

ABSTRACT

Title of Document: **HIDDEN NETWORKS OF LOSS: MULTI-ETHNIC MEDIA AND MOURNING IN TWENTIETH CENTURY AMERICAN LITERATURE**

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Mourning may be generally thought of as a private matter, but it is also a set of socially regulated practices designed to determine which lives are considered socially valuable and relevant. These normative modes of mourning often dismiss the losses and griefs of certain groups. In such scenarios, how do those affected communities mourn and represent their losses? How do marginalized peoples incorporate their losses into public discourse, and how can such losses be understood as publicly grievable? As Judith Butler has demonstrated, grievability has immense political importance: to be grievable is to be acknowledged as living, while being un-grievable denies a person his or her humanity.

This dissertation explores these questions via spaces of confinement – internment camps, prisons, and reservations – as they encapsulate the way dominant discourse literally brackets and marginalizes certain groups. Indeed, mainstream networks of information dissemination (like mass media) often do not imagine these communities or their grief, and if they do, it is often sensationalized. The dual pressure of confinement –

restrictions regarding circulation and exclusion from normative structures of public grief – then creates a representational bind for authors. But by changing the discursive forms of mourning, writers can reach and appeal to different audiences. This project draws from literary and media sources, charting the public networks that transmitted recordings of loss and shape mourning practices from the 1930s to the 1990s, a period of increased literary publication from marginalized subjects. I use this archive to demonstrate how breaking mourning out of traditional genres – like elegy, eulogy, and epitaph – allows grief to infiltrate dominant discourse, teaching its audiences how to read loss. In other words, genre, and its accompanying expectations, creates alternative ways of expressing (and interpreting) loss that can expand the bounds of what is grievable. By crafting a history of grievable life in American literature, I show how contemporary meditations on loss are rooted in a long-standing cultural discourse and how this history can help us better understand present political protests – and further social justice aims.

HIDDEN NETWORKS OF LOSS: MULTI-ETHNIC MEDIA AND MOURNING
IN TWENTIETH CENTURY AMERICAN LITERATURE

By

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Dedication

For Robert and Mary Stanutz, in recognition of their love and support

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When I first imagined going to graduate school, I thought it would be a lonely endeavor with only books for my friends. While there were many solitary hours spent toiling over the page, I also found a vibrant and welcoming community that has sustained me over the years. This dissertation is an account of my textual companions, but its shadow story is one of the mentors, colleagues, friends, and family who made it possible.

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My family has stood by me through everything. If I am anything, it is because of Bob and Mary Stanutz. My parents taught me how to be a strong, smart woman and that love and kindness are of utmost importance. My siblings, Ed and Sara, are the best “closest blood relatives” one could have (and my furry siblings, Leo and Isabelle, deserve thanks too).

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Part I: Unimagined Communities

Introduction – Confined Grief

In November 1948, the Westminster Memorial cemetery in Santa Ana, California denied a burial plot to the family of Sergeant Kazuo Masuda, a member of the 442nd Combat Team and posthumous awardee of the Distinguished Service Cross. Basing the decision on the institution's "restrictive covenants" that furnish graves only to Caucasians, the cemetery joined many others across the United States who refused burial plots to deceased Japanese American soldiers after World War II.¹ The rejection spurred protests, and after the commanding general of the 6th Army intervened – at the request of the Japanese American Citizens' League (JACL) – the cemetery relented and granted Sgt. Masuda a burial plot.² The JACL's media outlet, *Pacific Citizen*, confirmed that this kind of discrimination pervaded the West Coast. Reports from Japanese Americans in the Midwest (specifically Illinois and Minnesota) noted similar rebuffs based on the same restrictive covenants.³

Cemetery discrimination affected diverse minority groups, and the JACL participated in a 1954-1955 Supreme Court case about this issue.⁴ Evelyn Rice, widow of a Native American World War II veteran killed in combat during the Korean War, sued the Sioux City Memorial Park Cemetery for refusing to bury her husband on the grounds that it violated the Fourteenth Amendment and the United Nations Charter. The Supreme Court ultimately dismissed the suit, as new Iowa laws prohibited discrimination in public cemeteries. In doing so, they declined to establish federal precedent prohibiting cemetery

¹ "Cemetery Offers Desired Burial of Nisei GI," *Pacific Citizen*, November 27, 1948, 1.

² Future President Ronald Reagan attended the funeral ceremony. Alice Yang Murray, *Historical Memories of the Japanese American Internment and the Struggle for Redress* (Stanford, CA: Stanford UP, 2008), 376.

³ "Cemetery Offers Desired Plot," *Pacific Citizen*, 1.

⁴ "Supreme Court Rules Again on Cemetery Refusing Burial Service," *Pacific Citizen*, May 20, 1955, 5.

discrimination or to specify the relevance of the Fourteenth Amendment to such cases.⁵

Although Rice did not win her case, her husband was interred in Arlington National Cemetery with military honors from President Truman. While the publicity around these cases afforded Masuda and Rice privileged final resting places, many more dead lie in their shadow, forgotten and excluded from public spaces.

Death may be the great equalizer, but mourning is not an equalized or equalizing practice. Cemetery discrimination, amongst other social concerns and practices, shaped the way that various ethnic communities publicly mourned the dead throughout the twentieth century.⁶ While we tend to think of grief as a private matter, mourning is very much a social practice. Whom we mourn, how we mourn, and even where we (are allowed to) mourn are all shaped by social, cultural, and political conditions. If the dominant culture omits the losses and grief of certain groups, then how do those grieving communities mourn and represent their losses? How do these marginalized individuals and communities incorporate their losses into mainstream public discourse? How can such losses be understood as grievable and be publicly mourned?

This dissertation explores these questions via spaces of confinement – internment camps during World War II, prisons, and reservations – as they encapsulate the way dominant discourse literally brackets and marginalizes certain groups. Indeed, mainstream networks of information dissemination, like mass media, often do not imagine these communities as mourning – and when loss is portrayed, it is often sensationalized. Subjects in states of confinement are excluded from public spaces and

⁵ Rice v. Sioux City Memorial Park Cemetery, Inc. Et Al., 349 U.S. 70 (1955). For more on cemetery integration, see Kitty Rogers, “Integrating the City of the Dead: The Integration of Cemeteries and the Evolution of Property Law, 1900-1969,” *Alabama Law Review* 56, no. 4 (Summer 2005): 1153-1166.

⁶ See Gary Laderman’s *Rest in Peace: A Cultural History of Death and the Funeral Home in Twentieth-Century America* (New York: Oxford UP, 2003), especially 119-69.

limited in their movements. Like Sergeant Rice (who was born on the Winnebago reservation) and Sergeant Masuda (who had family interned in Jerome and Gila River), many aspects of their lives are affected by such restrictions, including how they mourn and are mourned. For instance, internees during World War II could not go home to bury their dead. Camps had cemeteries, but many decided to wait to inter their loved ones so that they could lie alongside family. This kind of restriction had emotional consequences, intensifying grief as confinement complicated and elongated the funerary process, an important part of mourning. Internment itself incited many losses for Japanese American families (which was not part of conventional discourse in the 1940s); that it inhibits mourning further deepens the losses felt. Indeed, confinement often simultaneously creates situations of loss – whether it be of freedom, possessions, family and friends, and even life – and obstructs mourning.

Further, the dual pressure of confinement – restrictions regarding circulation and exclusion from normative structures of public grief – creates a representational bind for authors. When conventional ideology does not allow for expressions of grief, mourning subjects have few outlets for dealing with loss or making that loss widely known. But by changing the discursive forms of mourning, writers can reach and appeal to different audiences, especially since the circulation of texts (in the absence of circulating bodies) is a key way to reach the mainstream public. Traditional mourning genres like elegy, eulogy, and epitaph help establish the modes and moods of bereavement, as the often formulaic structures give comfort in their expected messages about loss and condolence. And yet the strictures of these genres can be confining with their rote and prescriptive manner. Breaking out of these generic confines changes reading practices associated with

grief – and can offer new representational possibilities for confined populations. When authors use genres like graphic memoir, young adult literature, political treatise, and the novel to mourn, they reshape the rhetorical frames of loss. In other words, genre, and its accompanying expectations, creates alternative ways of expressing (and interpreting) loss that can expand the bounds of what is grievable.

Throughout this project, I draw from archives of literary and media sources that operate both within and outside confined spaces, charting public networks that transmit recordings of loss. Literature and media interact, often creating varied and conflicting public reactions to grief. For example, in my third chapter, I discuss reactions to George Jackson's violent death in San Quentin State Prison. When *New York Times* columnist Tom Wicker wrote a sympathetic depiction of Jackson, it incurred backlash within the pages of his own paper: letters to the editor came in condemning Wicker, and another column (with a different, anonymous author) was soon printed that declared Jackson unworthy of widespread grief. Wicker fired back with another column defending his position. Prisoners across the country mourned Jackson, but even within the prison where he was interred, Jackson's death was contentious, as the *San Quentin News's* condolences contained not-so-subtle digs at Jackson's political activity. Tracing these complex conversations about loss and grief shows the modes of public mourning that happen within (and amongst) mainstream and niche groups. Such analysis illuminates the representational barriers and possibilities for confined populations.

This introduction contextualizes confined grief by interlocking three major discourses: mourning and melancholia in the twentieth century, Judith Butler's conception of grievability, and genre theory. I begin by positioning myself within critical

frameworks of mourning and melancholia, the psychoanalytic key terms that guide much of the scholarship on mourning in literature. Then, I put this work in conversation with Butler's discussions of the political importance of grief. Since loss and grief are made public (and political) via rhetorical frameworks, I turn to genre theory to show how literary categories can bind grief – or create new representational capacities.

Sigmund Freud's work, especially his essay, "Mourning and Melancholia," has been extremely influential in theorizing literary mourning practices. Written in 1915 and published in 1917, this essay draws a distinction between two different ways of dealing with loss: mourning and melancholia. Freud characterizes mourning as the normative way of dealing with loss and melancholia as pathological. In mourning, the griever has a clear sense of what is lost and works through a process of letting go. As the mourner relives memories of and attachments to the lost object, he gradually detaches his libido from the lost object, and "when the work of mourning is completed the ego becomes free and uninhibited again."⁷ But Freud spends little time discussing mourning and far more time explaining melancholia. Freud distinguishes the two by noting that "in mourning it is the world which has become poor and empty; in melancholia it is the ego itself."⁸ Melancholia causes an internalization of the loss, a self-flagellation and internal break within the self, as the identification of the ego with the abandoned object turns object-loss into ego-loss. Freud describes the process of working through melancholia as similar to the gradual, piecemeal detachment of mourning but remarks that overcoming melancholia involves more complications regarding the ego separating from the object

⁷ Sigmund Freud, "Mourning and Melancholia," *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, Ed. James Strachey, XIV (London: The Hogarth Press, 1957): 243-258, 245.

⁸ Freud, "Mourning and Melancholia," 246.

because the lost object – here, internalized into part of the ego – denies assault, making overcoming melancholia as a much more violent process.⁹

Freud notes that one key reason for melancholia can be an inability to consciously identify what one has lost.¹⁰ For losses that society denies, this position becomes more likely, so here I parse the relevant mechanics of melancholia in subsequent criticism. In *The Psychic Life of Power*, Judith Butler writes about mainstream culture’s disavowal of homosexuality and how such denials, in turn, cause losses. She writes, “When there is no public recognition or discourse through which such a loss might be named or mourned, then melancholia takes on cultural dimensions.”¹¹ In other words, when mainstream culture is both the catalyst for loss *and* the denier of space for mourning, melancholia is inevitable. The social dimension of loss – the way that culture can engender grief, particularly for marginalized populations – is an important factor especially for confined populations.¹² Butler makes another relevant point: while her own argument in this piece is about how this melancholia affects gender performance, she makes a brief call to see melancholia as politically productive.¹³ This appeal echoes Douglas Crimp’s work on AIDS and loss 1980s and 1990s, in which he makes a more distinct case for turning

⁹ In fact, Freud actually revised his stance on melancholia in *The Ego and the Id* (1923), writing that the process of melancholia is much more common than previously supposed and that it “makes an essential contribution toward” the ego’s character (28). Indeed, he writes that we can consider the ego to be partially constructed by an internalized history of lost objects. He then assigns the destructive behaviors of melancholia to the super-ego. See 28-9 and 53-4 in *The Ego and the Id, The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, Ed. James Strachey, XIX (London: The Hogarth Press, 1957).

¹⁰ Freud, “Mourning and Melancholia,” 245.

¹¹ Judith Butler, *The Psychic Life of Power: Theories in Subjection* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1997), 139.

¹² Seth Moglen proposes replacing the dyadic model of loss (subject and lost object) with a triadic one (subject, lost object, and the social forces that act upon them and can even cause loss). See *Mourning and Modernity: Literary Modernism and the Injuries of American Capitalism* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2007).

¹³ Butler, *Psychic Life of Power*, 147-8.

melancholia into catalyst for political action.¹⁴ Reconceptualizations of melancholia have since pervaded scholarship on queer loss. For example, José Muñoz, Monica Pearl, and David Eng work toward various melancholic formations about gay and lesbian loss and trauma that counter dominant modes of erasure.¹⁵ Thus, melancholia turns from a state of psychic distress to a mode of political engagement, a crucial repositioning, especially for marginalized populations.

We see a similar reassessment in Anne Anlin Cheng's *The Melancholy of Race*. In this book, she argues that "dominant white identity in America operates melancholically" since U.S. national identity is created through both an integration and repudiation of the racial other.¹⁶ However, Cheng is not only interested in the large-scale sociopolitical operations of melancholia. Focusing on Asian American and African American literature, she extends Freud by investigating the "subjectivity of the melancholic subject" – that is, the psyche of the racialized subject who is simultaneously included/excluded from U.S. national culture.¹⁷ She ultimately poses melancholia as both the state of race relations in the U.S. and as "a psychic *strategy* in response to that rejection."¹⁸ This dual operation presents melancholia as both a cause of marginalization and as a method to combat exclusion, thus lending it a political potential not seen in Freud. Such work pivots toward a further rethinking of melancholia.

Others, like David Eng and David Kazanjian, Heather Love, and Jonathan Flatley,

¹⁴ Douglas Crimp, *Melancholia and Moralism: Essays on AIDS and Queer Politics* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2002).

¹⁵ David Eng, "Melancholia in the Late Twentieth Century," *Signs* 25, no. 4 (2000): 1275-1281 and "The Value of Silence," *Theatre Journal* 54, no. 1 (2002): 85-94; José Muñoz, *Disidentifications: Queers of Color and the Performance of Politics* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1999); Monica Pearl, *AIDS Literature and Gay Identity: The Literature of Loss* (New York: Routledge, 2013).

¹⁶ Anne Anlin Cheng, *The Melancholy of Race: Psychoanalysis, Assimilation, and Hidden Grief* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 11 and 10.

¹⁷ Cheng, *Melancholy of Race*, 14.

¹⁸ Cheng, *Melancholy of Race*, 20.

have disrupted the psychoanalytic perspective on melancholia.¹⁹ Instead, they draw from various historic discourses of melancholia (like humoral melancholia) and affect theory. By expanding the scope of melancholia, they posit melancholia's continued attachment as a method for creating ongoing, open connections to the past. In work by these critics and others, melancholia becomes a productive way of dealing with loss – showing the ways that lingering connections to the past can help subjects reinvest in the world and even fuel future political action. As evidenced by the larger body of work on these issues, the discourse has moved beyond a binary of mourning/melancholia.

My project is informed by these extensions and mutations of mourning and melancholia. Given that the grief of the populations I examine is often unacknowledged in larger American culture, there is an inherently melancholic relationship to loss. But such discussions often do not account for spaces where supportive communities might make mourning (as opposed to melancholia) possible. Lauren Berlant discusses such “intimate publics” in conjunction with her interest in the “affective components of citizenship,” and such work influences my thinking here.²⁰ Perhaps ironically, the confinement that prompts loss and prevents grief from entering mainstream discourse can sometimes create an intimate space for shared mourning (although certainly not always). The case of James Hatsuki Wakasa – a Japanese American internee felled by a sniper's bullet in Topaz, a Utah camp – is one example. The Topaz community banded together with a large memorial service unlike any other in the camp, using the ritual to work through grief, even though outside sources barely recognized it. I discuss this instance,

¹⁹ Jonathan Flatley, *Affective Mapping: Melancholia and the Politics of Modernism* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2008); *Loss: The Politics of Mourning* Ed. David Eng and David Kazanjian (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2002); Heather Love, *Feeling Backward: Loss and the Politics of Queer History* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2007).

²⁰ Lauren Berlant, *Cruel Optimism* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2011), 3.

and its depictions in literature, in my second chapter. Another example, from the fourth chapter, is grave repatriation advocacy from indigenous populations in the late twentieth century. By advocating for remains held in museums being returned to tribes for reburial, these efforts actively seek opportunities to mourn in native communities with native rituals. Given these examples, my project illustrates the way that confined spaces can offer potentials for mourning, not just melancholia.

That said, melancholia always lingers. Mourning is ultimately a process that seeks closure. Since grief is framed by mainstream cultural constructions – ones that sometimes deny the grief of marginalized populations – the problems of loss and grief that mourning tries to solve will remain unresolved. I maintain that, in the face of unresolvable loss, my authors’ work fits into the discourse of depathologized, productive melancholia as they grapple with different strategies for dealing with loss. As David Eng notes, the absence of public space for representing loss takes issues of grief out of the private and makes them very much a political problem, one that prompts melancholic constructions.²¹ I position my authors as theorists of political grief, engaged with this dyad of mourning and melancholia, helping us understand the larger importance of *grieving*, a process that encompasses both sides of the psychoanalytic coin. My chapters parse public modes of representing loss, especially specific literary strategies for making grief (and continuing attachments to loss) more widely known in the public sphere. In terms of my vocabulary usage throughout the dissertation, I want to explicitly note that when I use the term “mourning,” I mean it not in the psychoanalytic sense – unless specifically noted – but instead am referring to the public process of registering and expressing grief (synonymous with “grieving”). By looking at three similarly confined populations –

²¹ Eng, “Melancholia in the Late Twentieth Century,” 1278.

Japanese American internees, African American prisoners, Native American reservation residents – I explore how different social conditions necessitate alternative ways of creating communities of grief and for helping dominant culture understand, as Sara Ahmed says, not just the “other’s grief, but...the other as a griever.”²²

To further illuminate the political dimensions (and potentials) of mourning, I turn to Judith Butler’s work on the sociality of grief and its relationship to recognizing life that she examines in two books, *Precarious Life: The Powers of Mourning and Violence* and *Frames of War: When is Life Grievable?*²³ Building on one another, these essay collections take their impetus from the post-9/11 political landscape. *Precarious Life* demonstrates the political importance of mourning, arguing that the capacity to mourn is linked to an ability to oppose violence.²⁴ Butler focuses on how the 9/11 terrorist attacks laid bare fears of U.S. vulnerability, a vulnerability that the state sought to deny and fight via the War on Terror. Violence begets mourning which begets violence, a vicious cycle of loss and rage. Butler calls for an end of swift retribution in the face of loss and instead positions mourning as a way of rethinking political process. She writes, “To grieve, and to make grief itself into a resource for politics, is not to be resigned to inaction, but it may be understood as the slow process by which we develop a point of identification with suffering itself.”²⁵ Butler’s emphasis on “grieve” as a verb is important: to acknowledge grieving as an action means we understand it as a deliberate act, not an abeyant reactive state. Since grieving is often seen as not “doing” anything – hence decrees that state the

²² Sara Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics of Emotion* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh UP, 2004), 161. Ahmed posits this mode of engagement as a “queer politics of grief.”

²³ Judith Butler, *Precarious Life: The Powers of Mourning and Violence* (New York: Verso, 2004) and *Frames of War: When is Life Grievable?* (New York: Verso, 2009).

²⁴ Butler, *Precarious Life*, xviii.

²⁵ Butler, *Precarious Life*, 30.

time for mourning is over and the time for action is now – emphasizing the active work of mourning is important. It recalibrates emotional labor, making feeling part of political process rather than a tangential emotional state. To purposefully feel grief – to “develop a point of identification with suffering” – and to know that others feel that pain is a major part of conceptualizing the vulnerability of others.²⁶ Such practices help acknowledge the social nature of loss and can create a more empathetic political practice.²⁷

A wider understanding of vulnerability is important specifically because social conditions differentiate between lives (and, implicitly, deaths) that matter and ones that do not. Public discourse creates conditions that determine who is “grievable” and who is not, often through public mourning – that is, whose loss is observed (mourning 9/11 victims) and whose is not (Butler cites the *San Francisco Chronicle*’s refusal to publish a memorial for two Palestinian families killed by Israeli troops on the grounds that it might “offend” people).²⁸ We saw before how denying public space for mourning can create psychically harmful melancholic conditions. But here Butler shows how it is far more insidious. To be “ungrievable” means that these subjects are often treated as non-human, as unreal lives. Thus, violence against such people “fails to injure or negate those lives since those lives are already negated. . . . They cannot be mourned because they are always already lost or, rather, never ‘were,’ and they must be killed, since they seem to live on, stubbornly, in this state of deadness.”²⁹ Although Butler is mostly referring to Iraqi and Afghani lives, this kind of living deadness has long been discussed in U.S. contexts, mostly regarding slavery and its extensions into confined spaces (particularly

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Butler, *Precarious Life*, 30-1.

²⁸ Butler, *Precarious Life*, 35-7.

²⁹ Butler, *Precarious Life*, 33.

carceral ones).³⁰ Without a way of conceptualizing these losses and griefs within dominant ideology, there is no mode of understanding vulnerability, no mode for preventing or changing such structures without radical reconceptions of human life.³¹ Thus the political stakes of grief are much higher than perhaps assumed: this is not simply a matter of drying tears and feeling empathy. Rather, it is about freeing those living dead citizens, if not from literal confinement then from ideology that deems them ungrievable.

