have due to constraints of technology, communication, medical science, and other developments. Conclusions from recent studies of the Black Death, for example, might have been useful in the 14th century, but they did not exist; thus, they saved zero lives and enabled no immediate ideas which could have informed economic disruptions which followed. But with regards to current and future disasters like COVID-19, we can expect a furious hunt for near-instantaneous and equitable data insights; we can expect unintended cross-sections of the

socioeconomic playing field; we can expect that in a functioning democratic society—and I hope we can *expect* a functioning democratic society—access to information mobilizes positive change.

The Black Death serves as an excellent example of how an exogenous shock can disrupt institutional norms. European labor systems dissolved, "fundamentally [changing] the balance of power between men and women and between generations" (De Moor 14). Jedwab, Johnson, and Koyoma explain that aggregate demand plummeted (10); "Crops went unharvested, and building projects stopped" (8). (This sounds familiar to the age of COVID-19 when industrial activity was halted to a point where even the price of *oil* went negative.) Religious institutions became increasingly top-heavy, as struggling low-class worshippers banded into movements of reform. Unorthodox groups that sparked during the Black Death wrote an important prologue to the Protestant Reformation, a crucial historical pivot which swept through Europe in the 1500s, challenging Roman Catholicism (Jedwab et. al 39). Economies and religious institutions were disrupted, and modern studies show that those decaying landscapes were conducive to change.

For example, the European world may have been *ready* to redefine gender roles and expectations. Researchers disagree on whether the European Marriage Pattern (EMP) emerged from, or was reinforced by, the Black Death. But both views overwhelmingly argue that the Black Death conducted the rise of the EMP in the 15th century, which destabilized traditions of a male-focused economy and early marriage for women. Female

populations gained bargaining power, according to De Moor and Van Zanden. Female presence in the workforce rose as well as their average wage (14). Women finally controlled significant wealth, saving to support future families rather than being attached to their estate and marrying according to their inherent value, before immediately accepting the arduous cycle of fertility (15). Perhaps to fill vacancies in decimated urban populations, young men and women began engaging in labor migration which also delayed marriages (15). These socioeconomic shifts paralleled changes in the agricultural standard; Nico Voigtländer and Hans-Joachim argue that especially in Northwest Europe, production shifted "from corn to horn" as a Malthusian rise in living standard enabled wider demand for animal products which had been considered luxury goods before the Black Death (Voigtländer 2254). All of these changes happened fast in pre-industrial terms, building a stronger, earthquake-proof foundation and re-wiring the path of least resistance which helped conduct the Great Divergence.

It must be noted that the Great Divergence is remembered as a period of vast growth and progress, when Western Europe adopted new cultural philosophies and economic practices (such as the EMP and pastoral farming). Some regions of Eastern and Southern Europe lagged behind and "missed out" on the fruits of this progress; the integration of women into positions of relative power allowed for a more efficient division of labor, in purely economic terms, and likely increased societal enlightenment and morale. The Great Divergence

is valuable evidence on a global scale, useful for female-labor advocacy groups to undermine the arguments of opponents with male-centric views, as they may have never learned that progress for women has been an ongoing battle since their initial empowerment helped bring an end of the dark ages. Of course, gender inequality still persists into the twenty-first century.

When COVID-19 struck the United States, the path of least resistance was wired delicately between competing political ideologies of how to support struggling citizens when their jobs and businesses are forced to shut down—in this case for unpredictable, drastic reasons. In one pandemic-inspired profile of American needs, Stefania Albanesi and Jiyeon Kim showed that women are more-likely to work in service providing industries—which suffered more than, say, male-dominated finance and law—and that they, especially, suffered a regression to old-fashioned norms of tending to childcare and other household needs as schools and daycare facilities closed (8). These gendered responsibilities came at the expense of wage-earning, career-advancing labor. That's just one demographic angle into the impact of crisis; of the massive overall 14.1% increase in unemployed—including employed-but-non-earning—Americans by April 2020, citizens without a college education were more than twice as likely to become unemployed (Bitler et. al 4). Food security needs *tripled*, and food pantries reported a 70% increase in demand (Bitler et. al 1). These needs emphatically affected certain vulnerable groups, overwhelming the programs and outlets which *already*

supported them. Data from the rubble of this economic shake-down emphasized the need for a stronger "Social Safety Net".