While these circumstances of confinement might seem unusual, they actually represent a norm. Marginalized populations have often been bracketed from the mainstream in ghettos or ethnic neighborhoods, or excluded from certain spaces, thanks to segregation practices during a large chunk of the twentieth century. Perhaps the most striking and prevalent example, mentioned above, is prison, which has long been discussed as an extension of the treatment of African Americans, as a reiteration of slavery and of Jim Crow.³² But it is also true of American Indians and Japanese Americans. American Indian reservations came about when Indian Removal policies necessitated spaces set aside for indigenous communities apart from the ancestral lands seized by the U.S. government. During internment, the U.S. government recognized the

³⁰ See Orlando Patterson's keystone book, a comparative text that has greatly influenced scholarship on U.S. slavery: *Slavery and Social Death* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1985). For work on prison and social death, see Joshua M. Price, *Prison and Social Death* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2015) and Caleb Smith, *The Prison and the American Imagination* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2014).

³¹ See Butler, *Precarious Life*, 43-44.

³² See, for example, H. Bruce Franklin, *Prison Literature in America: The Victim as Criminal and Artist* (Westport, CT: Lawrence Hill, 1982); Ruth Wilson Gilmore, *Golden Gulag: Prison, Surplus, Crisis, and Opposition in Globalizing California* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2007); *New Abolitionists: (Neo)Slave Narratives and Contemporary Prison Writings*, Ed. Joy James (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 2005). Perhaps the most well-known book (in mainstream discourse) on this topic is Michelle Alexander's *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness* (New York: The New Press, 2010). However, this book has also been critiqued for several reasons, not the least of which is a problematic historicization that overlooks radical prison discourse in the 1960s and 1970s.

pervasiveness of ethnic neighborhoods when relocating people to the East Coast and advocated assimilation to prevent the construction of new “Little Tokyos” post-war.³³ Far from aberrant, confinement in these scenarios merely highlights standard practices of separation and segregation of certain populations from mainstream American life.³⁴

Confined populations are fundamentally affected by the material state of mourning. In other words, the practices, rituals, and rites of mourning are often greatly constrained by confined states as affected peoples do not have access to the necessary objects or space to perform them. Besides lack of materiality, literal lack of space affects grieving. Physical confinement often leaves the bereaved without quiet space to grieve. For example, in chapter two I discuss how Yoshiko Uchida’s young internee protagonist tries to find a place to be alone to cry about her family pet’s death, but the camp’s lack of privacy intensifies her feelings of loss. The carceral logic of internment affected mourning in other ways too. Some families were interned in different camps, and if a death occurred, they were allowed to go to the other camp to mourn. But this allowance was not always offered with compassion. When a woman unexpectedly died in Topaz, her husband, who was interned in a different camp, was only allowed to travel to Utah with armed guards and then was lodged in the guardhouse (the camp jail), adding insult to injury.³⁵ In such instances, confined spaces mean that there is little to no space for expressing grief. When there is no room for grief, the grievability of these lives is called into question.

³³ Greg Robinson, *After Camp: Portraits in Midcentury Japanese American Life and Politics* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2012), 73. For more, see Yoonmee Chang, *Writing the Ghetto: Class, Authorship, and the Asian American Ethnic Enclave* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2010).

³⁴ Jeffrey Santa Ana has also discussed the ways in which capitalist structures work to contain and conscript Asian American subjects. *Racial Feelings: Asian America in a Capitalist Culture of Emotion* (Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 2015).

³⁵ Yoshika Uchida recounts this event in her memoir of internment, *Desert Exile* (Seattle, WA: University of Washington Press, 1982), 134.

Butler calls grievability “a presupposition for the life that matters” – the keystone for recognizing “the value of life.”³⁶ It exists within the complex layers of knowledge that bolster recognition of different subjects and even make recognition possible. Specifically, “grievability precedes and makes possible the apprehension of the living being as living.”³⁷ Butler positions apprehension as a point before recognition, a “less precise” mode of knowledge that “is bound up with sensing and perceiving, but in ways that are not always – or not yet – conceptual forms of knowledge.”³⁸ This affectual kind of comprehension “can become a basis for a critique of the norms of recognition.”³⁹ With this emphasis on the affective, on indefinite processes of knowledge, Butler repositions grief’s importance as a political tool. Previously, grieving (an action) was the focus, as she prescribes a purposeful engagement with feeling. But here, comprehending potential for loss – and the grief it would engender – is equally important. In other words, grievability need not be about actually grieving those lives; rather, it is an understanding that this loss *affects* you, me, someone else, the world. How it affects, what feelings it causes, is another matter, one I will discuss momentarily. But first, given that grievability is not a given for many, how do we expand its categorization?

Butler argues that “the problem is not merely how to include more people within existing norms, but to consider how existing norms allocate recognition differentially.”⁴⁰ Thus, she focuses on the epistemological “frames” that dictate our ability to recognize subjects and perceive lives as grievable. Such frames are created by normative, regulatory structures like the state and especially media. Butler considers how epistemological

³⁶ Butler, *Frames of War*, 14.

³⁷ Butler, *Frames of War*, 15.

³⁸ Butler, *Frames of War*, 5.

³⁹ *Ibid.*

⁴⁰ Butler, *Frames of War*, 6.

frames can be exceeded, disrupted, and even broken, claiming that the very thing that enables them (reproducibility) is what ruptures them.⁴¹ In reproducing itself, the frame is constantly recontextualized and thus open to new sets of interpretation – the circulation of images from Abu Ghraib and poetry from Guantanamo, taken out of their original contexts, and the ensuing public shock and outrage are examples of how frames can be altered and reconceived. In such examples, “a taken-for-granted reality is called into question, exposing the orchestrating designs of the authority who sought to control the frame.”⁴² Butler argues that this breakage leads to new opportunities for apprehending other lives.

My dissertation considers the textual form grief takes, part of how my authors break out of representational confinement. This emphasis on form reflects Eugenie Brinkema’s recent call to read form and affect as mutually informative.⁴³ Specifically, I look at genre as a crucial structure for framing grief. Indeed, genre is often discussed as a frame: in his comprehensive account of genre theory, John Frow states that he uses “frame” as a “near-synonym of genre.”⁴⁴ Because genre “defines a set of expectations which guide our engagement with texts” it helps create the epistemological edifice for interpretation.⁴⁵ But this framing is not only about concrete forms of knowledge – it also functions affectively. Emotional reactions are guided by interpretive frameworks, and Butler writes that “affect depends upon social supports for feeling.”⁴⁶ In other words, larger cultural frameworks of emotion (and emotional expression) govern what can

⁴¹ Butler, *Frames of War*, 9-10.

⁴² Butler, *Frames of War*, 12.

⁴³ Eugenie Brinkema, *The Forms of the Affects* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2014).

⁴⁴ John Frow, *Genre* 2nd edition (New York: Routledge, 2006; Hoboken, NJ: Taylor and Francis, 2014), 115. For more on this concept, see Frow, especially 19-20 and 112-9.

⁴⁵ Frow, *Genre* (2014), 113.

⁴⁶ Butler, *Frames of War*, 50

emerge as part of public feeling. She claims that the process through which we understand the world – the modes that structure how we *feel* about it – can reshape those interpretations and feelings. Genre is one such space that constructs affective worlds.⁴⁷

I use “space” purposefully here. Genre structures knowledge, facilitating comprehension, but it is also a form of confinement as it “both enables and restricts meaning.”⁴⁸ Genres frame the way we understand certain subjects, and recognizable forms prescribe reading and interpretative practices. On the other hand, it can narrow the scope of our understanding, locking meaning into discrete categories and inhibiting other interpretations. But the spatialization of genre can also facilitate a breaking of the frame. While the language of taxonomy pervades critical discussion of genre, Susan Wells argues that biological metaphors do not allow us to see the mutable and intermingled nature of genres and that they “[overlook] the possibilities of texts generating readers and practices of reading.”⁴⁹ She uses spatial markers instead to better conceptualize this openness. Indeed, Wai Chee Dimock argues that genre can be an open-ended field, one that is constantly reconstituting itself.⁵⁰ Such models of genre influence my analysis as I ask what happens when we free grief from its traditional genres and how alternative genres generate potentials for recognizing subjects and their emotions.

Discussions of grief and genre traditionally looked at elegy, the standard literary mourning genre, or, as in the case of Desiree Henderson’s work, similar genres that are associated with mourning like funeral sermons, eulogies, and even cemetery spaces

⁴⁷ See Berlant, *Cruel Optimism*, 6.

⁴⁸ Frow, *Genre* (2014), 10.

⁴⁹ Susan Wells, “Genres as Species and Spaces: Literary and Rhetorical Genre in *The Anatomy of Melancholy*,” *Philosophy and Rhetoric* 47, no. 2 (2014): 113-36 (113-4).

⁵⁰ Wai Chee Dimock, “Introduction: Genres as Fields of Knowledge,” *PMLA* 122, no. 5 (October 2007): 1377-88.

(Henderson uses “genre” liberally).⁵¹ Recent discussions of literary grief include many different genres, but despite such expansions to the category of “mourning literature,” form and genre are often not major considerations in the scholarship. Certain work gestures toward it, but for the most part, the connection between genre and mourning remains under-examined.⁵² My work takes up this link, investigating the function of grief in different genres *not* marked for mourning.

Literary representations of grief are especially related to specific genres that can constrain representational (and comprehensive) modes. Mourning genres like elegy, eulogy, obituary, dirges, and epitaphs are often unoriginal and repetitive. They prescribe certain reading practices and moods – they usually aim to generate somberness, sadness, and consolation. Often the consolation comes from a shared community of mourners who participate in these genres together. As such, they tend to reach limited audiences predisposed to agreeing with the sentiments expressed. While ironic forms of these genres exist – negative obituaries, for example – they are generally considered taboo. Further, this kind of reframing does not radically reorient perspective; instead, it merely flips it (“this should not make us feel sad”). But sharing grief is not always about making others feel grief. It can be about how loss affects others, as I alluded to above, and these reactions can take many forms – shame, passion, anger, and even feelings that have not

⁵¹ For work on elegies, see Max Cavitch, *American Elegy: The Poetry of Mourning from the Puritans to Whitman* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2007); Jahan Ramazani, *Poetry of Mourning: The Modern Elegy from Hardy to Heaney* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994); Peter Sacks, *The English Elegy: Studies in the Genre from Spenser to Yeats* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins Press, 1985); and Celeste Schenck, “Feminism and Deconstruction: Re-Constructing the Elegy,” *Tulsa Studies in Women’s Literature* 5, no. 1 (April 1986): 13-27. Also see Desirée Henderson, *Grief and Genre in American Literature, 1790-1870* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2011).

⁵²In *Signifying Loss: Toward a Poetics of Narrative Mourning* (Lewisburg, PA: Bucknell University Press, 2011), Nouri Gana looks at rhetorical tropes for representing loss, and Richard Armstrong parses bereavement in film in *Mourning Film: A Critical Study of Loss and Grieving in Cinema* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2012). John Vickery’s work on mourning and prose, while expanding the scope of grieving literature, still maintains a link to traditional mourning genre in *The Prose Elegy: An Exploration of Modern American and British Fiction* (Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University Press, 2009).

reached a cognitive level of recognition (it can just make us *feel* something that we cannot name). Engaging diverse affects in the face of loss can help us rethink grief and grievability, and alternative genres for loss can remediate the conditions of loss and grief, creating points of connection – or highlighting cultural disconnections. Breaking out of traditional genres – or reworking the imperatives of a conventional genre – infiltrates dominant discourse, teaching its audience how to read loss. As such, I argue that genre, and the expectations of genre, create hermeneutics of grief – new affective forms for representing grief that can expand the bounds of what is grievable.

The time period I have chosen (1930-1990) is a significant period, especially pertaining to grief. However, scholarship on American mourning tend to focus on either the ravages of modernism or the traumatic ripples of 9/11.⁵³ The mid-century is a period of significant losses: Japanese American internment, the 1971 Attica prison riot, and Bureau of Indian Affairs termination/relocation policies in the 1950s are all catalysts of loss surrounded by dominant narratives that work to dismiss, deny, or obscure mourning – situations that authors respond to with counter-narratives of loss. Simultaneously, this

⁵³ For books on modernism (and one, Clewell's, that mentions postmodernism as a continuation of the concerns of modernity), see Mitchell Breitwieser, *National Melancholy: Mourning and Opportunity in Classic American Literature* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2007); Tammy Clewell, *Mourning, Modernism, Postmodernism* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009); Madelyn Detloff, *The Persistence of Modernism: Loss and Mourning in the Twentieth Century* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009); Greg Forter, *Gender, Race, and Mourning in American Modernism* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011); Pearl James, *The New Death: American Modernism and World War I* (Charlottesville, VA: University Press, 2013); Seth Moglen, *Mourning and Modernity; Modernism and Mourning*, Ed. Patricia Rae (Lewisburg, PA: Bucknell University Press, 2007); William Watkin, *On Mourning: Theories of Loss in Modern Literature*. (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2004).

For post-9/11 loss and trauma, see E. Ann Kaplan, *Trauma Culture: The Politics of Terror and Loss in Media and Literature* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2005); *Literature after 9/11*, Ed. Ann Keniston and Jeanne Follansbee Quinn (New York: Routledge, 2008); Arin Keeble *The 9/11 Novel: Trauma, Politics and Identity* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2014); Aimee Pozorski, *Falling after 9/11: Crisis in American Art and Literature* (New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2014).

period sees an upsurge in public figurations of minority subjects.⁵⁴ Prior, niche publications published in native languages existed in the 19th century, like Chinese- and Japanese-language newspapers.⁵⁵ English language publications intended for these communities grew in the twentieth century – for example, the previously mentioned *Pacific Citizen*, run by the Japanese American Citizens’ League, began in 1929. However, mainstream media often ignored such populations, and in 1947, a report from the Hutchins Committee rebuked the press for its lack of coverage on minorities.⁵⁶

Book publishing sees significant changes to minority publications aimed at the mainstream in this period too. While a few Asian immigrants published texts prior to the 1940s, Elaine Kim points out that the more well-known books by Asian Americans came out in the 1940s, like Jade Snow Wong’s *Fifth Chinese Daughter* (1945) and Toshio Mori’s *Yokohama, California* (originally slated to appear in 1941 but delayed to 1949 because of the war).⁵⁷ Publishing in native communities had a similar pattern – native language periodicals flourished within the community and a few writers, like D’arcy McNickle and Mourning Dove, had mainstream attention – but the so-called Native American Renaissance in the late 1960s was the major breakthrough.

The African American relationship to mainstream coverage and publishing is a bit different. Since the eighteenth century, African Americans have contributed significantly

⁵⁴ For more on history of race and publishing see *Race, Ethnicity and Publishing in America*, Ed. Cécile Cottenet (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014).

⁵⁵ In 1856 the first Chinese language daily newspaper started in Sacramento and lasted about two years. The first Japanese language paper in the U.S. appears in 1858. Jonathan H.X. Lee, *History of Asian Americans: Exploring Diverse Roots* (Santa Barbara, CA: Greenwood Press, 2015), xix.

⁵⁶ Virginia Richardson-Mansfield’s *Asian Americans and the Mass Media: A Content Analysis of Twenty United States Newspapers and A Survey of Asian American Journalists*, 67. Also see *U.S. News Coverage of Racial Minorities: A Sourcebook, 1934-1996*, Ed. Beverly Ann Deepe Keever, Carolyn Martindale, and Mary Ann Watson (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1997).

⁵⁷ Elaine Kim, “Asian American Literature,” *The Columbia Literary History of the United States*, Eds. Emory Elliott, Martha Banta, Houston A. Baker (New York: Columbia University Press, 2013), 811-21 (813).

to American literary heritage. That said, the mid-twentieth century sees changes to the way black authors were positioned and received. The Book-of-the-Month's selection of Richard Wright's *Native Son* (1940) marked the first time a black author was circulated by this group.⁵⁸ Furthermore, the Black Arts Movement helped found major black publishing houses, like Broadside Press in 1965 and Third World Press in 1967. While John K. Young notes that there were smaller black publishers in the early twentieth century, they did not achieve the market or the prestige that presses like Broadside did.⁵⁹ So this period sees important changes to the way that black authors published and were marketed.

Since marginalized groups face limitations regarding physical circulation in the American public, textual productions become a way to access the larger publics outside their own communities. But these publications differ from texts circulated within the community; for example, internment camp papers and literary magazines speak to the community in ways that outside publications do not, and they cover much different issues (notably, the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki is not mentioned in the *Topaz Times*, a news outlet for a Utah camp). Niche publications articulate loss much differently – often in a shorthand because of a communal understanding. But to make grief and loss more widely understood requires different tactics especially because marginalized losses are often not considered worthy of grief. We see this with genres like obituary, perhaps the most ubiquitous marker of public loss. Butler uses 9/11 obituaries as an example of how narratives of loss and grief are created – and how these are fundamentally exclusionary

⁵⁸ See Hazel Rowley “The Shadow of the White Woman: Richard Wright and the Book-of-the-Month Club,” *Partisan Review* (Fall 1999): 625-34.

⁵⁹ John K. Young, *Black Writers, White Publishers: Marketplace Politics in Twentieth-Century African American Literature* (Jackson, MS: University Press of Mississippi, 2006), 11-2.

constructions.⁶⁰ Other critical studies of obituary have noted the genre's regulatory function, as the genre upholds certain people and values as worthy of our time – and the people missing from those pages are lost to public records of grief.⁶¹ My first chapter specifically explores this phenomenon.

The first section of the dissertation, “Unimagined Communities,” includes this introduction and the chapter, “Burying the Uniform of Grief: Obituary and John Dos Passos's *U.S.A.*” These two pieces work in tandem to establish key points about exclusionary grief, imagined communities, and genre. Dos Passos's *U.S.A.*, his trilogy of novels comprised of *The 42nd Parallel* (1930), *1919* (1932), and *The Big Money* (1936), is an experimental meditation on the forces (and generic contexts) that influence how we understand, represent, and interact with the world, including how we mourn. Culling from various media forms, Dos Passos creates a jagged collage of the modern world and reframes our understanding of community. While there has been much work on the generic contexts for the “Newsreel” sections that juxtapose clippings of media ephemera and for the “Camera's Eye” sections with their intense subjective focus, the generic influences for the brief biographies of various figures from Jack Reed to Isadora Duncan to Thorstein Veblen remain under-examined. My chapter argues that obituary is an important contextualizing genre for the brief biographies.

As previously mentioned, obituaries are a significant social indicator and even regulator. The type of coverage a person's death receives often depends on social status and these death columns often omit those who do not fit into social norms. Obituaries uphold certain social values and create hierarchies of grief, producing mourning

⁶⁰ Butler, *Prekarious Life*, 32, 34-7.

⁶¹ See Bridget Fowler, *The Obituary as Collective Memory* (New York: Routledge, 2007).

communities situated around sanctioned figures and generating shadow communities whose losses are not publicly endorsed or acknowledged. The first part of my chapter examines how obituary operates in this way, comparing obituaries of President Woodrow Wilson to Dos Passos's profile of Wilson, "Meester Veelson." I demonstrate how Dos Passos critiques the sweeping proclamations of grief for Wilson in the papers, skeptical about such uniform emotional responses that gloss over important political points. As the genre of obituary works to confine grief, effectively locking out certain populations, I maintain that Dos Passos revises it to comment on this exclusion. Specifically, he sheds light on one such disregarded community: the economic lower classes and especially labor organizers. By including such omitted figures, Dos Passos forges new modes of public grief.

While Dos Passos's texts work to undo the invisibility of poverty and labor issues, *U.S.A.* has a glaring blind spot: race and ethnicity. "The Body of an American," a profile of the Unknown Soldier, hints at these issues, which I look at in my concluding section. However, people of color are largely absent, leaving a major segment of the U.S. (still) unimagined. The confining principles of obituary – and the omission of certain populations – remain. Thus, the second section of the dissertation, "Reimagined Communities," takes up this issue. Comprised of three chapters, this section explores how writers from three different populations portray grief. The circumstances that these authors write from differ widely, as do mainstream public conceptions of each group. As such, the ways authors represent grief to a public that views them with a range of sympathy and hostility vary greatly. Each chapter, then, presents a case study of textual methods of grieving. While not parallel discourses, they do speak to each other and

present intersecting concerns about the political potential for public mourning.

“Mourning in America: The Case of Japanese American Internment and Redress” investigates the particular problems of representing and mourning the losses of internment during World War II. Public forms of expression for Japanese Americans during the war were greatly constrained and heavily regulated by the government. During the 1940s, Japanese Americans were simultaneously hypervisible as potential fifth columnists and invisible with regard to the conditions of internment – and the losses it engendered. Just as the barriers of the camps relegated them to cramped, state-run spaces with little privacy or independence, the barriers of wartime fear and racism allowed them little room for self-expression or self-representation, especially in the dominant sphere of media. As such, Japanese Americans had to find new ways of reconfiguring their identities, their claims to American citizenship, and their grief. This chapter is particularly interested in how Japanese American cultural production aided in mainstream recognition of internment’s injustices and losses leading to the Civil Liberties Act of 1988, which awarded reparations to former internees.

I frame these issues primarily through Miné Okubo’s *Citizen 13660* (1946) and Yoshiko Uchida’s *Journey to Topaz* (1971) and *Desert Exile* (1982). The first memoir by a Japanese American post-internment, *Citizen 13660* is path-breaking text in public representation of Japanese Americans in this period. This text depicts the experience of internment through drawings with accompanying prose. Primarily a visual artist, Okubo draws scenes from the camps and pairs them with brief descriptions and a sparse narrative structure. The terseness of Okubo’s prose lets her drawings speak for themselves, with the struggles and losses of camp life present on the tear-streaked faces

and slumped shoulders of the internees. I read Okubo's work in the context of contemporaneous media both within the camp (the internee-run newspaper *Topaz Times*) and outside (mainstream media) to situate her work within available representational frameworks. I argue that *Citizen 13660* contains an aesthetic of inscrutability, one that plays with the stereotypical "unreadable" face of Asian subjects. Inscrutability here functions as a method of depicting grief in a wider public sphere that is ill-equipped to read and recognize Japanese American mourning. Readers are not required to comprehend the book's grief – and indeed, the reception of the book shows that they did not – to sense loss. Thus, inscrutability via graphic memoir allows Okubo to break through representational confinement.

The second part of this chapter considers the reparations movement in the 1970s and 1980s and how another genre offers different potentials for Japanese American grieving. Memoirs (and fictional accounts) of internment like those by Monica Sone, John Okada, Hisaye Yamamoto, and Jeanne Wakatsuki Houston often show emotional restraint. They often read like testimony to the conditions of internment. *Desert Exile*, Yoshiko Uchida's account of her time in Topaz, functions in this way. However, her young adult book, *Journey to Topaz*, covers many of the same events but with considerably more emotional expression. Juxtaposing these two accounts, I demonstrate how children's/young adult literature offers particular potentials for portraying grief. The conventions of the genre help Uchida more openly represent grief. Such emotional pedagogy for younger readers, I argue, works toward the goals of the redress movements in the 1970s-80s.

The third chapter, "If We Must Die': Grieving George Jackson and Attica," looks

at nested genres in prison literature. Although prison literature exists as its own genre, it is often defined by place and authorial position. But this is problematic, as Doran Larson has pointed out, since such facile designations overlook the methods and tropes employed in prison literature.⁶² My chapter thus explores the specific literary genres used by prison writers to think about the different potentials that genres like epistolary collection, political treatise, and poetry offer prisoners. Focusing on a series of intertwined events and texts in the late 1960s and early 1970s, a time of rising tension within prisons (and public interest in them), this chapter starts with George Jackson's *Soledad Brother* (1970) and *Blood in My Eye* (1971). I argue that Jackson's texts are both concerned with mourning as a mode of political engagement, especially as it relates to Jackson's grief over his brother's death. Jackson rejects sentimentality and instead lays bare the public import of grief in black communities overrepresented in the carceral space. These texts challenge a larger culture that treats black lives as expendable and insufficiently worthy of grief.

Days after Jackson's untimely death in San Quentin State Prison, inmates in the Attica Correctional Facility took over a section of the prison leading to a four day standoff with authorities that ended with state troopers firing on the inmates and hostages. When the smoke cleared, forty three men were dead, including ten hostages, all at the hands of the state. This section looks at media portrayals of the riot (and its losses) and how Attica inmates' writing creates counter-narratives of grief. I concentrate chiefly on several elegies within a volume of inmate poetry, *Betcha Ain't: Poems from Attica* (1974). These poets, I argue, employ elegies to insert prison grief into a larger history of mourning (and of black literature), thus using literariness as an authorizing mode of

⁶² Doran Larson, "Toward a Prison Poetics," *College Literature* 37, no. 3 (Summer 2010): 143-66.

representation, especially when political representation was often not available to them.

The dissertation concludes with a study of American Indian literature in “Beyond the Crying Indian: Representing Loss in *House Made of Dawn* and *Almanac of the Dead*.” The cultural imaginary surrounding Native Americans is frequently predicated on loss, as seen in the trope of the vanishing Indian and in the frequently evoked Trail of Tears. Thus expressions of loss and grief by native peoples risk being coded as clichéd. I engage this problem through two major American Indian writers – N. Scott Momaday and Leslie Marmon Silko. Both novels respond to historical frameworks of loss – termination and relocation for Momaday and grave repatriation for Silko. Ostensibly, neither book takes grief as a central concern, but I maintain that the residue of loss sticks to the narrative, emerging primarily through form. In Momaday’s novel, grief is not centered in subjects but rather spills into the diffuse narrative voice, making it constantly felt but dislocated from any one person. This non-subject centered version of loss continues with Silko, whose detached narrative voice in *Almanac*, I argue, counters sentimentalizing depictions of indigenous peoples that mask the causes of native loss (Western imperialism).

Our current cultural moment is heavily invested in the political issues that public loss and grieving raise, as we ask which lives matter. This project historicizes these concerns, tracking literary attempts to make marginalized lives visible and valuable in dominant cultural structures. By crafting a history of grievable life in American literature, I demonstrate how contemporary struggles are rooted in a long-standing cultural discourse and how this history can help us better understand and advance social justice aims.

Chapter 1 – Burying the Uniform of Grief: Obituary and John Dos Passos’s *U.S.A.*

“grief isn’t a uniform...(He and I we must bury the uniform of grief)”

-John Dos Passos, “The Camera Eye (28),” *1919*⁶³

In *1919*, the second novel in the 1930s *U.S.A.* trilogy, John Dos Passos engages with losses engendered by World War I. Indeed, mourning appears in the opening pages of the novel as they note repeatedly that “grief isn’t a uniform” followed by a desire to “bury the uniform of grief” (*1919* 6-7). These lines come from this book’s first Camera’s Eye section that references the deaths of Dos Passos’s parents, but given the larger war context, this remark is also a macabre play on images of dead soldiers, with the uniform donned by the surviving griever rather than the corpse. It also serves as a poignant representation of the way communities form around times of mourning. Just as soldiers recognize their compatriots through their matching uniforms, so do mourners find kinship and solidarity amongst those cloaked in similar losses. The notion of grief as a uniform depicts mourning as performative and public, as the uniform is something immediately visible on the exterior of the body – a departure from typical portrayals of grief as a private, interior emotion. However, uniformity also indicates a standardization of emotion that forms a tight-knit community but shackles the individual, constraining modes of emotional expression and denying individuation. To call grief a uniform is to recognize the imbrication of private emotion and public performance, and to bury it is to reject homogeneity in feeling while still acknowledging that one cannot completely

⁶³ All quotations come from John Dos Passos, *1919* (1932. Boston: First Mariner Books, 2000). The other books in the trilogy are *The 42nd Parallel* (1930. Boston: First Mariner Books, 2000) and *The Big Money* (1936. Boston: First Mariner Books, 2000).

dismantle rote public displays of mourning – all issues inherent to *U.S.A.*'s relationship to loss.

Dos Passos's experimental narrative style in *U.S.A.* has long defied strict categorization as he intersperses third person limited narrative portions with three other genres: the highly subjective "Camera's Eye" sections, the montage-like "Newsreels" that collate bits of popular culture in print fragments, and finally, the biographical profiles. While much work has been done on generic influences, especially regarding film, for the first two experimental techniques, the generic commentary on the brief biographies remains undernourished. Often described as "prose poems," these sections also "draw on the ironic portraits popularized by Thomas Beer in which carefully selected and rearranged biographical details attempt to reverse received opinion concerning national figures."⁶⁴ The profiles cut across wide swath of American life, covering economic power players (William Randolph Hearst and J.P. Morgan), Leftist darlings (Jack Reed and Randolph Bourne), political juggernauts (Theodore Roosevelt and Woodrow Wilson), innovators (Thomas Edison and Henry Ford), entertainers (Isadora Duncan and Rudolph Valentino), and radicals (Joe Hill and Wesley Everest). However, a connecting thread exists between the disparate figures profiled: nearly all of them are deceased by the date of composition.⁶⁵ Dos Passos generally begins each profile with the subject's birth and background and ends with his or her death, reflecting on that person's life and legacy. This framework mimics that of the obituary which often features

⁶⁴ Michael Wainwright, "Figuring the Financier: Dos Passos and Pierpontifex Maximus," *Papers on Language and Literature* 46, no. 1 (Winter 2010): 79-92 (80).

⁶⁵ All nine of the figures in *1919* were deceased at the time of publication. Of the nine biographies in *42nd Parallel*, Thomas Edison was the only one still alive when the book went to press. *The Big Money* also features nine biographies, not including the concluding "Vag," and four and a half of those featured were deceased – "The Campers at Kitty Hawk" covers the Wright brothers and ends with Wilbur Wright's death, though Orville was still alive.

a compressed biography.

The word “obituary” dates back to the early eighteenth century when it referred to registers that catalogued death dates, and collections of brief biographies of the deceased were precursors to modern obituaries.⁶⁶ Obituaries play a significant role in the creation of collective memory, and sociologist Bridget Fowler explicitly explores this connection.⁶⁷ She argues that although obituaries supposedly valorize the individual, they in fact emphasize greater societal traditions and values. Similarly, Janice Hume looks at the way American obituaries work toward creating a uniform portrait of nationalist values.⁶⁸ Purporting to offer an authoritative account of an individual’s life, the seemingly apolitical obituary is actually structured by regulatory social and political mechanisms. Thus, this genre plays an important role in asserting and upholding normative social values. Obituaries blur the line between private and public, a place where intimate grief mingles with the public announcement of death. Beyond just acting as a public record of death, the obituary creates a highly regulated public record of grief. The obituary is a gatekeeper of public grief, excluding certain people and thus implicitly denoting them as not worth mourning. From whose obituaries are printed, to how much coverage they get, to the tone of the obituary itself, the genre is intensely, if subtly, political. Furthermore, the complex, individual process of mourning compresses into a standardized response as the obituary either implies or explicitly dictates how we should receive the dead. The genre of obituary can be a confining apparatus of grief, as it simultaneously sanctions only limited modes of public expression and excludes many from its columns.

⁶⁶ Fowler, *Obituary as Collective Memory*, 4.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

⁶⁸ Janice Hume, *Obituaries in American Culture* (Jackson, MS: UP of Mississippi, 2000).

Similarly, containment defines the narrative modes of *U.S.A.* Each discrete portion performs its own function separate from the others. The inventory-like naturalism of the narrative portions traps the reader in the constant motion of the narrative. Leaping from event to event, the reader has little time to locate or process any sense of personal emotions in the characters, and the lack of interiority in the novels makes any feeling almost impossible to detect. Both the Newsreel and Camera's Eye sections cordon off, respectively, exterior, social perspective and interior, subjective perspective, with no sense of how they fit together. Throughout the novels, point of view is highly controlled and bracketed, highlighting the way that new modes of information dissemination via global networks can narrow and limit our perceptions (versus expanding them).

In recent years, critics have explored *U.S.A.*'s relationship to debates about public opinion formation and to grief, both of which apply to obituaries. Seth Moglen, for example, has argued that the trilogy reflects Dos Passos's attempts to engage the losses wrought by capitalism and that *U.S.A.* is constitutive of two threads of grief in modernism, one of mourning and one of melancholia.⁶⁹ For Moglen, the different narrative techniques allow Dos Passos to simultaneously mourn and reengage with radical politics in the brief biographies and to melancholically fall prey to the mechanics of capitalism in the naturalist narrative sections. While Moglen's work informs my own, his reading of the biographies does not fully account for the vast range of people profiled: I hope to expand our understanding of the profiles' mourning function by reading them in the vein of obituaries. On the other hand, Matthew Stratton focuses on the contemporaneous rise of mass media and propaganda. He writes that "Dos Passos deploys satire as a mode of activist irony to educate readers' aesthetic sense of print,

⁶⁹ Moglen, *Mourning Modernity*.

image, and text in the age of public relations and hopelessly corrupt information.”⁷⁰ This pedagogy relies on the importance of form; that is, how information circulates and how such forms can lead to new modes of understanding.⁷¹ My chapter brings these discourses together as the media form of obituary becomes a way of framing not only public opinion but public emotion and memorialization.

In the trilogy, Dos Passos seems invested in erasing subjectivity and sentimentality. But despite this evacuation of emotion, the trilogy remains a catalog of loss. The absence of interiority necessarily shifts the reader’s focus to how external forces influence and organize demonstrations of grief as these novels displace the idea of mourning from an internal, subjective process, instead concentrating on how American culture performs grief. Dos Passos understands the significance of public mourning: in these novels, what happens on the surface, in public is what matters (and the private is buried in the often incoherent *Camera’s Eye* sections). His emphasis on networks of information dissemination – primarily mass media – throughout *U.S.A.* highlights how such systems influence not just public opinion but also emotional expression, including mourning.

By engaging obituary, a key genre of public grieving, Dos Passos critiques this discourse that assimilates private reactions to death into a collective grief. *U.S.A.* is deeply skeptical of prescriptive collective grief which omits many from public grief ledgers and only condones certain feelings. Engaging the politics behind public displays of grief, Dos Passos interrogates the cultural values that bind a grieving national community together and responds to the exclusionary mechanisms of obituary. His

⁷⁰ Matthew Stratton, *The Politics of Irony in American Modernism* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2013), 110.

⁷¹ Stratton, *Politics of Irony*, 115.

profiles strip away overt grief and do not urge a sense of mourning; in fact, his biographies hold such emotions at arms' length. Instead, he distorts this placid, consoling genre, reshaping it into an ironic and agitating form. These obituaries are meant to provoke and generate conflict. With warped obituaries, Dos Passos demonstrates the hollowness of such public genres of mourning – the way that their generic traits lull us into complacency – and creates dissenting grieving practices instead.

Furthermore, by taking the obituary out of its traditional bounds – newspapers soon after the individual's death – Dos Passos ruptures the conventional relationship between obituary and history. To return to the obituary form years after a death disrupts the temporal structures of grief and memory. Obituary is an immediate reporting and emoting, and it is rooted in the ephemera of print media, discarded for a new batch of grief in the next issue. By the 1930s, World War I had already been memorialized in more sturdy forms, like the many sculptures and monuments dedicated to it.⁷² Indeed, Mark Whalan notes that by the late 1920s, the war was discussed more frequently – and in different ways, as people could now “see the war as something that had somehow achieved a totality of meaning that could now be summarized and reflected on. It involved the consideration of the war as a legacy for a new generation of Americans, something that had a formative and now identifiably *determinate* impact on contemporary American character.”⁷³ As such, the memories and losses had already been, sometimes literally, set in stone. But by returning to obituary, Dos Passos takes us back to a moment of potential for mourning and memory formation. An obituary for a

⁷² See Jennifer Wingate's *Sculpting Doughboys: Memory, Gender, and Taste in America's World War I Memorials* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2013).

⁷³ Mark Whalan, *The Great War and the Culture of the New Negro* (Gainesville, FL: University Press of Florida, 2008), 201.

decade-old event disrupts the temporality of both grief and historicization. It restores a sense of process in memorialization as the obituary's placement in the open-ended time of novel puts time in abeyance, keeping history malleable and leaving channels of grief open.

To explore the influence of obituary in *U.S.A.*, this chapter will first use *1919*'s "Meester Veelson," a profile of Woodrow Wilson, as a case study. Comparing the reporting of Wilson's death to Dos Passos's "obituary" shows the resonances between the forms and the way the profile distorts the function of obituary, namely how it creates a singular, solidified vision of the deceased, one that prompts a community of mourning. The next section considers other profiles, demonstrating how Dos Passos releases the bindings of genre and opens the scope of obituary. The chapter concludes with one of the most well-known – but least discussed – portions of the trilogy: "The Body of an American," a profile of the Unknown Soldier. Dos Passos's take on this symbol of communal grieving encapsulates his critique of public mourning structures and memorialization, rewriting the Unknown Soldier's narrative and, in turn, rewriting collective grief.

Mourning "Meester Veelson"?

The subject of one of the most vexed profiles in *1919*, Woodrow Wilson is also one of the central figures in this novel as he appears in other sections of the text, from headlines in the "Newsreel" sections to characters campaigning for him in the narrative portions. At first a great supporter of Wilson, Dos Passos became disillusioned and increasingly bitter about him after the United States' entry into World War I.⁷⁴ Indeed,

⁷⁴ For more on Dos Passos's views of Wilson, see Virginia Spencer Carr's *Dos Passos: A Life* (New York: Doubleday, 1984), 101-2 and 108-9.

Martin Landsberg calls Wilson the “Satan in Dos Passos’ epic” and notes the central, pivotal position Dos Passos gives his villain: Wilson’s biography is the fourteenth of twenty-eight (counting “Vag” in *The Big Money*) and appears halfway through the trilogy.⁷⁵ Wilson’s ubiquitous presence in *1919* and Dos Passos’s sustained interest in Wilson over his literary career – he returns to Wilson with less animus in 1962’s non-fiction book, *Mr. Wilson’s War* – makes this specific profile one of note. Juxtaposing the actual obituaries and death stories in newspapers at the time with Dos Passos’s obituary, we see how his depictions destabilize the collective memory of Wilson formed in the press accounts. Instead of consensus-forming platitudes, Dos Passos trades in dissensus as he crafts an obituary meant to provoke and enrage. Obituaries for Wilson exemplify the forms Dos Passos critiques: these obituaries are riddled in clichés, and they create a collective memory of Wilson that does not incorporate opposing views. Thus, Dos Passos produces a fun-house mirror version of an obituary, offering only the dissenting views to show the rigidity and platitudinous nature of obituary form.

Wilson’s obituaries are emblematic of celebrity and presidential obituaries at the time: instead of just a short blurb, newspapers devote entire issues to Wilson’s death, with coverage spreading over multiple pages and continuing for days after his death. Indeed, in this time period, newspaper publishers realized that this kind of “death news” could be used to increase circulation.⁷⁶ Presidential obituaries on the whole go far beyond merely documenting the individual’s death. Rather, they construct a sense of collective mourning, creating an increased sense of nationalism. To fashion uniform emotional

⁷⁵ Melvin Landsberg, *Dos Passos’ Path to U.S.A.* (Boulder, CO: Colorado University Press, 1972), 194-5. Iain Colley also discusses Wilson’s villainous inclusion in *1919* in *Dos Passos and the Fiction of Despair* (London: Macmillan, 1978), 95-6.

⁷⁶ Hume, *Obituaries in American Culture*, 96.

responses in readers, the obituaries first offer remembrances of Wilson. In the 1920s, most people considered Wilson a futile idealist, but the obituaries make little mention of contemporaneous opinion, instead extolling Wilson as an unheeded prophet. These portrayals illustrate the impulse to minimize and even overlook negative opinions about the deceased; this white-washed lauding of former leaders also serves to unite the nation in grief with a collective memory of the deceased forming between the printed lines and the readers' eyes. To reinforce this image of Wilson, papers certify that he is worth mourning by explicitly showing the community that mourns him. Such depictions of Wilson simultaneously historicize his presidency *and* grieve him, a mix that Dos Passos questions in his portrayal.

Printed in virtually every newspaper across the United States, President Calvin Coolidge's official proclamation of Wilson's death attempts to foster connections and mount a united response to Wilson's passing. It opens,

To the People of the United States:

The death of Woodrow Wilson, President of the United States from March 4, 1913, to March 4, 1921, which occurred at 11:15 o'clock today at his home at Washington, District of Columbia, deprives the country of a most distinguished citizen, and is an event which causes universal and genuine sorrow. To many of us it brings the sense of a profound personal bereavement.⁷⁷

The proclamation directly juxtaposes the announcement with the emotional response to it. By claiming a "universal and genuine sorrow" for the nation that is then widely distributed, the proclamation immediately posits a collective response to Wilson's death – a national grief. It also creates a sense of intimacy with the deceased, who was known as

⁷⁷ "President Coolidge's Proclamation," *New York Times*, February 4, 1924, 1.

a public figure to most and a private citizen to few: the grief experienced is both private (“profound *personal* bereavement”) and public (“universal...sorrow”), blurring the lines between the two and creating a grief that transcends individual emotion and becomes a larger social and political force.

Indeed, showing (and shaping) a mourning community was certainly at the forefront of press coverage. Mourners of Wilson often detract from Wilson himself, as the papers exhaustively cover reactions to his death and even document the time leading up to Wilson’s death. On February 4, 1924, the day after Wilson died, the *Washington Post’s* front page surprisingly does *not* contain a picture of Wilson, and the headline reads “CROWDS SHARE IN GRIEF AT WILSON’S DEATH / STATE FUNERAL IS URGED BY CHIEF JUSTICE.”⁷⁸ The corresponding picture features a large group of people kneeled in prayer. Focusing on the mourners illustrates the adage that mourning is about the survivors, not the deceased, and by emphasizing community response, the *Post* cultivates a sense of national unity upon the death of this controversial figure.

CROWDS SHARE IN GRIEF AT WILSON’S DEATH STATE FUNERAL IS URGED BY CHIEF JUSTICE



Standing there on sidewalk at Wilson home silently bow in prayer, shortly before the death of America's war-time President was assassinated by Admiral Graveson, his friend and physician. It was one of the dramatic moments after he started shaking.

⁷⁸ “Crowds Share in Grief at Wilson’s Death,” *Washington Post*, February 4, 1924, 1.

Figure 1: *Washington Post*, February 4, 1924, 1.

Praise from “colleagues, legislators and public men” fills the *New York Times* on February 4, 1924.⁷⁹ These men eulogize Wilson, emphasizing their own personal grief, but also confirming a sense of universal mourning. Taken as a whole, this entire newspaper page filled with homages to Wilson reinforces the widespread grief overtaking the nation – especially given the variety of political affiliations of those featured. The tributes begin with the Cabinet – not Wilson’s Democratic cabinet, but Coolidge’s Republican cabinet members Charles Hughes, Herbert Hoover, and Edwin Denby.⁸⁰ Secretary of State Hughes lost to Wilson in the very close 1916 election. The next three senators are also Republicans. Of the thirty three individuals quoted in the article, eight are Republicans and twenty five are Democrats, but the first six individuals featured are Republicans. Two subheadlines of this article feature this bipartisan grief: one reads “Hughes Mourns Nation’s Lost Leader and Hoover Voices People’s Gratitude to Him,” while another declares “Republicans Join Democrats in Appreciation of Wilson’s Intellect and Character.” The fact that the paper leads with opponents of Wilson demonstrates the attempt to universalize the reaction to Wilson’s death. By quoting bipartisan praise for him, the paper aims to unify divisive factions through these stagings of grief.

While these newspapers feature vast and varied Wilson mourners, remembrances of him begin constructing a heroic collective memory. For example, the *Washington Post*

⁷⁹ “Capital Praises Dead Statesman,” *New York Times*, February 4, 1924, 3.