Mental health and wellness also became a priority. Logel, Oreopoulos, and Petronijevic highlight the increased challenges faced by students during the pandemic, including increased rates of anxiety and depression, and struggles with motivation and career outlook. The authors argue that while these results appear grim, they also might inform priorities tomorrow. Unprecedented focus on coping strategies revealed "the importance of focusing on social connection and social support during times of stress and suggests that colleges may support students' well-being by providing opportunities for them to connect with each other," and to prioritize communication in general (20). While COVID-19 has been an unfortunate event for many obvious reasons, it has highlighted some previously camouflaged issues such as mental health issues which might improve with greater focus on communication, social connection, and support.

The authors also argue that as a backup for in-person networks of support, social media can deepen existing relationships, as "people are less self-conscious when communicating electronically, and therefore share more of their joys, worries, and stresses. Such self-disclosure is associated with positive relationship outcomes" (22). While people struggled to adjust to virtual connection during COVID-19 lockdowns, the authors believe that the world's expanded perception of communication will be seen as a positive outcome of

disruption, as populations are better prepared to use technology as a tool to increase access to support. This study on college students provides evidence for one angle, but with caution, it could be fair to extrapolate that American citizens should be better prepared to communicate mental health needs support their peers who might be struggling.

Apparently lacking mental health support, though, America's social safety net "has always been less far-reaching and less funded compared to other rich countries," according to Marianne Bitler, Hilary W. Hoynes, and Diane Whitmore Schanzenbach (2). This emergency relief system was built on programs including Unemployment Insurance (UI) offering weekly payments to jobless Americans, and Supplemental Nutritional Assistance Program (SNAP) which is the current form of the Food Stamp Program. With record-high UI applications (34 million by July), congressional policy added $600 per week of benefits ($23 billion per week in federal spending) and opened eligibility to fit the contemporary gig-economy (9-10). With unusual food support needs, SNAP spending "more than doubled by the end of July," costing $1 billion more per week than before the pandemic (9). Those financial resources were not distributed with optimal attention to supporting disparities of greatest importance; despite these massive, hastily-legalized, expensive federal benefits, measures of wellbeing still "are generally worse for families with children, and for Black and Hispanic respondents" (11). It's possible that with all the current academic literature which shows the porosity of America's social safety net,

the delicate wiring of crucial support might be replaced, and the new circuitry will be more efficient than politics could have spliced *without* a disaster like COVID-19 to prove the need for reinforcement.

The Black Death, of course, also saw an initial crumble before any aging buildings were restored. Before the shock which killed 33-50% of Europe, normal agrarian farming meant an economy based in the supply and demand for grains and corn; after the plague's deep disruption to labor markets, populations, and standard of living, women stepped up to assume greater value from their roles as valuable pastoral farmers and relatively independent citizens (Voigtländer 2258). Northwestern Europe's labor force—women, in particular—was primed to make this adjustment in farming, but marginal cost of change would have been prohibitive before a Malthusian shock (the plague) transformed the market. Through modern study, we can derive an understanding that without the Black Death, women would have waited longer for their renaissance of individual bargaining power.

It's also key to look for patterns in how institutions will react to disruption, and the Black Death provides a strong case. In the long run, wealth distribution in Europe changed most notably by decreasing the relative wealth share of the richest 10%; the top 10% went from controlling 65-70% of wealth to just 50%, a drop which compares to the 30% drop (from 90% to 60%) between World Wars and including the Great Depression (De Moor 19). This sudden parity of class in the 14th century was unpleasant for elites; scrambling to grab their

scattered power, they leveraged sumptuary laws which dictated fashion based on social status (20-21). Power figures using law to maintain the status quo is *not* an archaic issue; in the current era of social justice in America, partly tied to the COVID-19 pandemic, America's former president emphasized the importance of "law and order" against activists protesting systemic racism. He directly encouraged a white-supremacist group to "stand back and stand by" during a presidential debate (Frenkel). The Black Death is essential to understanding how governing powers might hire unequitable architects, attempting to suppress the organization and growth of lower-class citizens in the wake of disasters which destabilize institutions and require plans to rebuild.