⁸⁰ “Wilson’s Cabinet Mourns Dead Chief,” *New York Times*, February 4, 1924, 3.

devotes the entire fourth page on February 4, 1924 to Wilson's life, with an article and a sidebar summary of important events in his presidency.⁸¹ The main article opens as such:

Any comprehensive review of the career of Woodrow Wilson falls naturally into three divisions – the teacher, the writer of history and the statesman. It is upon his work in the latter capacity that the late President's fame will chiefly rest. Called into public service late in life, it fell to his lot to direct the affairs of the nation in the midst of the greatest war of all times and to achieve prominence as a war leader second only to that of Washington and Lincoln. No man of his time has been more widely discussed and no man perhaps has been subject of a greater divergence of opinion. Perhaps, as one writer put it in summing up the character of Mr. Wilson, it is one sign of a man's greatness that other men in their inmost hearts are for or against him.⁸²

While the article acknowledges that the public opinion of Wilson widely varies, it mentions dissenting views in order to deflate their significance. The author accepts the "divergence of opinion," but immediately follows this concession by affirming Wilson's "greatness." Furthermore, he spins this negative attention as a "misunderstanding," with the section heading of the most critical passage reading "Real Men Often Misunderstood," implying that the criticism Wilson faced is a burden of his brilliance rather than legitimate complaints about his policies. Also, the comparisons to Washington and Lincoln put Wilson in a league with other great presidents, further advancing

⁸¹ While my analysis of the official obituaries in the newspapers focuses on the *Washington Post* and the *New York Times*, other papers across the nation adopted similar tones, although outside the Northeast and Mid-Atlantic they tended to offer less coverage of Wilson in favor of local news. Also, papers frequently emphasized connections Wilson had to particular areas: for example, the *Atlanta Constitution* focused on Wilson's ties to the South, making much of the fact that his first wife was from Georgia.

⁸² "Wilson's Life, From College to White House, Marked by Independence," *Washington Post*, February 4, 1924, 4.

Wilson's positive legacy. With dissenting opinions cast aside, the totalizing image of Wilson as a superior leader and great national figure begins to take shape.

The comparison to Washington and Lincoln happens again, this time in the *New York Times*. On February 10, 1924, the *Times* ran an article on Wilson's legacy in its Special Features section. A large picture that takes up most of the page commands our attention. Shaped like a cross, the illustration features Wilson dressed like a Crusader, flanked by George Washington and Abraham Lincoln. The message is bold and immediately apparent: before we even read the text, we know that it flatters Wilson, emphasizing his steadfast faith in his ideals. Janice Hume notes that the comparison to Washington was a trope in American obituaries, an easy indicator of patriotism and national unity.⁸³ The title article, by Ray Stannard Baker, Wilson's Press Secretary at Versailles, posits that the true "secret" to Woodrow Wilson lay in his conviction that what was "right" would prevail.⁸⁴ He concludes the article,

This great man lies at rest at last, and already the personal animosities and jealousies are beginning to burn away; the country is beginning to see emerging more clearly the figure of a very great man. At first we revile the prophets who would stir us out of our moral slothfulness, inspire us to great vision and high duty, but afterward we come to reverence and follow such leaders. The truest policy for America today, in this time of world doubt and turmoil, is to seek out the message of Woodrow Wilson and be guided by it.

"It is right; and right will prevail."⁸⁵

⁸³ Hume, *Obituaries in American Culture*, 150-1.

⁸⁴ Baker later went on to write an eight volume biography: *Woodrow Wilson: Life and Letters*. 8 vols. (New York: Doubleday, 1927-39).

⁸⁵ Ray Stannard Baker, "The True Secret of Woodrow Wilson," *New York Times*, February 10, 1924, XX1.

This passage succinctly sums up the accounts of Wilson published in the *New York Times* and most other papers – Wilson as an enduring idealist and even a prophet, with a cemented place as a great man in history. The visual representation of Wilson, along with the heaping praise and claims that detractors simply lacked Wilson’s foresight, helps forge a collective remembrance and begins to form his legacy.



Figure 2: *New York Times*, February 10, 1924, XX1.

In these press reactions to Woodrow Wilson’s death, obituaries move beyond the realm of shaping public opinion by including the complexities of grief. It is not enough to

merely report Wilson's death, as mourning joins factual accounts of where, when, and how Wilson died. Accordingly, Dos Passos addresses more than just the constructed narratives of history: he also grapples with constructed narratives of grief and the way that obituary's impulse to mourn affects factual reporting. Most notably, he strips grief from the genre. By eliminating the unifying emotion from the obituary, Dos Passos uses this genre to question exactly what the United States lost when they lost Woodrow Wilson and Wilson's subsequent place in American history.

While the obituaries in the newspapers strive to create a canonical interpretation of Wilson's life and to establish a strong community of mourners, Dos Passos delivers a revisionary obituary that disassembles the heroic vision of Wilson and offers alternative, critical views of him. To begin, he accentuates the widely varied make-up of the United States and its citizens, including many different viewpoints, especially those not usually reported in newspapers. He highlights regionalism and foreign groups to think about Wilson's legacy regionally, nationally, and internationally – as opposed to “uniform” responses that do not accurately represent the diversity of American communities – and poses smaller groups within large crowds who do not acquiesce to the general sentiment of the assembly. These dissenters represent those not caught up in the supposed universal reaction to Wilson. By writing an ironic and conflicting obituary, Dos Passos creates a portrait of dissent and of fractured community. He reinscribes the uniformity found in obituary but with opposite emotions (bitterness and hostility). This reversal serves not only to critique his subject, but to demonstrate the insincerity of such public genres of grief, the way they box complicated feelings into digestible, simplified forms. When mass media has flattened the modes of representation to such a degree, we become

trapped in these familiar, easy modes, an issue that Dos Passos draws attention to via generic distortions and exaggerations.

Dos Passos's emphasis on varied voices is immediately apparent as his title for this profile, "Meester Veelson," leaves the standardized language in the newspapers and writes in an immigrant or even foreign register. Throughout *1919*, Dos Passos has an interest in accents: he mentions the "broad 'a'" used in upper class eastern accents in several instances, including in the Wilson profile.⁸⁶ (There, the practiced accent shows Wilson's attempt to move away from any regional markers – i.e. his Southern heritage – and into a "national" accent). This title, then, deliberately shifts away from linguistic and accentual homogeneity. The emphasis perhaps even mimics a German pronunciation of "Mister Wilson," thus shifting our viewpoint to that of foreign enemies during World War I. By intentionally marking this profile with a non-standard pronunciation, Dos Passos places Wilson in a global context, rather than just American, changing the framework of his legacy – and of grief pertaining to his death.

This obituary responds to one of the main conceits in newspaper depictions of Wilson: the comparisons of Wilson to George Washington and Abraham Lincoln. Indeed, the first line of the profile indirectly addresses them: "The year that Buchanan was elected president Thomas Woodrow Wilson / was born to a presbyterian minister's daughter" (*1919* 191). The line break (and lack of comma) makes the word "president" applicable to both Buchanan and Wilson, ostensibly about Buchanan, but also

⁸⁶ There are two examples in the Wilson profile alone: "At twentynine [Wilson] married a girl with a taste for painting (while he was courting her he coached her in how to use the broad 'a')" (*1919* 192). The second is "First it was *neutrality in thought and deed*, then *too proud to fight* when the *Lusitania* sinking and the danger to the Morgan loans and centers in the East bawling for war, but the suction of the drumbeat and the guns was too strong; the best people took their fashions from Paris and their broad "a's" from London, and T.R. and the House of Morgan" (*1919* 194).

foreshadowing what will happen to Thomas Woodrow Wilson. Hinging on the word “president,” this line explicitly connects the two men’s presidencies. Instead of comparing Wilson to Washington or Lincoln, two famous war presidents, Dos Passos connects him to an ineffectual and divisive president, most famous for being a lame duck. From the beginning of this profile, the fragmentary structure of these sections disrupts the temporal experience of information – the reader pieces it together to create meaning rather than passively taking it in, a contrast to media forms.

The description of Wilson’s childhood also mentions Washington: “...Tommy was a backward child, didn’t learn his letters till he was nine, but when he learned to read his favorite reading was Parson Weems’ / *Life of Washington*” (1919 192). Parson Weems’ *Life of Washington* contributed to popular cultural memories of Washington, but many sections of it are false or highly exaggerated. For example, Weems’ book gives us the famous story about Washington cutting down a cherry tree and then admitting to it, an event that probably did not occur even though it remains part of Washington lore.⁸⁷ By linking Wilson to Washington in this manner, Dos Passos foreshadows the mythologizing about Wilson. It also reminds readers to be skeptical of such anecdotes, as these stylized accounts muddle collective memory and political interpretation.

Dos Passos subverts the cohesive collective memory of the former president formed in the papers by highlighting less flattering stories about Wilson. He uses the retrospective form of obituary to juxtapose contradictions in Wilson’s career to point out hypocrisy. Instead of glossing over the troubling points of Wilson’s legacy, as conventional obituaries do, Dos Passos stresses these contradictions. For example, he

⁸⁷ Leonard S. Marcus, *Minders of Make-Believe: Idealists, Entrepreneurs and the Shaping of American Children’s Literature* (New York: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2008), 10-13.

juxtaposes Wilson's words and his actions, especially when it comes to U.S. imperial measures and international interventions:

At Mobile he said:

I wish to take this occasion to say that the United States will never again seek one additional foot of territory by conquest;

and he landed the marines at Vera Cruz. (1919 194)

This direct juxtaposition of speech and action deftly illustrates Wilson's hypocrisy. Dos Passos even makes this statement one sentence, strongly linking the contradiction in one fluid grammatical structure. The newspapers' attempt to smooth out Wilson's life, to mold it into a clear path of actions all working toward one noble cause, creates an impossible uniformity to his existence. While the profiles generally move in a linear fashion, such juxtapositions disrupt the temporal order. Time speeds up in these moments, leaping months, even years, in a sentence. Compacting time does not function as it does in conventional obituaries, which shorten and summarize to give an overall picture; instead, this temporal disjuncting highlights the fissures in a neatly compressed biography found in obituaries, breaking their framings and creating cracks in Wilson's legacy.

The most critical sections of "Meester Veelson" come from the inclusion of dissenters. Contrary to newspapers' emphasis on collective, homogenized grief, this obituary highlights specific groups whose presence denies the uniformity of sentiment. For example, in his depiction of Wilson's trip to France, Dos Passos points out marginalized voices:

La France héroïque was there with the speeches, the singing schoolchildren, the mayors in their red sashes. (Did Meester Veelson see the gendarmes at Brest beating back the demonstration of the dockyard workers who came to meeting him with red flags?)

At the station in Paris he stepped from the train onto a wide red carpet that lead him, between rows of potted palms, silk hats, legions of honor, decorated busts of uniforms, frockcoats, rosettes, boutonnieres, to a Rolls Royce. (Did Meester Veelson see the women in black, the cripples in their little carts, the pale anxious faces along the streets, did he hear the terrible anguish of the cheers as they hurried him and his new wife to the hotel de Mûrat, where in rooms full of brocade, gilt clocks, Buhl cabinets and ormolu cupids the presidential suite had been prepared?) (1919 195-6)

We return to non-standardized dialect here with the repetition of “Meester Veelson” throughout, a clear reference to the audience of foreigners whose lives were irrevocably changed due to World War I as the landscape of Europe (literally and psychically) was altered in ways that U.S. territory was not. The juxtaposition of those distorted bodies – women in mourning and disabled “cripples” – with the luxurious trappings afforded to a president whose actions significantly contributed to the aforementioned injuries succinctly demonstrates who bears the burdens of war. Dos Passos’s stylistic choices further denote these figures’ marginality, as the parentheses mark these scenes as asides and the interrogative form signals how such people are ignored in discussions of world politics. While this passage does not give the protesting dockyard workers or the war widows a voice, it does acknowledge their existence, bringing the background figures to

our attention to highlight dissent in the masses. These are exactly the kind of people left out of public considerations of Wilson – and of traditional obituaries in the newspapers. So by including them here (in a moment of exclusion), Dos Passos points out the problems of the genre.

Near the end of “Meester Veelson,” Dos Passos picks up the thread of labor protest planted in the previous passage while painting a scene of American reactions to Wilson:

In Seattle the wobblies whose leaders were in jail, in Seattle the wobblies whose leaders had been lynched, who'd been shown down like dogs, in Seattle the wobblies lined four blocks as Wilson passed, stood silent with their arms folded staring at the great liberal as he was hurried past in his car, huddled in his overcoat, haggard with fatigue, one side of his face twitching. The men in overalls, the workingstiffs let him pass in silence after all the other blocks of handclapping and patriotic cheers. (1919 198)

This passage eliminates the parentheses; it does not even bother with the “official” account of the incident. In fact, this depiction marginalizes the general crowd – it is only acknowledged in the last line as disembodied “handclapping and patriotic cheers.” Instead, Dos Passos directly focuses on this portion of the crowd that dislikes Wilson, thus flipping the majority/minority viewpoint. Like the foreign crowds, these men do not get a voice, but they do not need one. Their silence speaks volumes compared to the hollow, meaningless cheers from the rest of the masses – like the hollowness of obituary itself. By bringing the minority opinion to the forefront, this passage celebrates the resistance of the collective reaction and implies that Wilson’s death is indeed not a loss

worth grieving for these individuals. Instead, they mourn their lost leaders, relegated to jail or killed in horrific ways. Those losses do not receive the kind of press coverage that Wilson does, and as we will see with the Wesley Everest and Joe Hill profiles in *1919*, Dos Passos works to restore a sense of loss and mourning for these men.

Yet, there is another version of Wilson embedded in this passage. His characterization here is pathetic, in both senses of the word. It shows the husk of a man and foreshadows his death, the eventual loss that leads to the obituary. Still, it is pitiable, even sympathetic as the toll of his efforts is written on his crumbling body. In this moment, we can feel for him *and* for the “workingstiffs” – the walking (near)dead, hampered and betrayed. This potential moment of simultaneous empathy for both sides generates a (productive) fracture in community, one that allows for contradictory feeling.

As noted, a major difference between Dos Passos’s obituary and those in the newspapers is the lack of commentary after the death announcement. Dos Passos places it at the end of the obituary, succinctly proclaiming: “In 1924 on February 3rd he died” (*1919* 198). While the newspapers hail Wilson as a man thinking beyond his time, a man whose importance can only be understood in the future, “Meester Veelson” looks toward nothing.⁸⁸ The exclusion of any follow up story, any reaction to his death, makes this obituary closer to an obituary for a common man rather than that of a national figure. By removing prescribed grief from the obituary, Dos Passos splits the traditional obituary’s aim to simultaneously historicize and mourn. He focuses on crafting a(n alternative) public record of Wilson’s life, not a public record of national grief surrounding his death.

⁸⁸ In *Obituary as Collective Memory*, Fowler points out that “the obituary is the first station to canonization or more permanent memorialisation” (40).

By ending abruptly with Wilson's death, Dos Passos makes no attempt to envision how history will remember Wilson.

Originally, however, Dos Passos ended the Wilson obituary much differently. In the edited typescript, he concludes this sketch: "In 1924 on February 3rd he died. / ~~Judge him if you want to.~~"⁸⁹ The imperative "judge" is loaded with textured meanings – the verb is ripe with critical undertones, implying a disparaging viewpoint, one that pairs well with the ironic and often biting view of Wilson throughout the profile. This call for the reader to assess Wilson's life rejects the way obituaries dictate grief. Dos Passos instead advocates using the obituary to question, or judge, the deceased's place in history separate from any grieving over that individual.

Such portions of the text show Dos Passos's vehement dislike of Wilson, one born from a feeling of betrayal. To Dos Passos – and many others – Wilson represented hope and idealism in progressive politics. Ultimately, he failed to live up to his ideals, even turning against his own policies, hurting his original supporters, and this hurt is what drives Dos Passos's brutal depiction. Seth Moglen argues that the biography sections are a way of Dos Passos productively working through the failings of leftist radical politics, and while he is referring to other, more revolutionary figures like Eugene V. Debs and Bill Haywood, the Wilson biography actually takes a similar track. But Moglen calls "political hope...a social form of mourning" – that is, it helps us get over loss via new investments – and in this profile, there is no hope when it comes to remembering Wilson.⁹⁰ Thus, this revised obituary becomes a crushing of idealism depicted in the papers, an active resistance of intertwined hope and mourning related to Wilson. In the

⁸⁹ The sentence "Judge him if you want to" is crossed out in pen. The Papers of John Dos Passos, Box 79, Folder 3, held in Special Collections, University of Virginia Library.

⁹⁰ Moglen, *Mourning Modernity*, 24.

end, though, Dos Passos ironically reinstates a “uniform” of grief. His “obituary” does not reform the conversation – its distortion of the genre’s clichés merely flips it from positive to negative. So while Dos Passos opens the obituary form to new points of view, a move that could revolutionize the politics of this genre, the apparent anger and bitterness make it just as uniform as the newspapers. Wilson remains locked in a single-faceted representation of loss. However, in the face of such monolithic representations of Wilson, in the face of such reverence, perhaps the only way to disrupt collective memory is to annihilate it. Read in conjunction with other depictions, Dos Passos’s profile forces us to reconcile two disparate Wilsons, to critically engage memory and grief.

Alternative Legacies

“Meester Veelson” demonstrates one facet of Dos Passos’s revision of traditional obituaries – how he challenges mainstream prescriptions of grief – but other profiles show an expansion of the genres possibilities. Dos Passos places Wilson next to other power-players, such as Theodore Roosevelt and J.P. Morgan, whose obituaries dominated newspaper space, demoting other news and other obituaries. However, unlike the newspapers, Dos Passos offers the same amount of space to other figures, like Randolph Bourne, whose “tiny twisted unscared ghost” would only warrant a short obituary at the back of the *New York Times*, and even less prominent figures like Wesley Everest (1919 81).⁹¹ Indeed, he particularly focuses on Leftist causes like labor organizing, incorporating class issues. By bringing marginalized figures to the forefront and giving them the same treatment as more prominent people, Dos Passos responds to the

⁹¹ “Death of Randolph Bourne,” *New York Times*, December 23, 1918, 11.

exclusionary functions of obituary and posits an alternative public mourning.⁹²

The least known figure profiled is Wesley Everest, a veteran who returned home to go logging out west again and became involved with Industrial Workers of the World (IWW). On Armistice Day, an altercation occurred between a group of American Legion members and IWW members in Centralia, Washington. The exact circumstances are debated; the American Legion said they were fired upon, and the IWW claims that the American Legion members attacked their headquarters. In any event, during the fight, Everest was chased through the woods, where he killed Dale Hubbard and was then captured by the mob. Although placed in jail, he was later released to the mob, and they lynched him. Newspaper reporting of the incident largely blamed the IWW and turned the affair into an indictment of communists and labor organizers. Wesley Everest is not named in many papers, but an exception is the *St. Louis Post Dispatch*, which displays a picture of Everest's burial.⁹³ No undertaker in town would bury him, so his IWW friends interred him under the watchful gaze of soldiers.⁹⁴

Since many of the papers frame this conflict as the IWW targeting soldiers – during an Armistice parade, no less – Dos Passos's portrayal contradicts and nuances this opposition. Dos Passos emphasizes that Everest was a veteran too, and in his telling of those fateful events, even has him dress the part: “Wesley Everest was a crack shot; Armistice Day he put on his uniform and filled his pockets with cartridges” (1919 367). As such, he looks like the men in the parade (“the exsoldiers were in their uniforms”), some of whom would later kill him. By cloaking Everest and his killers in the same

⁹² Admittedly, this democracy of mourning only extends to a certain point: it is really a leveling of class distinctions, as Dos Passos leaves out racial minorities and women, with the exception of Isadora Duncan, who he features in *The Big Money*.

⁹³ “No undertaker would bury Wesley Everest...” *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, November 22, 1919, 13.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*

national uniform, he points out the deep divides in U.S. national culture, in the heterogeneous opinions and feelings of these men. The uniform, then, is insidious in this scenario as it purports to unify but actually masks the problems of economic class that divide Americans.

Wesley Everest's profile ends gruesomely, with his castration and death by lynching. It concludes: "Nobody knows where they buried the body of Wesley Everest, but the six loggers they caught they buried in the Walla Walla Penitentiary" (1919 369). Dos Passos goes against historical record here, since, as previously mentioned, Everest had to be buried in a make-shift funeral as no one in town would prepare and inter the body. In rewriting Everest's ultimate end, he makes a sad story even bleaker by erasing his remains from the record – his burial place is not a significant enough site to commit to memory, to history. Furthermore, using the word "buried" to indicate imprisonment links the state's treatment of communists and labor organizers to death. Not only excluded from normative public mourning structures, they are barred from public life.

By elevating Everest to the level of men like Wilson and other prominent figures, Dos Passos makes his death worth mourning in a larger public sphere. The title of this profile, "Paul Bunyan," suggests a futurity not present in the profile itself. By naming Everest after the great American legend, Dos Passos reshapes his place in national memory.⁹⁵ Angela Frattarola argues that the evocation of Paul Bunyan helps create a new folklore, an unofficial history.⁹⁶ Thus, Everest can live on as this folk hero, not just for the "reds," but for everyone, elevated by the form of the novel. As such, he opens the

⁹⁵ William Solomon writes that Dos Passos turns Everest into a "Christ of the labor movement," even though *U.S.A.* bristles against and subverts such "symbol making." See "Politics and Rhetoric in the Novel in the 1930s," *American Literature* 68, no. 4 (December 1996): 799-818 (807).

⁹⁶ Angela Frattarola, "The Limitations of Vision and the Power of Folklore in John Dos Passos's *U.S.A.*," *Studies in the Novel* 45, no. 1 (Spring 2013) 80-101 (96-99).

discourse of who can be an American legend – that is, who remains in the cultural imaginary and the emotional history of the U.S.

Juxtaposing Wilson and Everest in the same form shows the ways Dos Passos reacts to the segregation of grief within media, and indeed, obituary is a genre of representational confinement, containing only certain figures and values and barring many others. However, physical confinement also plays a role, reoccurring through the leftist profiles, from the mention of prison at the end of the Everest profile to the incarceration of two prominent organizers featured (Eugene V. Debs and Joe Hill). By including this theme in the profiles, Dos Passos shows the problems of both political action and representation. Attempts to curtail speech during the war lead to more literal forms of containment that hamper public circulation of ideas and bodies. In these obituaries, he releases them from representational confinement, including these men, and their politics, in a public record of loss and grief, but he cannot overcome the larger political forces that restrain and restrict progressive politics through incarceration. Thus, even while he rejects the censorship of political radicals, Dos Passos recognizes the barriers to inclusion. They can only be incorporated into national imaginings in this experimental rewriting of an obituary, only years after their actual deaths, showing both the possibility of genre and its hindrances.

The profile for Joe Hill, a prominent labor organizer and song writer who was convicted of murder in a controversial trial and executed by firing squad in 1915, considers the problems of pairing mourning and organizing, ironically going against Joe Hill's final words.

“Don’t mourn for me organize,” was the last word he sent out to the workingstiffs of the I.W.W. Joe Hill stood up against the wall of the jail yard, looked into the muzzles of the guns and gave the word to fire.

They put him in a black suit, put a stiff collar around his neck and a bow tie, shipped him to Chicago for a bangup funeral, and photographed his handsome stony mask staring into the future.

The first of May they scattered his ashes to the wind. (1919 339)

Dos Passos cites the oft-(slightly mis-)quoted line from Joe Hill on the eve of his death. But this call to redirect emotional labor toward political work is not actually followed by tales of further political action; instead, Dos Passos relates the way the IWW mourned Hill. The press reported on the “bangup funeral,” as Hill’s songs became dirges for him, and thousands gathered to remember him. Here, Dos Passos recognizes the way that traditional mourning ritual (dressing up the corpse, scattering ashes) can distract from political aims, the way that these deep-seated cultural norms and performances can lead us away from the goals at hand.

And yet, mourning for Hill was not safe or apolitical, as these seemingly innocuous rituals were fraught with political implications. Articles about the funeral prominently mention the red flag draped over the coffin, and they mention the many languages spoken during the service. The *New York Times* reporting is particularly disparaging:

Anarchists, Nihilists, some Socialists, “bums,” and hoboes generally, of whom less than 10 per cent were American, assembled for the ceremony in the West Side Auditorium. ... The red flag floated undisturbed at every turn. The pine

coffin containing the body of the man executed by the Utah authorities for murder, was draped in a red flag. There was no touch of religion in the ceremony. Bitter attacks upon the existing social system and threats against the Utah authorities were made by the orators.⁹⁷

So Joe Hill's funeral was explicitly political, as mourning became part of organizing, something that the *New York Times* denigrates (and implies is inherently un-American). These reports show the entrenched cultural custom of seeing mourning as inherently apolitical. Unlike the Wilson obituary, in which Dos Passos ramps up the negative rhetoric, here he tones it down, eliminating the harshness in actual reporting from outlets like the *New York Times*. This distortion of media representation ends up being more measured – even falsely apolitical – instead of grotesque caricature. On the surface, the dissonance between the tone of this profile and “Meester Veelson” reflects Dos Passos's own political leanings, but it also demonstrates the malleability and politically-regulating nature of the obituary form.

Undoing the Unknown: Writing an Obituary for John Doe

These potentials and problematics of obituary (and actually of *U.S.A.* as a whole) collide in the moving and oft-anthologized profile of the Unknown Soldier, “The Body of an American.” While this portion of the novel is probably the most famous section of the *U.S.A.* trilogy and while it is frequently mentioned in discussions of World War I memorials, it is often stripped from its context within the larger structure of the trilogy, and there is a general lack of sustained critical analysis of this passage (a fact that is often noted but left unremedied). I want to consider how the Unknown Soldier functions within a context of obituary, thus relating it to the other profiles. The Unknown Soldier is a

⁹⁷ “Hillstrom is Cremated,” *New York Times*, November 26, 1915, 7.

figure who challenges all conventions of obituary: he is unknown, and thus should be marginalized, but in this particular instance, that is exactly why he is important. His symbolic status constrains representations, only allowing for particular constructions of his memory, a confining structure Dos Passos pushes against. Indeed, the Unknown Soldier serves as the perfect liminal subject for a dismantling and destabilizing of obituary.

The newspaper depictions of the burial of the Unknown Soldier are similar to obituaries for celebrities in that they emphasize a collective mourning for the soldier. Creating a uniform portrait of the Unknown Soldier, however, presents a slight problem, since he, by definition, has no identity other than that of a soldier. Thus, the newspapers mention over and over again his symbolic value – that he represents all the losses of the Great War and that he stands for patriotism. As an article in the *New York Times* states, “Washington has witnessed many notable ceremonies, but never one like this. ... There were tears of sorrow then. There were tears today, but most of those who shed them were carried away by the emotion of the symbolism of patriotism which this unknown American embodied.”⁹⁸ Indeed, as William Solomon notes, the ceremony was used to create collective feelings of sorrow that would pull a disparate nation together.⁹⁹

To confirm that the soldier is worthy to stand as a symbol of American patriotism, we must imagine his death. President William Harding’s speech at the ceremony envisions a heroic end for the soldier:

We do not know the eminence of his birth, but we do know the glory of his death.

He died for his country, and greater devotion hath no man than this. He died

⁹⁸ “Solemn Journey of Dead,” *New York Times*, November 12, 1921, 1.

⁹⁹ Solomon, “Politics and Rhetoric in the Novel,” 809-10.

unquestioning, uncomplaining, with faith in his heart and hope on his lips, that his country should triumph and its civilization survive. As a typical soldier of this representative democracy, he fought and died, believing in the indisputable justice of his country's cause. Conscious of the world's upheaval, appraising the magnitude of a war the like of which had never horrified humanity before, perhaps he believed his to be a service destined to change the tide of human affairs.¹⁰⁰

This constructed narrative makes the Unknown Soldier an emblem of patriotism, but his symbolic importance rests upon an imagined scenario.¹⁰¹ It distills his life into its final moments, as the Unknown Soldier is, and can only be, an emblem of death. "The Body of an American" reacts to this narrative, specifically questioning both the tale of the soldier's death and society's notions of the soldier's identity to release him from these confining narratives.

While the newspaper obituaries focus on the soldier's patriotic mind and soul, Dos Passos emphasizes his body ("The *Body* of an American").¹⁰² He opens by imagining the selection of the Unknown Soldier:

In the tarpaper morgue at Chalons-sur-Marne in the reek of chloride of lime and the dead, they picked out the pine box that held all that was left of
enie menie minie moe plenty other pine boxes stacked up there containing what
they'd scraped up of Richard Roe

¹⁰⁰ "President Harding's Address at Grave of Unknown Soldier," *New York Times*, November 12, 1921, 2.

¹⁰¹ Solomon, "Politics and Rhetoric in the Novel," 808-14.

¹⁰² See Steven Trout, *On the Battlefield of Memory* (Tuscaloosa, AL: University of Alabama Press, 2010), 138 and 148.

the other person or persons unknown. Only one can go. How did they pick John
Doe?

Make sure he ain't a dinge, boys,
make sure he ain't a guinea or a kike,
how can you tell a guy's a hundredpercent when all you've got's a gunnysack full
of bones, bronze buttons stamped with the screaming eagle and a pair of roll
puttees?
...and the gagging chloride and the puky dirtstench of the yearold dead...

(1919 375-6)

Already Dos Passos shifts away from the overwhelmingly sentimental musings of the newspapers. The mention of the bodies' stench and the uncouth language ("what they'd scraped up of Richard Roe," "gunnysack full of bones") reminds readers of the fragile embodiment of the Unknown Soldier, of the literal remains that lie under the flag-draped marble in Arlington. The gruesome imagery contrasts with the passage's aural components. The opening lines feature tightly-interlocked rhymes: "enie menie minie moe," "Roe," "unknown," "go," "Doe." The repeated sound structure gives the writing a child-like quality, a sing-song aspect that trivializes the dead and glances over the somber setting – a morgue filled with war casualties. The process of choosing the Unknown Soldier, a figure held up with the utmost respect, becomes a silly game ("enie menie minie moe").

But the choice turns serious when considering the racial implications of the process. In order to be a national symbol, the soldier cannot be racially or ethnically marked: he must be "a hundredpercent" – a phrase from World War I propaganda. This

assumption means that this universal emblem excludes many. In fact, the Unknown Soldier's racial identity was a topic of interest amongst African American authors in the early 1930s. For example, James Weldon Johnson's poem, "Saint Peter Relates an Incident of the Resurrection Day" (1930), features patriotic groups like the Daughters of the American Revolution and hate groups like the Klu Klux Klan – all "duly qualified Hundred-Percenters" – congregating around the tomb to see the soldier ascending to heaven. However, much to their dismay, the soldier is black.¹⁰³ May Miller's play, *Stragglers in the Dust* (1930), features a black mother cleaning and caring for the tomb, convinced her son is the Unknown Soldier.¹⁰⁴ Mark Whalan's work on African American memorialization considers how black spirituals give a different "rhythm" to memorialization for Johnson and others: they provide an alternative to "a monumental type of closure and exclusion [that restricts] those able to participate in a national consensus of mourning along racial lines."¹⁰⁵ These accounts simultaneously incorporate African Americans into war memorials and show how such inclusion is impossible in the American public sphere. Indeed, Dos Passos's mention of minorities comes with ironic slurs and negation ("ain't"). But his references to other ethnic identities demonstrates the futility of trying to keep the Unknown Soldier "a hundredpercent" – there is no way to "make sure" of anything about the Unknown Soldier's identity. By pointing out this uncertainty, Dos Passos makes readers acknowledge the negative capability of this figure.

However, this instance also draws attention to Dos Passos's own limitations, as this passage is one of the few times race is explicitly discussed in the trilogy. It is also the

¹⁰³ James Weldon Johnson, "Saint Peter Relates an Incident of the Resurrection Day," *Complete Poems* (New York: Penguin, 2000), 49-54 (51).

¹⁰⁴ May Miller, *Stragglers in the Dust* (Alexandria, VA: Alexander Street Press, 2001).

¹⁰⁵ Whalan, *The Great War*, 212-3.

only time that one of the figures profiled is (potentially) a person of color – the rest of the featured figures are all white. Indeed, while these obituaries obviously seek to rewrite public grieving practices as they relate to class issues, they often obscure problems of race in the United States. The lack of engagement with race in *U.S.A.* ironically leaves out a lot of the actual population of the U.S., reinstating the same problems of public mourning that Dos Passos himself critiques. Nonetheless, this moment opens the door to those issues, especially considering how it would have been read alongside works like Johnson's and Miller's.

As Steven Trout points out, the late 1920s and 1930s saw a backlash against the outcomes of World War I and its subsequent memorialization as different writers and artists refigured collective memories of the war, especially through the figure of the Unknown Soldier.¹⁰⁶ He calls “Body of an American” “Dos Passos’s symphonic requiem to American losses in the Great War, and his melodies, intentionally jumbled and dissonant, come from the decade-old tradition of Unknown Soldier poetry, fiction, and ecclesiastical writing that predates his novel.”¹⁰⁷ So this novel builds on a contemporaneous questioning of memorials, and I argue that the incorporation of obituaries adds to these counter-narratives in ways not yet explored. Primarily, obituary changes the temporality of mourning. Monuments have a permanence, an immortal aura, contrary to the ephemerality of obituaries. Obituaries may, as Bridget Fowler notes, begin the process of collective memory formation and monumentalization, but the temporariness of obituary means that memory is still malleable, not yet set in stone.¹⁰⁸ As

¹⁰⁶ Trout, *Battlefield of Memory*, 134 (also see 124-56).

¹⁰⁷ Trout, *Battlefield of Memory*, 147.

¹⁰⁸ Fowler, *Obituary as Collective Memory*, 40.

such, the remembrances and legacies can still be shaped. Thus, the return to obituary in the 1930s allows Dos Passos to rewrite the temporal structures of memory and mourning.

As the profile continues, Dos Passos juxtaposes the official story of the Unknown Soldier presented at Arlington with alternative narratives that follow John Doe from birth to enlistment in the army to his accidental death. Dos Passos denies the claim that we cannot know the Unknown Soldier's life ("the eminence of his birth") by constructing plausible narratives for him. Instead of choosing a singular narrative for John Doe, Dos Passos allows for a multiplicity of John Does. He writes,

John Doe was born

and raised in Brooklyn, in Memphis, near the lakefront in Cleveland, Ohio, in the

stench of the stockyards in Chi, on Beacon Hill, in the old brick house in

Alexandria Virginia, on Telegraph Road, in a halftimbered Tudor cottage in

Portland the city of roses,

in the Lying-In Hospital old Morgan endowed on Stuyvesant Square,

across the railroad tracks, out near the country club, in a shack cabin tenement

apartmenthouse exclusive residential suburb (1919 376)

John Doe is, at once, singular and plural, a simultaneity that Unknown Soldier tropes often ignore as they strip individuality away in favor of vacuous symbolism. Dos Passos, on the other hand, retains individuality in his depiction – but not at the expense of plurality. His Unknown Soldier represents individuals with at least a gesture toward a sense of unique identity rather than emphasizing the representational aspect of the Unknown Soldier that stands in for an amorphous mass of deceased soldiers. By offering many origin stories for John Doe, Dos Passos encourages the reader to think about the

individuals that the Unknown Soldier represents – he becomes a composite figure, made of up discernable parts, rather than an abstracted symbol.

Furthermore, Dos Passos's John Does are regionally and economically diverse, hailing from all over the nation and from various class circumstances. This emphasis on varied identity folds the underclasses in with the privileged – subtly pointing out that class makes no difference in death – but it also then highlights the elitism present at the funeral ceremony. The attendees, Dos Passos notes, were “the diplomats and the generals and the admirals and the brasshats and the politicians and the handsomely dressed ladies out of the society column of the *Washington Post*” (1919 379). To make this funeral a social event fit for “society column” makes a mockery of the thousands lost in the war. And there is a twisted irony that the only way that the funeral for a “busboy harveststiff hogcaller...longshoreman lumberjack plumber's helper” would be attended by such society mavens is if they do not know who he is (1919 377). Dos Passos thus points out the artifice of the Unknown Soldier, not only his symbolic value but in the feelings of mourning and grief he is supposed to engender. As such, “The Body of an American” points out the lack of grievability associated with the lives of most men sent to fight in World War I.

Throughout this piece, Dos Passos juxtaposes the newspaper accounts and pieces of Harding's speech with various plausible tellings of John Does' stories. In doing so, he both cynically reminds readers of how easy it is to construct a moving story about a national symbol and sympathetically prompts readers to consider the individuals represented by John Doe rather than getting caught up in an unquestioning patriotic

fervor.¹⁰⁹ Unlike Harding, Dos Passos does not ask us to mourn John Doe; instead, he implores his readers to question the greater cultural narratives surrounding his story, like what the loss of soldiers in World War I means to American history. The official account of the Unknown Soldier is a single collectivizing narrative, whereas Dos Passos offers multiple narratives, using them to (ironically) restore individuality to someone whose personal history has been eliminated.

However, Dos Passos goes beyond just integrating a wide-range of social positions into the Unknown Soldier – he even includes himself. William Solomon points out that “John Doe” coincidentally puns on John Dos. Solomon argues that Dos Passos turns this inadvertent similarity to his advantage, as the resonances between the two names make Dos Passos “a passive victim of (linguistic) forces beyond his control,” just as the Unknown Soldier is subjected to rhetorical manipulation by President Harding’s speech.¹¹⁰ This pun strips the author of significance, burying him in the platitudes of grief that his writing resists.

Since “The Body of an American” is often taken out of context from the rest of *1919*, critics have overlooked a further blurring of the lines between Dos Passos and the Unknown Soldier in another section of the novel. One of the several possible reasons Dos Passos gives for the Unknown Soldier not having his tags on him is that he “lost [his] identification tag swimmin in the Marne” (*1919* 378). A few lines later, before the fatal shell hits, Dos Passos picks up this possibility again, writing “the identification tag was in

¹⁰⁹ Dos Passos’s cynicism about the Unknown Soldier also may stem from the fact that the burial was scheduled to coincide not just with Armistice Day, but also with the Washington Naval Disarmament Conference of 1921. The *New York Times* front page headline on November 12, 1921 places the two events together: “Our Unknown Warrior Buried, the World Honoring Him; Harding Pleads for a Ban Civilization on War; Delegates Enter Arms Parley Today in Hopeful Spirit.”

¹¹⁰ Solomon, “Politics and Rhetoric in the Novel,” 813.

the bottom of the Marne” (1919 379). These details hark back to “The Camera Eye (29),” found earlier in 1919. As with all Camera’s Eye sections, it is intensely subjective, and critics have noted how these sections draw from Dos Passos’s own life and have thus interpreted them as Dos Passos’s own perspective.¹¹¹ In this Camera’s Eye, Dos Passos writes that it is

spring and we’ve just been swimming in the Marne way off somewhere beyond
the fat clouds on the horizon they are hammering on a tin roof in the rain in
the spring after a swim in the Marne with that hammering to the north pounding
the thought of death into our ears
the winey thought of death stings in the spring blood that throbs in the sunburned
neck up and down the belly under the tight belt hurries like cognac into the
tips of my toes and the lobes of my ears and my fingers stroking the fuzzy
closecropped skull
shly tingling fingers feel out the limits of the hard immortal skull under the flesh
a deathshad and a skeleton sits wearing glasses in the arbor under the
lucid occasional raindrops inside the new khaki uniform inside my
twentyoneyearold body that’s been swimming in the Marne in red and
whitestriped trunks in Chalons in the spring. (1919 54)

The place mentioned (“Marne” repeated and “Chalons”), Chalons-sur-Marne, is also the location where the Unknown Soldier was chosen. Given the prominence of the Unknown Soldier in this novel and the mention of Chalons-sur-Marne in “The Body of an American,” this reference connects Dos Passos to the Unknown Soldier perhaps more so

¹¹¹ Landsberg, *Path to U.S.A.*, 190-2 and Donald Pizer, “The ‘only words against POWER SUPERPOWER’ Passage in John Dos Passos’ *The Big Money*,” *Toward a Modernist Style: John Dos Passos: A Collection of Essays* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2013): 82-88 (74).

than the (coincidental) pun. This context reframes “Camera’s Eye (29),” ostensibly a simple anecdote of swimming during the war, as part of a potential tale of the Unknown Soldier.

Listening to the shells in this distance (“they are hammering on a tin roof”), the noise affects the soldiers, “pounding the thought of death into [their] ears.” Death is an altering substance – “winey,” like “cognac” – and “Camera’s Eye (29)” sinks smoothly into it without a clear distinction between life and death. We do not get the moment when the shell directly hits, just a bodily sensation and a lifeless body (the connection between them unclear). The corpse (“deathshad and skeleton”) is first observed from an outside perspective noting its location. But with the word “my” (“inside my twentyoneyearold body”), Dos Passos claims it as himself. This death of the author disrupts the entire apparatus of the trilogy – it kills its creator off not even midway through the second book, making him a potential nation symbol of grief rather than a dismantler of national mythology. As such, it distorts time, instilling us in the moment of death and of grief, suspending us there. Typical narratives of the Unknown Soldier’s death are impersonal, intended to serve a public monumentalizing role; Dos Passos, on the other hand, restores a sense of ongoing intimacy to the Unknown Soldier with this Camera’s Eye.

But this intimacy is not sustainable. “The Body of an American,” and thus *1919* in whole, concludes with a cultural practice of mourning: “All the Washingtonians brought flowers. / Woodrow Wilson brought a bouquet of poppies” (*1919* 380). The process of reading *1919* shows us that this final moment of tribute for the deceased John Doe is a hollow gesture, part of the “uniform of grief.” Symbols of renewal and rebirth, flowers are part of conventional mourning; poppies are especially significant as they are used in

remembrances of soldiers and were particularly related to World War I. But poppies are also used to derive opiates, which mask pain with pleasure and then fog the mind in drowsy comfort. Washington's elite present at the funeral "thought how beautiful sad Old Glory God's Country it was to have bugler play taps" – the aesthetic taking precedence over the reason for the gathering (and the emotions that accompany a funeral). With manufactured feelings of loss glossing over actual causes worth mourning and the larger social forces that caused such losses, Dos Passos demonstrates how such ceremonies of grief can inhibit the mourning process and hinder social activism that could prevent such losses in the future. Regarding the final line, the Unknown Soldier was often associated with Woodrow Wilson: Steven Trout points out that the two figures were often portrayed "in alignment, as mutually reinforcing symbols of international progressivism betrayed."¹¹² By ending the novel with Woodrow Wilson, an incredibly fraught character, who reappears only to participate in the same empty practices of mourning that are questioned, Dos Passos ostensibly offers an desolate portrait of American history.

However, we can read Wilson's presence in another way. We have already seen Wilson die (to not be mourned) in this book, and his return disrupts the temporality of grieving. It makes us see the hollowness of memorialization anew, the way such structures of remembrance calcify the past. The resurrection of Wilson within the timeframe of the novel creates an open, dynamic timeline for memorialization. Such a conceptualization of memorial seems counterintuitive, as memorials are often structures of closure. But Dos Passos rejects such confining structures of grieving and memorialization, instead forging an ongoing engaged relationship to the past that constantly interrogates the meaning of loss in American culture.

¹¹² Trout, *Battlefield of Memory*, 142.