Furthermore, modern research into Jewish pogroms during the Black Death can help explain the factors which predict persecution in any era. One specific study claimed that the behavior seen during the Black Death paralleled subsequent treatment of Jews throughout history, perhaps even the holocaust, according to Jedwab, Johnson, and Koyoma, because massive shocks such as plague and war happened to coincide with "the worst episodes of anti-Semitic violence" (347). By studying this angle of the Black Death, societies today can provide shelter against aftershocks—hate crimes against religious, racial, ethnic, and social groups.

In the Black Death, these authors found the important causal factors of persecution to be local mortality rate, local involvement of Jews in the

marketplace, and the propensity of a community to scapegoat the Jewish community—blaming them for the plague. Higher mortality rates discouraged pogroms or persecutions, possibly because organizing costs and efforts were too heavy for a weakened community (375). But also, the marginal value of Jewish workers in the moneylending sector was enhanced in desperate times of high mortality, which financially deterred their exile or extermination on an individual and community level (376). Markets either silenced or fueled the anti-Semitic behavior of certain communities.

Another interesting factor is that violent behavior aimed at Jews followed the Christian calendar; near Christmas, Jews were more commonly blamed for killing Jesus, where closer to Easter, Christians were more forgiving of Jews, and compelled to avoid sin including spontaneous attacks on their neighborhoods (347). As cold as it sounds, the authors concluded that in times of disaster, persecution "depends on how the magnitude of the shock interacts with the utility one derives from persecution and the economic benefits associated with the presence of the minority," and that underlying biases may sprout into violence during stressful times (391). Using mortality and population data from the coincident tragedies of Jewish pogrom during a plague, these researchers bring important ideas to the surface which can apply to any disaster where scapegoating is a risk.

The COVID-19 pandemic revealed scapegoating risk, particularly to Asian and Jewish populations. Inextricably tied to President Trump's use of anti-China "trade war" language, some Americans saw COVID-19

as a canvas for the painting of China-centric xenophobia; using terms like “Plandemic”, “Kung Flu Virus”, “Chinese Flu”, and “Wuhan Virus”, white-supremacist groups connected and thrived especially on right-wing, unregulated social media platforms by “linking the coronavirus to racist and antisemitic slurs and memes. Users across these channels regularly share racist messages or caricatures of Chinese people, mocking their eating habits, accents, and hygiene” (Greenblatt 212). As history shows, imagery of the Jewish community is routinely toppled by wave after wave in the tide of anti-Semitism. But this notion of Chinese inferiority is not new, notably dated by the “Chinese Exclusion Act” of 1882, which resulted from public discourse of a “Yellow Peril” (212). Already resurfacing before the virus partly due to President Trump’s rhetoric of ‘reclaiming our economy back from China’, COVID-19 provided a perfect coincident justification for extreme corners of America to identify themselves with racist language and actions. Educators *will* take note, and this hopefully supports awareness in the next generation.

The COVID-19 pandemic shook the world. Only well-supported, well-informed constructs could withstand the sudden destruction. However, earthquakes shake from the ground; the worst impacts were felt by those already weighed down by socioeconomic gravity, those who the world always crashes down onto. But this disaster, like all others, called for widespread research and truth-seeking. While nobody wishes for tragedy, at least the overflow of data can help us better recognize our economic institutions, and our treatment of

disadvantaged groups. Drawing on the long-term impacts resulting from past "earthquakes" like the Black Death, there is reason to hope the world might rebuild with better attention to sustainable architecture. Perhaps, like the Renaissance and waves of industrial revolution, the world could emerge from some sort of "modern middle age", which will be remembered for inefficient norms of economy and support, for class inequality sustained by the manipulation of power, and for senseless hate surviving through nostalgia and biases against minority groups perpetuated through institutionalized ignorance and an unethical media landscape which earns profit through engagement with information, regardless of fact.

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