Part II: Reimagined Communities

Chapter 2 – Mourning in America: The Case of Japanese American Internment and Redress

During and post-World War II, Japanese Americans occupied a precarious position in the United States. After Pearl Harbor, rumors of fifth column conspiracies proliferated, and anti-Japanese sentiments quickly escalated. This tense situation reached a culminating point on February 19, 1942, when President Roosevelt signed Executive Order 9066, giving the government the right to create military exclusion zones and paving the way to the internment of enemy aliens on the west coast. More than 110,000 Japanese Americans were interned. Roughly two-thirds were United States citizens.

The losses of those affected by internment were great. Forced to quickly leave their homes, most had to abandon, destroy, or sell (at greatly deflated prices) the majority of their belongings. The material losses alone were staggering. However, the psychic losses were worse. Internees were separated from their friends – occasionally from their families – and from their homes, businesses, and schools. To add insult to injury, these losses often went unacknowledged in mainstream American culture. In fact, government authorities on both national and local levels told Japanese Americans that the evacuation was for their protection and that they “should be glad to make the sacrifice to prove [their] loyalty.”¹¹³ Presenting forced losses as willing “sacrifices” that anyone would be glad to make, the government masked the devastation to the Japanese American community.

Over forty years later, President Reagan signed H.R. 442, otherwise known as the

¹¹³ United States and Edward Spicer, *Impounded People: Japanese Americans in the Relocation Centers* (Tucson, AZ: University of Arizona Press, 1969), 60.

Civil Liberties Act of 1988, a landmark bill that officially acknowledged the injustice of internment and hardships suffered, formally apologized to Japanese Americans, and awarded monetary damages to former internees. This hard-fought victory came after a long report from the Commission on Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians that confirmed the government's wrongdoing.¹¹⁴ Many factors led to H.R. 442's eventual passage, including shifting cultural understandings of internment that made this kind of unprecedented legislation palatable not just to Congressmen but also to their constituents.¹¹⁵

This chapter explores how Japanese American cultural production helped reshape mainstream conceptions of internment from the 1940s through the 1980s. The most publicly circulated type of cultural work by Japanese Americans at the time was life writing (like memoirs), and I show how memoir serves not only to publicly record the events of internment but also the emotions associated with it, specifically loss and grief. Such writing makes the losses of internment public by representing Japanese American grief, working to turn unacknowledged grief into reparations for grievance. By focusing on personal experiences of internment, this literature adds an important dimension to redress movements. While we can make a case for political action from statistics and facts – a rational basis for retribution – this enumeration of casualties in neat rows of numbers makes loss all about the lost objects, not the grieving subjects left behind. In recognizing the other as a feeling, grieving subject, we may move toward recognizing marginalized subjects both emotionally and even politically. Literature provides a crucial

¹¹⁴ See the Report of the Commission on Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians, *Personal Justice Denied* (Seattle, WA: University of Washington Press, 1996).

¹¹⁵ See Leslie T. Hatamiya's thorough analysis of the various factors that went into the passing of H.R. 442. *Righting a Wrong: Japanese Americans and the Passage of the Civil Liberties Act of 1988* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1993).

public space for representing and circulating these kinds of grieving subjects, one that can reshape the bounds of recognition. Like Betsy Huang, I specifically emphasize literary genre as an important tool for the representation of Asian (Japanese) American identity.¹¹⁶

I center my discussion on two authors, Miné Okubo and Yoshiko Uchida, who were interned in the same camp (Topaz), showing how their use of different genres strategically frames mourning over internment and incorporates it into dominant discourse. I argue that what links these disparate texts is a trope of excess – that is, representations of emotion that exceed the frames of mainstream cultural construction. Such surfeits push against ideologies governing emotional expression, spilling over and straining against (even breaking) modes of representation to produce new modes for expression. For Okubo, the limitations of the time period mean that excess does not denote excessive displays of emotion, but rather an excess of emotion that cannot be depicted, one that exists outside representational frames. On the other hand, Uchida’s children’s literature is able to use generic constructs to depict less moderated emotional reaction. In both cases, these authors play with generic boundaries to exceed their framings, thus simultaneously working within representational limits *and* expanding those borders to include Japanese American mourning.

The cultural climate surrounding Japanese Americans during and post-internment was very volatile, and there were few outlets through which Japanese Americans could process or even speak the injuries and losses brought upon them. Given these constraints,

¹¹⁶ Betsy Huang looks at “genre fictions” like immigrant fiction, crime fiction, and science fiction to think about how “writing Asian American identities according to or against generic constructs is a self-reflexive and self-conscious performative act that engenders, through repetition, the possibilities of variation and transformation” (7). *Contesting Genres in Contemporary Asian American Fiction* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010).

grief is eliminated as a mode of interpreting and conceptualizing Japanese American experience in the 1940s. Furthermore, as Leslie Hatamiya notes, traditional Japanese culture discourages outright displays of emotion and encourages stoicism.¹¹⁷ So then how does Japanese American cultural production represent grief? I first explore this question through the first Japanese American memoir published post-internment: Miné Okubo's illustrated memoir, *Citizen 13660* (1946), a text that creates a record of everyday Japanese American camp experience.¹¹⁸

Numerous scholars mention *Citizen 13660*'s mournful mood, but the criticism does not offer a sustained engagement with Okubo's depiction of public grieving. My examination brings internment losses and internee grief front and center to demonstrate Okubo's interest in representing scenes of mourning in this crucial post-war period, as the book features two memorials held in Topaz and other scenes of less overt grieving. Such a project opens up the range of emotional expressions available to Japanese Americans in this time period by demonstrating the way that internment was an experience to be grieved. Signaling an awareness of how the greater American public was ill-equipped to read representations of Japanese American emotion – or to comprehend internment as an event worth mourning – her strategies for representing grief respond to ideologies governing emotional expression. Specifically, I claim that Okubo's particular mix of visuals and text interrogates the stereotype of the "inscrutable Oriental," reflecting on and countering the dominant cultural constructions that influence reception of the text. Her subjects' grief is often obscured or ambiguously represented, hindering cohesive interpretation. This aesthetic of inscrutable grief critiques the paradigms governing Asian

¹¹⁷ Hatamiya, *Righting a Wrong*, 94 and 133.

¹¹⁸ Miné Okubo, *Citizen 13660* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1946; Seattle, WA: University of Washington Press, 1983). All quotations are from the University of Washington Press edition.

American self-expression and goes beyond the representational frameworks of the time. In a time period when a total reframing of the issues (i.e. recognizing and acknowledging internment grief) was not possible, this mode of surpassing boundaries (rather than redrawing them) opens up possibilities for new frameworks in the future.

The second section of this chapter considers how children's literature processes grief (as opposed to the adult memoir genre that constitutes much of internment writing). I compare Yoshiko Uchida's young adult novel, *Journey to Topaz* (1971), and her adult memoir, *Desert Exile* (1982), both of which reflect and take part in the burgeoning redress movements of the 1970s and 1980s.¹¹⁹ These books tackle the confining structures of internment in more critical ways than earlier publications, particularly with respect to how imprisonment within the camps affected mourning. But while *Desert Exile* deftly demonstrates these principles, *Journey to Topaz* actually *feels* the effects of loss via a younger protagonist. Even as the child narrator is confined by her physical circumstances – and constricted in how she can process her losses – her emotions spill unrestricted into the narrative. Ironically, children's literature is one of the most hyper-restricted genres as it is heavily policed and normalized due to the younger readers. The contradictory excesses – outpourings of grief over injustice in an overtly regulated genre – strangely end up working together as they mutually sanction each other. Internment grief is made acceptable in dominant discourse if children can read it, and the inclusion of diverse racial issues in a historically homogeneous genre expands the bounds of children's literature. Uchida's texts function pedagogically, teaching people how to read Japanese American subjects and their emotions, modeling the acknowledgement of other

¹¹⁹ Yoshiko Uchida, *Journey to Topaz* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1971) and *Desert Exile* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1982).

mourning subjects. Thus, this genre has a lot of potential for reshaping emotional recognition and creating a more empathetic politics.

Miné Okubo's Inscrutable Aesthetics and Crafting Empathy

The first memoir of internment published was not a straightforward text. Rather, Miné Okubo's *Citizen 13660* (1946) is a dynamic interplay of text and image – pen-and-ink drawings done during her time at the Tanforan Assembly Center in California and the Topaz War Relocation Center in Utah and later paired with contextualizing captions for publication. It is exactly this dialogue between visual and textual that makes Okubo's depictions of grief so affecting – and so innovative in ways that I will discuss shortly. *Citizen 13660* was the only text she published since she was primarily a visual artist. Pre-war, she worked on a Federal Arts Project mural with Diego Rivera, and her post-war work differed greatly from her internment camp drawings.¹²⁰ Although during the war, Okubo was confined, her body of work circulated. In March 1943, she won the San Francisco Art Association's seventh annual exhibition of drawings and prints for a sketch of an internment camp guard.¹²¹ That summer, she compiled her drawings and composed accompanying text for a piece entitled "An Evacuee's Hopes – And Memories" for the *San Francisco Chronicle's* weekend section, "This World."¹²² Okubo left Topaz before the end of the war to work as an illustrator for *Fortune* magazine, and she had exhibitions in New York. These artistic endeavors demonstrated Okubo's talent, which was already established pre-war, and publicized Japanese American experience.

¹²⁰ *Miné Okubo: An American Experience* (Oakland, CA: The Oakland Museum Special Exhibits and Education Department, 1972), 18.

¹²¹ "Mine Okubo Wins in S.F. Art Show," *Topaz Times*, March 30, 1943, 4. There is also a reprint of a statement made by Alfred Frankenstein in the *San Francisco Chronicle* saying that "America may be defined as a place where an inmate of a concentration camp makes a picture of her guards, sends it to an exhibition a thousand miles away and wins a prize for it."

¹²² Full text and drawings of "An Evacuee's Hopes – And Memories" found in *Miné Okubo: Following Her Own Road* (Seattle, WA: University of Washington Press, 2008), 40-5.

The Columbia University Press records on *Citizen 13660* indicate public interest in the book. In the months leading up to the book's release, the press increased the initial printing from 3,000 copies¹²³ to 5,000 copies with 3,000 bound because Sales Manager Harold H. Laskey stated that he was "convinced that the book will sell well from the start."¹²⁴ Less than two weeks after the release on September 20, 1946, the press recommended the final 2,000 copies be bound at once because of the number of advance sales.¹²⁵ For Columbia University Press, 5,000 copies was a good print number. In 1946, they published seven new titles in the "Of General Interest" category, and *Citizen 13660* had the second highest number of editions published – others range from 2,500 to 4,000.¹²⁶ Furthermore, the press's Annual Report to the Trustees highlights *Citizen 13660* as a book that sold well.¹²⁷ In early 1947, the press decided to print and bind an

¹²³ A March 6, 1946 letter from Harold H. Laskey (Sales Manager) to Mr. Novell Samuels of Princeton University Press asks how well "their Leighton book, 'The Governing of Men,' is doing because "it might indicate to us that we may be aiming way too low with an initial printing of 3,000 copies. The Okubo book, in our opinion, is swell – and I'd like to give it a good start. It should get a considerable boost from tho[sic] many persons and groups interested in the author, her work, and the relocation problem in general." Columbia University Press Records, Box 175, Folder Okubo, Mine: Citizen 13660, Columbia University Rare Book and Manuscript Library.

¹²⁴ Sales Manager Harold H. Laskey (addressed by his initials, HHL) recommends this course of action in a March 6, 1946 memo to Fon W. Boardman (CCed to CSS / CGP / Production Department). Columbia University Press Records, Box 175, Folder Okubo, Mine: Citizen 13660, Columbia University Rare Book and Manuscript Library.

¹²⁵ An October 2, 1946 memo from FWB to Mrs. Scanlan says, "I recommend that the remaining 2,000 copies be bound at once. Since the book was published only two weeks ago, I have no report to show you, but the advance sale indicates that we had better start immediately on binding the rest." It is confirmed on October 7, 1946, when GS writes a memo to Miss Powers to ask that the remaining 2,000 copies be bound "at once." Columbia University Press Records, Box 175, Folder Okubo, Mine: Citizen 13660, Columbia University Rare Book and Manuscript Library.

¹²⁶ On page seven of Trustees' report it states that of the seven new titles in the category "Of General Interest," Okubo's had the second highest number of editions published with 5000 copies (the highest was Lawton's AGING SUCCESSFULLY, mentioned above, with 10,000 copies). Others range from 2500-4000.

¹²⁷ Columbia University Press Records, Box 267 (Office File: Trustees, 1945 – Workman's Comp), Folder "Columbia University Press – Trustees Meetings 1946 / File Previously Called: Annual Report" Annual Report to the Trustees / Columbia University Press (May 26, 1947), Columbia University Rare Book and Manuscript Library. On page four of report, "Table IV – Columbia University Press Titles, 1946," it states that, "Of the 53 new titles, three of those which have sold the best were written at the invitation of the Press and printed in the quantities indicated: THE ROOTS OF AMERICAN LOYALTY, by Merle Curti (2 printings, 6200 copies).

additional 2,500 copies.¹²⁸ The printing numbers and the issuing of a reprint indicate the press's faith in the book and its ability to sell. Furthermore, the press received requests to translate the book from an Italian publishing house¹²⁹ and from a Japanese American publication.¹³⁰ Although both deals fell through, the interest indicates the books' transnational cachet.

Upon release, book was widely (and favorably) reviewed in such popular venues as the *New York Times*, the *Saturday Review of Literature*, the *Herald Tribune*, and the *Chicago Tribune*; additionally, former Secretary of the Interior, Harold Ickes covered the book in his syndicated column, "Man to Man" on September 23, 1946.¹³¹ The *Chicago*

IRAN, by William S. Haas (2 printings, 6400 copies).

AGING SUCCESSFULLY, by George Lawton (10,000 copies).

Other 1946 titles which have sold well and will, we believe, continue to do so are:

PSYCHIATRY FOR SOCIAL WORKERS, by Lawson G. Lowrey (3200 copies)

CITIZEN 13600, by Mine Okubo (5000 copies).

A HISTORY OF AMERICAN PHILOSOPHY, by Herbert W. Schneider (3000 copies).

FOODS: THEIR VALUE AND MANAGEMENT, by Henry C. Sherman (3000 copies).

A VICTORIAN ALBUM, by Lucy Poate Stebbins (4000 copies)."

Columbia University Press Records, Box 267 (Office File: Trustees, 1945 – Workman's Comp), Folder "Columbia University Press – Trustees Meetings 1946 / File Previously Called: Annual Report," Annual Report to the Trustees / Columbia University Press (May 26, 1947), Columbia University Rare Book and Manuscript Library.

¹²⁸ On January 3, 1947, G.S. writes a memo to Advertising, Editorial, Production, Publication, Sales, and Stock: "There will be a second printing and binding of 2500 copies, which should be in our stockroom by the earliest possible date. The Sales department will probably need further copies by the end of February, so the best possible schedule should be made." Columbia University Press Records, Box 175, Folder Okubo, Mine: Citizen 13660, Columbia University Rare Book and Manuscript Library.

¹²⁹ An Italian publishing house, Casa Editrice Valentino Bompiana and C., had interest in publishing a translation in December 1946, but they do not end up printing it. Columbia would have approved it, but Casa Editrice decided that "it cannot fit in our editorial program" in a letter dated May 5, 1947. Columbia University Press Records, Box 175, Folder Okubo, Mine: Citizen 13660, Columbia University Rare Book and Manuscript Library.

¹³⁰ A Columbia letter indicates that they would print a Japanese translation, but when the press writes to Hokubei Shimpo to ask for an update, managing editor Takeshi Haga replies on June 25, 1947 to say that "for sometime we have been discussing about that and finally we came to the conclusion that we would not undertake it at this time." Columbia University Press Records, Box 175, Folder Okubo, Mine: Citizen 13660, Columbia University Rare Book and Manuscript Library.

¹³¹ An October 17, 1946 letter from Fon W. Boardman, Jr. (Sales Promotion Manager) to Far East Photo Review (in New York City) says, "You might be interested to know that the book has been very favorably reviewed all over the country in such places as the New York Times and Herald Tribune Book Reviews and the Saturday Review of Literature. Harold Ickes devoted his whole column to it on September 23." Columbia University Press Records, Box 175, Folder Okubo, Mine: Citizen 13660, Columbia University

Defender, a popular African American newspaper, also published a review.¹³² Scholarly outlets like the *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, the *Social Service Review*, the *American Journal of Sociology*, and *Pacific Affairs* all published reviews in 1947.¹³³

Mainstream press reviews often praise the book for two qualities: its objectivity and its good-spirited humor.¹³⁴ Editor of *The Nation*, Carey McWilliams, says that the book is “particularly notable for its wit, sharpness of observation, objectivity, and generally unsentimental attitude,” regarding it as a record of the facts of internment.¹³⁵

M. Margaret Anderson’s *New York Times* review calls *Citizen 13660* “remarkably objective and vivid and even humorous,” and her statement epitomizes reactions to the book.¹³⁶ However, at least one reviewer criticized the perceived “good spirits” and lack of sorrow.¹³⁷ Constantine Panunzio calls the book “simple...direct and matter of fact”

before speculating that “had the artist-author, without blinking at reality, depicted also the

Rare Book and Manuscript Library; Ralph M. Williams, “Pictorial Record of Internees in Relocation Camps,” review of *Citizen 13660*, by Miné Okubo, *Chicago Daily Tribune*, September 22, 1946, G12.

¹³² Jack Conroy, “Off the Book Shelf,” review of *Citizen 13660*, by Miné Okubo, *The Chicago Defender*, October 5, 1946, 15.

¹³³ Constantine Panunzio, “Okubo, Miné. *Citizen 13660*,” review of *Citizen 13660*, by Miné Okubo, *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 249 (January 1947): 209; E.A., “*Citizen 13660* by Miné Okubo,” review of *Citizen 13660*, by Miné Okubo, *Social Service Review* 21.2 (June 1947): 278-9; Setsuko Matsunaga Nishi, “*Citizen 13660* by Miné Okubo,” review of *Citizen 13660*, by Miné Okubo, *American Journal of Sociology* 52.5 (March 1947): 463-4; Alice M. Togo, “*Citizen 13660* by Miné Okubo,” review of *Citizen 13660*, by Miné Okubo, *Pacific Affairs* 20.1 (March 1947): 122.

¹³⁴ Heather Fryer points out three aspects of the reviews: praise of Okubo’s objectivity, interest in Okubo’s ethnicity as part of her work, and the erasure of the role the federal government played in internment. See “Miné Okubo’s War: *Citizen 13660*’s Attack on Government Propaganda,” *Miné Okubo: Following Her Own Road*, Ed. Greg Robinson and Elena Tajima Creef (Seattle, WA: University of Washington Press, 2008), 82-98 (92-4).

¹³⁵ Quotes for Advance Comments on “*Citizen 13660*” by Mine Okubo (Published by Columbia University Press, September 20, 1946), Box 175, folder “Okubo, Mine: *Citizen 13660*,” Columbia University Press Records, Columbia University Rare Book and Manuscript Library. For more on McWilliams’s politics and activism, see Colleen Lye’s *America’s Asia: Racial Form and American Literature, 1893-1945* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2005), 154.

¹³⁶ M. Margaret Anderson, “Concentration Camp Borders, Strictly American Plan,” review of *Citizen 13660*, by Miné Okubo, *New York Times*, September 22, 1946, BR4.

¹³⁷ Ralph M. Williams’s review in the *Chicago Daily Tribune* (“Pictorial Record”) states that “the discomforts and the tragedies that befell people of her race failed to shake her good spirits” (G12).

total sorrow of ‘the other half,’ her book would have been great art.”¹³⁸

On the other hand, one review registers the text’s “personal” characteristics and emotions – that reviewer was herself interned.¹³⁹ In a 1947 review from the *American Journal of Sociology*, Setsuko Matsunaga Nishi writes,

Because the book is entertaining, *Citizen 13660* undoubtedly will serve an important propaganda function to a public that perhaps would be more comfortable to forget the treatment of the Japanese-Americans during the war. For all but the most careful reader, the very facile nature of the book detracts from the deep subjective meaning of the drawings. If the reader were to verbalize the significance of some of the illustrations, he might be surprised at the bitter irony. It seems unlikely that the author intended to be funny. ... What is not evident to most readers is the disillusioning torment that evacuation meant to them [internees]. *Citizen 13660* is an unusual personal document, a valuable supplement to the important research that the evacuation has stimulated.¹⁴⁰

The reviewer who perhaps best comprehends the losses of internment rendered in Okubo’s work is one who intimately experienced them.¹⁴¹ Nishi’s astute comment about “careful [reading]” demonstrates the importance of reading practices here. The text’s genre – “the very facile nature of the book” – invites a particular type of reading practice,

¹³⁸ Panunzio, “Okubo, Miné,” 209.

¹³⁹ Her obituary notes that she was interned. Greg Robinson and Barbara Katz Rothman, “Setsuko Matsunaga Nishi, Scholar of Asian American Studies, Dies at 91,” *The Rafu Shimpo*, November 28, 2012, <http://www.rafu.com/2012/11/setsuko-matsunaga-nishi-scholar-of-asian-american-studies-dies-at-91/>

¹⁴⁰ Nishi, “*Citizen 13660* by Miné Okubo,” 464.

¹⁴¹ In her review, Alice M. Togo writes that “since the brief text does not attempt to argue the ethics of the forced evacuation and confinement of American citizens, the book may appear to be no more than a rather impersonal chronicle of events. But her sketches suggest that Miss Okubo was not unaware of the social processes operating in the camps and of their effects on individuals. She draws no conclusions for her reader, but any thoughtful person examining her drawings of the disorganized classrooms, the crowded living quarters which offer no privacy, and the institutionalized mess halls can form his own judgment.” “*Citizen 13660* by Miné Okubo,” 122.

one that takes the drawings on face value, accepts their depictions without further interpretive work. The visual allows for skimming over complex and varied meaning, as Nishi argues that to “verbalize the significance of some of the illustrations” would alter the interpretation from good humor to “bitter irony” – or even allow for both at once.¹⁴²

Even if most reviewers did not comprehend the larger emotional range of Japanese American experience, they often mention that the text affected them. Radio personality H.V. Kaltenborn says that “the illustrations are delightful but the book leaves me with a sense of shame...,” and Pearl S. Buck says that “the wry pictures and the scanty words make the reader laugh – and if he is an American too – sometimes blush.”¹⁴³ Harold Ickes’s barely addresses Okubo’s book, mostly using it as a jumping off point for a damning indictment of internment, but he concludes his tour de force by stating that “this whole episode was one in which we can take no pride. To understand just what we did to many thousands of our fellow Americans we should read “Citizen 13660.””¹⁴⁴ Like other reviewers, Ickes does not offer his own emotional reaction; he only prescribes one – stating elsewhere that internment was an act that “we [Americans] ought properly to be ashamed” – or negates one (“we can take *no* pride”). There is an indistinct emotional vocabulary in these moments as reviewers can only allude to the vastly complex way that the text affects them.

¹⁴² Okubo actually faced backlash from the Japanese American community for the book. Greg Robinson writes that “the Japanese American press, which had devoted extensive coverage to Okubo’s show and other achievements, was less unanimously positive about her book...two radical New York-based English-language journals, the *Nisei Weekender* and the Japanese American Committee for Democracy *Newsletter*, berated Okubo for soft-pedaling the hardships of evacuation and its impact on the inmates. Mary Ikeda, a former inmate, commented in the latter, ‘Despite the comprehensive drawings and text material, however, we feel that too much was left unsaid.’” *After Camp*, 82.

¹⁴³ “Quotes for Advance Comments on ‘Citizen 13660’ by Mine Okubo (Published by Columbia University Press, September 20, 1946)”, Box 175, folder “Okubo, Mine: Citizen 13660,” Columbia University Press Records, Columbia University Rare Book and Manuscript Library.

¹⁴⁴ Harold L. Ickes, “Man to Man,” *Altoona Mirror*, September 23, 1946, 1.

How, though, does Okubo's text produce these "many varied, and sometimes contradictory, meanings"?¹⁴⁵ I argue that *Citizen 13660* contains an aesthetic inscrutability that plays on the "inscrutable Oriental" stereotype. Predominant cultural modes rendered Asian American subjects as flat – unrecognizable as fully-realized human beings – or portray their motives and interiority as unknowable and unreadable.¹⁴⁶ Monica Chiu points out that this stereotype of inscrutability – referring to the inability of Westerns to "read their [Asian subjects'] facial articulations" – marks Asian Americans as people to be both "looked at and overlooked."¹⁴⁷ By deploying this trope common to mainstream depictions of Asian Americans, Okubo works her representations into the constrained interpretative frames afforded to Japanese Americans by mainstream culture while simultaneously expanding those frames, using them to make multiple possibilities of meaning. A novel use of genre – the combination of illustration and text – allows her to familiarize a non-Japanese American audience with the racialized bodies of Japanese Americans. Even though she works against the stereotype of inscrutability, the spatial situation of bodies, subjects' facial expressions, and other representations often remain enigmatic, and the text almost never clarifies the illustrations. As the reception history shows, this ambiguity hinders clear emotional interpretation. But the way that depictions of grief – even grief beyond the bounds of understandability – affects readers becomes a potent political tool to address the injustices of internment and prevent future wrongs, as seen in the feeling Okubo's book engenders. Her work both inhabits and estranges

¹⁴⁵ Robinson, *After Camp*, 79.

¹⁴⁶ Elaine Kim writes about the one-dimensional nature of many early to mid-twentieth century depictions of Asian Americans, as characters were often reduced to stereotypes like the submissive, comic servant or the brutish fiend. "Images of Asians in Anglo-American Literature," *Asian American Literature: An Introduction to the Writings and Their Social Context* (Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 1982), 3-22.

¹⁴⁷ Monica Chiu, *Scrutinized!: Surveillance in Asian North American Literature* (Honolulu, HI: University of Hawai'i Press, 2014), 118 and 9.

dominate discourse with a strategic unreadability, one that unsettles the reader, creating affective registers that allow for reinterpretations of internment (seeing it as shameful, for example).

The collapsing of categories throughout Okubo's text disrupts representational paradigms of Japanese American subjectivity, experience, and emotion, creating different affective modes that alter the terms of perception. Take, for example, Okubo's presentation of camp attire. Internees were limited in what they could bring to camp, and they relied on government-issued clothing or ordered clothing from limited catalog choices.¹⁴⁸ However, Okubo notes that "many substitutions" arrived instead of the ordered clothing (*Citizen* 152). The accompanying drawing shows Okubo wearing an oversized jacket that overwhelms her frame. Huge boots sit nearby. The image seemingly invites a comical reaction due to the absurdity of the huge jacket on a small woman, augmented by the huge boots waiting to fit her oddly disproportionate feet. However, we can also read this drawing as resisting light-heartedness. Her expression seems to convey dismay as the long-awaited clothing turns out to be a disappointment. By expressing her sadness, she shows the sorrows that make up so much of camp experience. The displeasure shown here opens up the range of emotional expressions available to Japanese Americans, who were mostly expected to accept their circumstances: it demonstrates the way that loss – of personal autonomy, of freedom, etc. – intrudes on everyday camp life. However, this reading starkly contrasts with the comic elements of the drawing. In this instance, comedy and tragedy collapse upon one another, inextricably tangled. The text offers no hints that would help the reader decipher the layered feelings

¹⁴⁸ For more on the politics of clothing during the war, see *Wearing Propoganda: Textiles on the Home Front in Japan, Britain, and the United States, 1931-1945*, Ed. Jacqueline M. Atkins (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2005).

inherent to the drawing or to make sense of the disturbing disruption of standard categories. This aesthetic points us to what lies outside the frame – the excess emotion that dominant culture does not recognize or sanction.

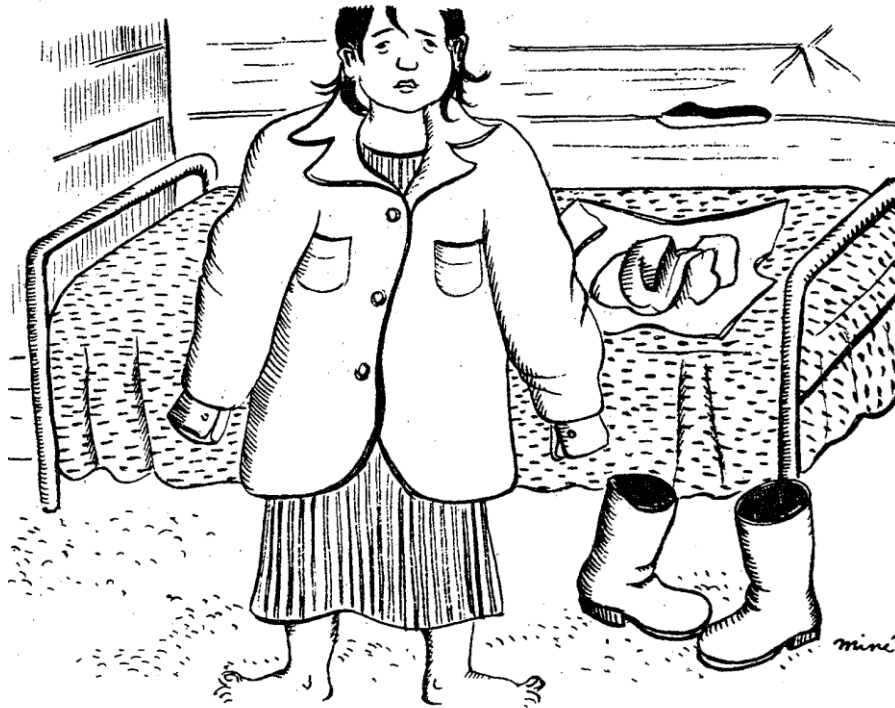


Figure 3: Miné Okubo, *Citizen 13660*, 152.

The juxtaposition of text and image highlights different systems of knowledge as the reader deals with both the seen and the spoken – and, implicitly, the unseen and unspoken. Okubo does not seem to have much of a “voice” in the writing – it reads as simple, impersonal descriptions. This kind of personal silence fits into a mode that scholars of Asian American literature like King-Kok Cheung and Patti Duncan have identified, one where speech is not always a liberatory force. Duncan in particular argues that internment texts by authors like Joy Kogawa and Mitsuye Yamada use “both speech

and silence simultaneously” to deconstruct narratives about internment.¹⁴⁹ But this text’s visual elements allow emotion to linger in the bodies and especially the faces of the internees. Caroline Chung Simpson argues that Japanese American bodies in this text demonstrate the “hidden power of memory that once experienced never could be completely effaced even if it is rendered unrecognizable through subsequent acts of remembrance” and that the text “draws its power from its repeated foreclosure of representation.”¹⁵⁰ However, the multivalenced representations do not seem to block expression – as Vivian Fumiko Chin writes, we can recognize many emotions like sadness, anger, and displeasure through Okubo’s self-representations – but rather the clear interpretation of such representations.¹⁵¹ The external trace of emotions in the illustrations, like facial expressions and especially tears, provides a striking contrast to the lack of emotional language. This emphasis on external features challenges representational norms, showing that exterior appearance can demonstrate complex emotion, even if that exact emotion is not entirely legible.

The reviews often divest the book of loss, showing the ways that Japanese American grief remains largely illegible to the greater American public at this time. But by simultaneously praising the documentary quality of the drawings and the comic elements (amongst the tragic circumstances of internment), they illustrate the fundamental ambiguity of the text, the way it registers incongruously. The seemingly odd

¹⁴⁹ Patti Duncan, *Tell This Silence: Asian American Women Writers and the Politics of Speech* (Iowa City, IA: University of Iowa Press, 2004), 103; King-Kok Cheung, *Articulate Silences: Hisaye Yamamoto, Maxine Hong Kingston, Joy Kogawa* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1993).

¹⁵⁰ Caroline Chung Simpson, *An Absent Presence: Japanese Americans in Postwar American Culture, 1945-1960* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2001), 27-8.

¹⁵¹ Vivian Fumiko Chin, “Gestures of Noncompliance: Resisting, Inventing, and Enduring in *Citizen 13660*,” *Miné Okubo: Following Her Own Road*, Ed. Greg Robinson and Elena Tajima Creff (Seattle, WA: University of Washington Press, 2008), 70.

emphasis on humor perhaps comes from the generic expectations of a “picture book.”¹⁵²

It resembles a children’s book, inviting lighter interpretations, and comics, thus inscribing a generic expectation for humor.¹⁵³ Thus, the genre itself creates reading practices that Okubo uses to her advantage – the genre seems rather innocuous and lighthearted, taming fears about overt political statement.

Contemporary critics often refer to *Citizen 13660* as a graphic memoir, but this term did not exist in 1946. The Oxford English Dictionary dates the term “graphic novel” at 1978, and the moniker was made popular with 1980s publications like *Watchmen* – comic books meant for adult readers.¹⁵⁴ So Okubo’s text is important not only for its status within internment literature but also for the history of graphic texts generally. Western antecedents include comic books, newspaper comic strips, and picture books, and Kimberly L. Phillips discussed the influence of such forms, as well as Japanese manga, on Okubo.¹⁵⁵ In the 1940s, readers would associate illustrated texts with children, although comic strips especially also had adult readers.¹⁵⁶ A similar illustrated narrative published in this time period was Japanese immigrant Taro Yashima’s *The New Sun*, a 1943 account of his time in a Japanese prison, which was warmly reviewed in the *New*

¹⁵² In “Pictorial Record,” Williams of the *Chicago Daily Tribune* refers to it as such (G12). Other reviews often do not have a set term for it – they usually just describe it.

¹⁵³ In an interview, Okubo herself reflected on the book’s “humor,” saying “After being uprooted, everything seemed ridiculous, insane, and stupid. . . . We had to sing ‘God Bless America’ many times with a flag. Guards all around with shot guns, you’re not going to walk out. I mean. . . . what could you do? So many crazy things happened in the camp. So the joke and humor [she] saw in the camp was not in a joyful sense, but ridiculous and insane.” However, this comment was printed decades after the initial publication, so the clarification of tone does not affect readers of the initial publication. *Beyond Words: Images from America’s Concentration Camps*, Ed. Deborah Gesensway and Mindy Roseman (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1987), 71.

¹⁵⁴ Will Eisner coined the term “graphic novel.” “Graphic novel,” *Oxford English Dictionary*, 2nd ed., s.v. For more on the rise of the “graphic novel,” see Roger Sabin’s *Comics, Comix and Graphic Novels: A History of Comic Art* (London: Phaidon, 1996), 165.

¹⁵⁵ Kimberley L. Phillips, “To Keep a Record of Life: Miné Okubo’s Autographic *Manga* and Wartime History,” *Miné Okubo: Following Her Own Road*, Ed. Greg Robinson and Elena Tajima Creef (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2008), 99-110.

¹⁵⁶ Sabin, *Comics*, 28 and 37.

York Times.¹⁵⁷ However, Okubo's work differs from Yashima's in that her drawings are more realistic – the figures in *The New Sun* are abstract and faceless, and they do not make the reader engage with verisimilitudinous bodily expression. In fact, Okubo's content often heightens the intimate mimesis of her drawings, as she displays bodies in private situations, like nude women in bathrooms (*Citizen 72* and *74-7*). Greg Robinson argues that “it was of central importance to Okubo to humanize herself and other Nisei, in order to underline their acceptability as new neighbors to a largely Caucasian audience,” and to smooth the path to assimilation.¹⁵⁸

Elena Creef notes that internment was, in many ways, literally invisible to Americans “given the scarcity of photographic evidence that was allowed to circulate during and immediately after the war.”¹⁵⁹ This invisibility resonated ironically with the media coverage of Japanese Americans during the war that frequently focused on the visual: one main reason for discrimination against Japanese Americans was that they *looked* like the enemy.¹⁶⁰ Okubo's drawings circulated almost in conjunction with “guides” on how to “read” and differentiate between different Asian American peoples, such as an infamous *Life* magazine article on how to tell Japanese people from Chinese people.¹⁶¹ Using pictures with clearly marked visual cues – and including a reporter wearing a badge indicating his Chinese background, literally making his ethnicity readable – the article aimed to make sure that the proper people were discriminated

¹⁵⁷ Christopher Lazare, “Japanese Liberal,” review of *The New Sun*, by Taro Yashima, *The New York Times* November 21, 1943, BR6. In *After Camp*, Greg Robinson points out that *Citizen 13660* would certainly have reminded readers of this book (79).

¹⁵⁸ Robinson, *After Camp*, 84.

¹⁵⁹ Elena Tajima Creef, *Imaging Japanese America: The Visual Construction of Citizenship, Nation, and the Body* (New York: New York University Press, 2004), 17.

¹⁶⁰ In “Miné Okubo's War,” Heather Fryer discusses Okubo's reaction to government propaganda at length, though she focuses on propagandistic movies.

¹⁶¹ “How to Tell Japs from Chinese,” *Life*, December 22, 1941, 81-2.

against. Other war propaganda displayed overt exaggerations of race. War posters showed animalistic caricatures of Japanese soldiers and read “This is What the Enemy Looks Like.”¹⁶² A 1942 *Fortune* magazine article purported to give insight into the Japanese people by perpetuating caricatures, stereotypes, and generalizations – including large illustrations of soldiers and geisha with overstated features.¹⁶³ Defined simply by outward appearance, these posters made it easy to draw connections between the enemy and anyone who looked like him. These archetypes frame the circulation of Japanese American expression in mainstream discourse and constrain the types of expression possible.

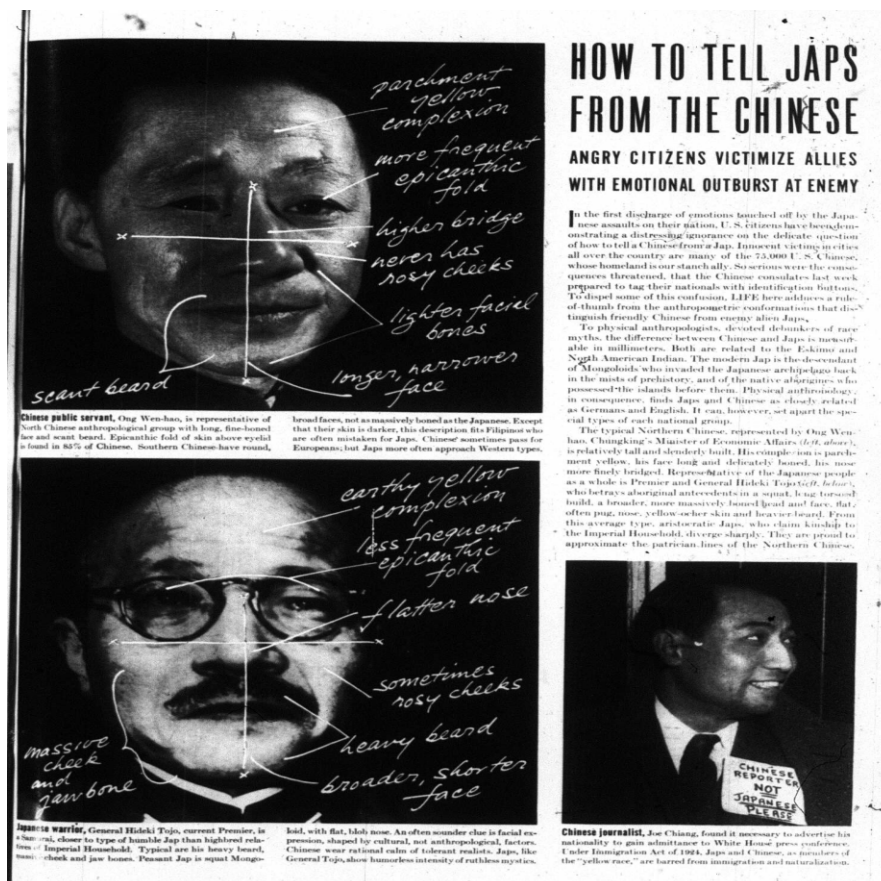


Figure 4: *Life*, December 22, 1941, 81.

¹⁶² Various war posters can be seen in *Life*, December 21, 1942, 54-7.

¹⁶³ “The Japanese,” *Fortune*, February 1942, 52-3.

Okubo addresses notions of uniformity in her remarks on clothing. She states that “everyone was dressed alike, because of the catalog orders and the G.I. clothes,” and the accompanying image shows Okubo (far right) and two other women wearing the exact same shirt (*Citizen* 153). Min Hyoung Song points out that this image plays on ideas of racial uniformity, the idea that Japanese Americans are all the same, in that none of the women here could be mistaken for one another.¹⁶⁴ Okubo has relaxed hands on her hips, a seemingly casual reaction (or perhaps one of irritation). However, her face, along with the other women, remains unreadable. Are they silently sizing each other up? Is the middle woman trying to ignore the identical clothing? Are they dismayed at this fashion faux pas? The other people in the drawing give no hints, as the man on the far right has a seemingly neutral expression, and the other man faces away from the reader. The spatial arrangement is notably odd – none of the people face one another, instead looking in different directions. This disjointed gaze appears in many drawings, as the camp community’s attention is often drawn in different directions. Okubo further fractures uniformity, leaving the reader to wonder about the unknown objects of attention. She constructs Japanese American subjectivity around an objectless gaze; that is, the reader sees only the external gesture, not the objects of desire or loss that inform our understanding of his or her interiority.¹⁶⁵ The scope of loss (living space, friends, community, etc.) is too much to depict, even intangible (freedom, for example) and unspeakable – it is beyond the scope of representational capacities at this time.

¹⁶⁴Min Hyoung Song, “Looking Back: Diasporic Longing in *Citizen 13660* and *Persepolis*,” *Ethnic Life Writing and Histories: Genres, Performance, and Culture*, Ed. Rocío G. Davis and Sâmi Ludwig (Piscataway, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 2007): 114-131 (118-9).

¹⁶⁵ I am influenced here by Kandice Chuh’s notion of Asian American studies as a “subjectless discourse”; that is, how the Asian American subject is always shifting in “a state of becoming and undoing in the same moment” as his subjectivity is always constructed “situationally.” *Imagine Otherwise: on Asian Americanist Critique* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2003), 8-10.



Figure 5: Miné Okubo, *Citizen 13660*, 153.

The lack of clothing options (and subsequent uniformity) is a common subject in Japanese American discussions of internment, and comparing Okubo's depiction with another visual rendering in *Topaz* illustrates the unique way her drawings engage the losses of internment. A cartoon strip regularly featured in early editions of the *Topaz Times*, the internee-run camp newspaper, addresses the clothing issues on October 21, 1942.¹⁶⁶ Bennie Nobori's "Jankee" follows Jankee, an impish, high-spirited boy who gallivants around camp. In this installment, Jankee receives his new clothes from the government. Three panels show him excitedly putting on his outfit, a suit with striped pants, a cravat, and a hat that resembles Uncle Sam's ensemble. When Jankee ventures out, he encounters three other men wearing the exact same outfit. Two are clearly different people, as the one on the far left has distinctly different facial features and the one on the far right has a long beard. However, Jankee and another boy in the middle are

¹⁶⁶ Bennie Norobi, "Jankee," *Topaz Times*, October 21, 1942, 4.

nearly indistinguishable. To poke fun at the similarity of their appearance, Jankee responds to the other boy's greeting of "Hi Jankee!" with a smile and a playful reply: "What's Doin' 'Jank'?" The cartoon has a good-humored tone, displaying a playful version of "shikata ga nai," a Japanese saying meaning "it cannot be helped" that was used as a way of coping with internment. Jankee acknowledges his lost individuality with a smile and a proactive joke that connects him to the others. The boys share an outfit and now a moniker, linking them more closely than before.

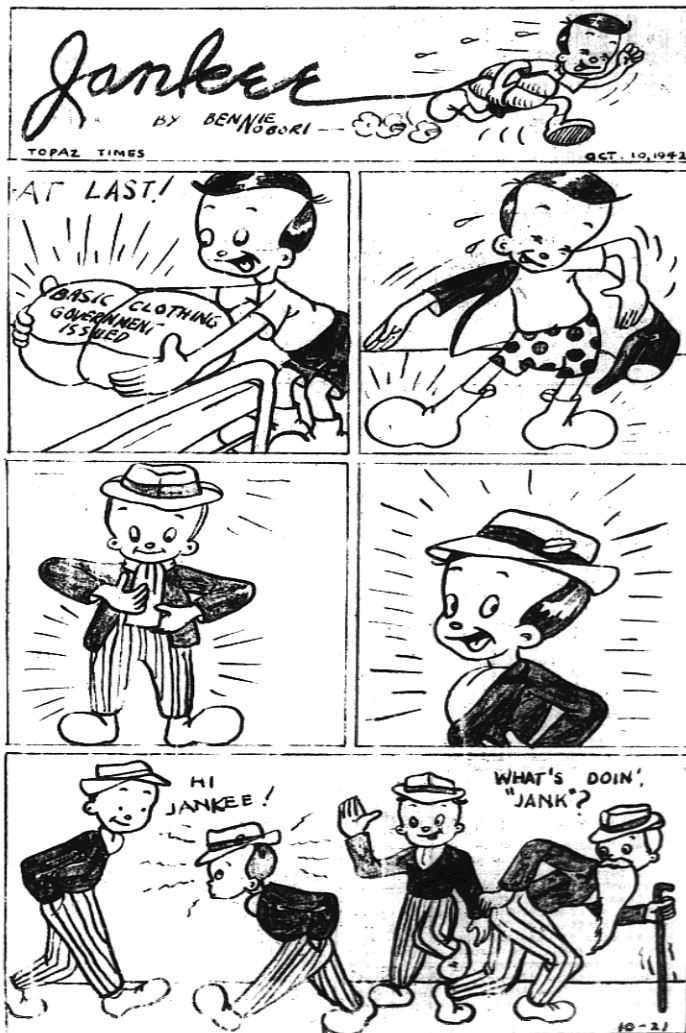


Figure 6: *Topaz Times*, October 21, 1942, 4.

Furthermore, this specific uniform signals inclusion in a particular community. Clad in Uncle Sam's apparel, the men resemble and even represent this emblem of American patriotism. Jankee's name – an amalgamation of Japanese and Yankee – is particularly apt at this moment. Jankee and the others are incorporated into the American community through their clothing, covering their racialized bodies with American garb. While the camps offered Americanization classes for the internees to help them assimilate into mainstream America, this early cartoon illustrates how the Americanization process in Topaz does not just operate internally, in the minds and hearts of the internees, but also must be expressed outwardly – a precursor to the later loyalty oaths. Published in the main camp media outlet, the cartoon prescribes an attitude toward uniformity: accept it, use it as a community builder, and ultimately become part of a uniform American community.¹⁶⁷

While clothing may act as a cover for racialized bodies, it is important to note that the racialized bodies in “Jankee” are quite different than those circulating in mainstream media. Norobi counters anti-Japanese propaganda, which amplifies racial characteristics to the point of parody, by toning down markers of foreignness. Jankee is not immediately recognizable as Japanese American, but of course he is. While Jankee does not have overtly Japanese features, he occasionally interacts with characters who display clearer indicators of racial identity. For example, he has a conversation about proper procedure in a fire with another boy who has large buck teeth.¹⁶⁸ According to historian John

¹⁶⁷ It must be noted that the camp newspapers were subject to War Relocation Authority censorship, as Catherine A. Luther and Takeya Mizuno note in, respectively, “Reflections of Cultural Identities in Conflict: Japanese American Internment Camp Newspapers during World War II,” *Journalism History* 29, no. 2 (Summer 2003): 69-81 and “Journalism Under Military Guards and Searchlights: Newspaper Censorship at Japanese American Assembly Camps during World War II,” *Journalism History* 29, no. 3 (Fall 2003): 98-106.

¹⁶⁸ Bennie Norobi, “Jankee,” *Topaz Times*, November 7, 1942, 4.

Howard, buck teeth and large glasses often mark representations of Japanese ethnicity in this time period.¹⁶⁹ However, the protagonist, who is in many more frames than the few characters who are more ostensibly racially marked, does not display these features. As such, it may have been easier for Caucasian readers to accept Japanese Americans as represented by Jankee, a more legible representation of ethnicity.¹⁷⁰ As the art editor of the *Topaz Times* for some time – almost undoubtedly when this cartoon ran – Okubo would have been familiar with “Jankee,” and it likely informed her very different representations in *Trek* and *Citizen 13660*.¹⁷¹

Okubo’s version, as noted above, counters this (understandable) attempt to minimize internment hurts. The blouse she wears is the one she dons through the entire text, and its pattern resembles both barbed wire and crosses. The barbed wire obviously evokes the enclosure of the camps, and on clothing, it hems in the individual body, closing up individuality.¹⁷² The crosses, on the other hand, allude to a Christian tradition of sacrifice. The dual (and dueling) messages mean that we cannot read the garment as just a symbol of resistance (by representing imprisonment) or one of acquiescence (internment as a sacrifice). Instead, the shirt represents the blurred meaning of internment, the hazy, constantly changing relation between Japanese Americans and dominant culture. Stella Oh argues that such inconsistency throughout Okubo’s text

¹⁶⁹ John Howard, *Concentration Camps on the Home Front: Japanese Americans in the House of Jim Crow*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008), 157.

¹⁷⁰ Amy Shirong Lu conducted a study on racial perception and demonstrates that Caucasian viewers often read anime characters intended to be Asian as Caucasian. “What Race Do They Represent and Does Mine Have Anything to Do with It?: Perceived Racial Categories of Anime Characters,” *Animation: An Interdisciplinary Journal* 4, no. 2 (2009): 169-190.

¹⁷¹ Okubo’s drawings in *Trek*, a literary magazine in Topaz that she helped organize, are quite different than “Jankee.” Similar to her drawings in *Citizen 13660*, the characters often have distinctly Japanese features.

¹⁷² Song writes that “the patterns might point to a particularly interesting duality of heterogeneous designs and uniform placement that captures the willed blindness of state knowledge to the complexity of the bodies it has consigned to imprisonment.” “Looking Back,” 120.

illustrates the inconsistencies of U.S. legal policies and theories of citizenship.¹⁷³ With such indeterminate boundaries, emotion also becomes obscured, as we see with the women in the illustration who deal with their loss of individuality. If the means of loss cannot be properly defined – if it moves along a spectrum of willing sacrifice to violent separation – the meaning of grief changes continuously. Okubo employs such slippery signage to point out the way dominant culture itself renders grief inscrutable, instead of the raced body hindering readability.

Although *Citizen 13660* mostly focuses on the common conditions of camp like housing conditions, meal lines, and the Utah desert weather, these snapshots of standard Topaz fare are occasionally interrupted by singular events that bring the community together. Two such events are camp-wide memorial services, a relative rarity as most funeral services at camp, like those outside, were not major, public events. The fact that Okubo includes two memorials in *Citizen 13660* invites comparison between them. The men they honor have few similarities: they died under uncommon yet dissimilar circumstances, and the community reaction to their deaths is quite different – both as depicted by Okubo and as seen in other reports of these events. While Okubo does not state the man's name, the first memorial honored Pfc. Isao Tsuno, a Japanese American soldier (I discovered via archival records of the *Topaz Times* that the only person who had a camp-wide memorial between September 1942 and April 1943 was Tsuno). The second memorial mourns James Hatsuki Wakasa, an Issei man shot by a M.P. at Topaz. By contrasting Okubo's representations of these memorials, we may further see the way

¹⁷³ Stella Oh, "Paradoxes of Citizenship: Re-Viewing the Japanese American Internment in Miné Okubo's *Citizen 13660*," *Miné Okubo: Following Her Own Road*, Ed. Greg Robinson and Elena Tajima Creff (Seattle, WA: University of Washington Press, 2008), 146.

that she structures Japanese American emotional expression around scenes of mourning.

In early November of 1942, Topaz held its “first mass gathering”: “a memorial service to honor a Japanese American soldier who died while in service” in which “all faiths were represented, and former members of the American Legion also participated” (*Citizen* 168). Holding a memorial service as the first camp-wide gathering clearly signals the role that loss can play in community formation, and this commemoration modeled – in a none-too-subtle way – which losses should be mourned. Of course, all the internees in Topaz had various reasons to mourn due to their forcible separation from home and family members, but the Tsuno memorial only sanctions feelings of loss and grief aligned with nationalist interests. Other reasons for mourning are left unspoken.

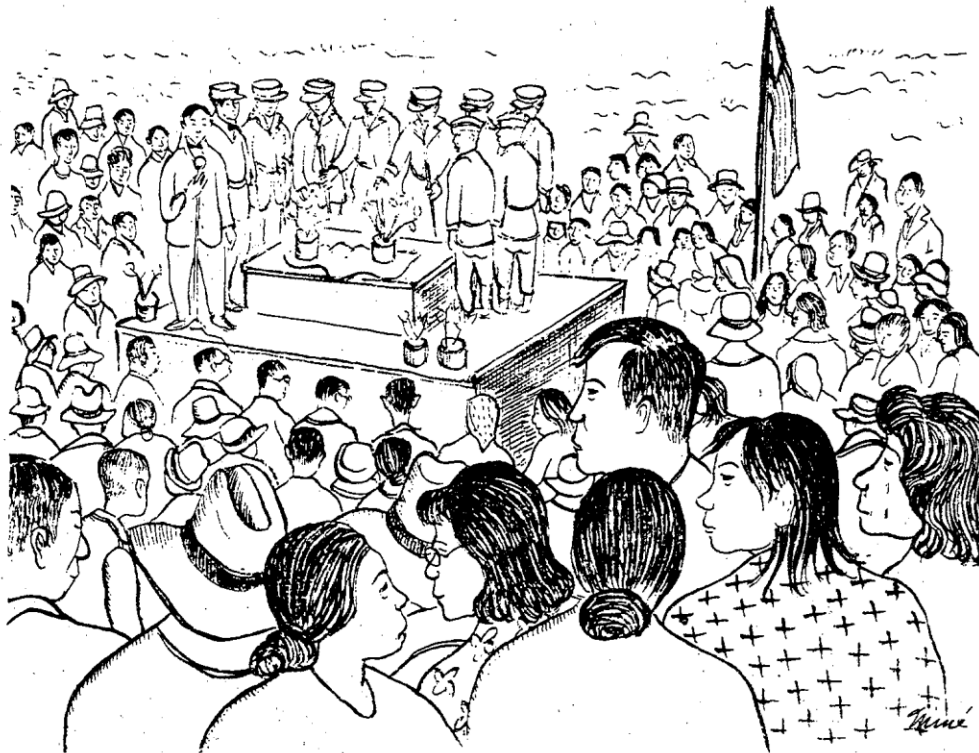


Figure 7: Miné Okubo, *Citizen* 13660, 168.

And yet, the putative consolation that inclusion in an American community is intended to achieve collides with unmistakable elements of discrimination. Okubo states that the soldier died “while in service,” but she does not indicate that it occurred in combat or overseas. Indeed, Pfc. Isao Tsuno, died at Fort Snelling in Minnesota.¹⁷⁴ In 1942, Japanese American soldiers were not cleared for combat duty. Consequently, heroism that would have indicated a clear inclusion in national community was unavailable to Japanese Americans at this time. Furthermore, Okubo notes that “all faiths” were represented in the memorial service – a note of inclusion – but in the same sentences states that the American Legion was also present. This juxtaposition could only have been ironic, since during the war, the national American Legion was staunchly anti-Japanese American – as many Americans would have known.¹⁷⁵ Thus, this “mass gathering” shows the fissures in the American community.

While the language indicate the tension between the larger American community and the Japanese American community, the drawing, at least ostensibly, signals unity. The crowd gathers around a small stage, where men in uniform stand solemnly around what appears to be a coffin with flowers on it. But the people, especially near the back of the crowd, seem indifferent. One woman cries, but the rest seem relatively uninterested. This lack of rapt attention begs the question of why the memorial was held and if the community itself actually called for such a mass gathering for one death. Tsuno’s family lived in Topaz, so holding a memorial there makes sense; however, other deaths occurred

¹⁷⁴ “Plan [sic] Tribute for Soldier,” *Topaz Times*, November 4, 1942, 3.

¹⁷⁵ The group’s stance was widely known. Matthew M. Briones refers to the group as one of several “rabid anti-Asian” groups. *Jim and Jap Crow: A Cultural History of 1940s Interracial America* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2012), 52.

within the camp and did not call for such large-scale memorialization.¹⁷⁶ Tsuno's rare, at this time, status as a Japanese American soldier seems to have prompted the display of mourning. Given how this kind of event can function as part of the Americanization process, it seems that this memorial prescriptively redirects feelings of grief away from dangerous lost objects – the losses caused by unjust and potentially unlawful action by the U.S. government.¹⁷⁷

Okubo, again wearing the patterned shirt, stands in the forefront of the drawing, at the back of the crowd, but closest to the reader. She exists both within the crowd and outside it. This liminal position allows her to observe the crowd, as the reader does, but also shows her place in the group, emphasizing that while Okubo often watches others, she is not the same kind of voyeur as the reader. Okubo claims her inclusion – she may distance herself from the experience of camp by observing it and representing it, but her surveillance has a much different political valence. It forces the reader to question this mourning group and how he or she fits into it – is this a loss that would be mourned nationally? Or is it only worthy of mourning in this context? Does the reader affectively identify with this situation or not? Okubo uses her dual role as participant and observer to raise these questions. However, the flag standing parallel to Okubo offers a more definitive – and pessimistic – response. Rather than flying high, over the land of the free and the brave, it droops, lackluster and sad, over the imprisoned Japanese Americans. This flag stands as an ironic symbol, denoting the violation of citizens' rights and of basic American principles right in the middle of this mournful celebration of America. The flag

¹⁷⁶ The family is mentioned in Iwao Kawakami, "Memorial Service," *Topaz Times*, November 6, 1942, 1.

¹⁷⁷ Several Supreme Court cases upheld the constitutionality of various laws linked to the internment of enemy aliens. *Hirabayashi v. United States*, 320 U.S. 81 (1943); *Yasui v. United States*, 320 U.S. 115 (1943); and *Korematsu v. United States*, 323 U.S. 214 (1944).

itself becomes an object of loss, but one that cannot be publicly identified as such.

The majority of the crowd glances around in different directions – some at the spectacle in front of them, some watching others react to it, some in an entirely different direction. While the memorial is meant to focus the community's grief by giving it an appropriate object to mourn, the crowd mostly seems distracted, neither compelled nor distressed by this lost object, although one woman does cry. In Okubo's representation of the memorial, we return to the objectless gaze. The people in the crowd look in many different directions instead of concentrating on the object of loss in front of them. This moment of loss evokes the other losses of internment. However, as the people are left unable to identify their grief, bereavement exceeds the sanctioned emotional frames and remains inscrutable to readers.

Comparing this memorial to the one held for James Wakasa a few months later illustrates the varied function of inscrutability. On April 11, 1943, an armed sentry shot and killed James Hatsuki Wakasa, a bachelor Issei man. The guard claimed Wakasa was trying to crawl under the fence and that several warnings were shouted prior to the shooting. However, other sources state that he was merely walking close to the fence, not trying to crawl under it. According to historian Sandra C. Taylor, it was virtually impossible that Wakasa could have heard any warning due to the winds around Topaz and the distance between him and the guard.¹⁷⁸ Wakasa's death led to protests and concerns about internee safety, but, as Taylor notes, they were relatively mild, especially compared to the tenser atmospheres of camps like Manzanar and Tule Lake.¹⁷⁹

In the outside press, it was reported it as an escape attempt. The local paper for

¹⁷⁸Sandra C. Taylor offers a good synopsis of the event. See *Jewel of the Desert: Japanese American Internment at Topaz* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1993), 136-47.

¹⁷⁹ Taylor, *Jewel of the Desert*, 146.

the town nearest Topaz, the *Millard County Chronicle*, reported that Wakasa was “attempting to crawl through the fence surrounding the residential area.”¹⁸⁰ The Associated Press, repeating a statement from the Office of War Information, stated that Wakasa “was shot and killed by military police...while attempting to flee the relocation center at Topaz, Utah.”¹⁸¹ When first reported, the *Topaz Times* actually placed the headline story, “Resident Killed,” underneath a statement from the administration promising an investigation, but also partaking in some victim-blaming, “urg[ing] every resident to familiarize himself with the rules and regulations.”¹⁸² While the *Topaz Times* was run by internees, it was still subject to War Relocation Authority censorship; that this announcement supersedes the actual report of the killing demonstrates the restraints on how internees could circulate information – and emotion – in print.

Camp officials initially resisted having a public memorial for Wakasa, thinking that it might spur a riot, but the camp community insisted. Although Wakasa was a bachelor, his neighbors took over planning the memorial, and most of the camp pitched in. That the internees fought for the right to hold a memorial shows the community’s recognition of the importance of publicly recognizing and grieving this death, even for a man with no blood ties to anyone else in camp. Furthermore, coverage of Wakasa’s death and memorial was front-page news in the *Topaz Times*.¹⁸³ This memorial paid tribute to and mourned one of their own, and it gave internees an opportunity to publicly confront their own vulnerability. It also demonstrates the confinement of mourning – the reactions

¹⁸⁰ “Sentry Shoots Japanese At Utah Center,” *Millard County Chronicle*, April 15, 1943, 1. In *Jewel of the Desert*, Taylor also briefly discusses mainstream press coverage (139).

¹⁸¹ See “Guards Kill Japanese Attempting to Escape,” *The Hartford Courant*, April 13, 1943, 5; “Japanese Interne [sic] Dies in Attempt to Escape,” *The Atlanta Constitution*, April 13, 1943, 9; and “Japanese Is Slain by Military Police,” *The [Baltimore] Sun*, April 13, 1943, 8.

¹⁸² “Administration Statement,” *Topaz Times*, April 12, 1943, 1.

¹⁸³ Wakasa’s death and funeral were front page news on April 12-13, 1943, April 15, 1943, and April 20, 1943.

in Topaz media greatly differ from the outside press as the emotional reaction does not cross the boundaries of camp.

In *Citizen 13660*, Okubo's report is typically terse but tense. She briefly relates the events that happened: "An elderly resident was shot and killed within the center area inside the fence, by a guard in one of the watchtowers. Particulars and facts of the matter were never satisfactorily disclosed to residents" (*Citizen* 180). Okubo counters the official narrative here, publicly rereading the Wakasa situation for American audiences. Note that she employs passive constructions for both sentences. In the first sentence, this formation makes Wakasa the subject of the sentence, rather than the object of an action performed by the guard. As such, it allows him to stand front and center in the story rather than being the ignored object of injustice. It also illustrates the lack of action on Wakasa's part prior to his killing, his passivity mirrored in the syntax. Similarly, the second sentence utilizes the passive voice to illustrate the internees' lack of agency. In the camps, they cannot seek out or circulate information themselves; instead, they must wait to be told what happened – the narrative already formulated for them.

While these first few sentences convey frustration with the War Relocation Authority's handling of the case, the next one indicates the various registers of emotion circulating in Topaz. Okubo explains the camp reaction: "The anti-administration leaders again started to howl and the rest of the residents shouted for protection against soldiers with guns" (*Citizen* 180). Ostensibly, she merely reports the indignation of the internees. However, the verbs applied to the protest – "shouted" and, particularly, "howled" – seem faintly negative, with the latter implying an animalistic reaction rather than an organized response aimed to get results. Furthermore, Okubo has already shown herself to be

unsympathetic to the anti-administration residents. Only a few illustrations back, she prominently displays her distaste for these “rabble rousers” (*Citizen* 175). In her drawing, she depicts the anti-administration contingent, mostly made up of Issei men, protesting the WRA’s loyalty pledge. A man stands on stage, giving an overly emotive speech, holding a handkerchief and crying. Other men tearfully watch him. Okubo, the only visible woman in the picture, stands off to the side, glancing outward at the reader and holding her nose in disgust. Her gesture implies the man on stage cries crocodile tears and that this group merely starts trouble – hence, calling them “rabble rousers.” This attitude informs the way we understand her depiction of this same group “howling” after the Wakasa killing. In these three sentences, Okubo swings from implied irritation with the administration, downplaying emotion, to a heightened critique of internee leaders’ response. Neither side’s response satisfies. The switch in rhetorical registers between sentences indicates the inability to articulate a coherent, cohesive response. It both reflects the experience of grief, with its swirls of different emotions, and the inability of internees to publicly articulate that grief, even to identify and define loss in this situation.

Competing narratives obscure mourning both inside and outside camp as the meaning of Wakasa’s death is constantly in flux. He is a fugitive, dead as a direct result of his subversive actions; he is a victim, a symbol of oppression; he is both, neither, something in-between. Moreover, his death means more than the loss of an individual: it potentially signals a justification for internment (Japanese Americans cannot be trusted to stay within the bounds of proper behavior), a confirmation of the injustice of internment (an innocent man shot for being too close to an arbitrary boundary), or any other range of reactions. The varied readings of his death in the outside press, in the *Topaz Times*, and

Okubo's own account create overlapping and yet divergent storylines.

The shifting signification of his death means that mourning Wakasa becomes a vexed process. While this drawing is one of the most overtly emotional ones in the text, Okubo also subtly shows the ways that mourning is confined, illegible to the outside world. The drawing of the Wakasa incident is a crucial counterpoint to the Tsuno memorial. The picture first distinguishes itself in terms of spatial context.¹⁸⁴ The earlier drawing did not contain contextualizing places that give us a sense of where we are in the camp; rather, it seems that the memorial exists in an open and anonymous space, lending a sense of universality and depersonalization.

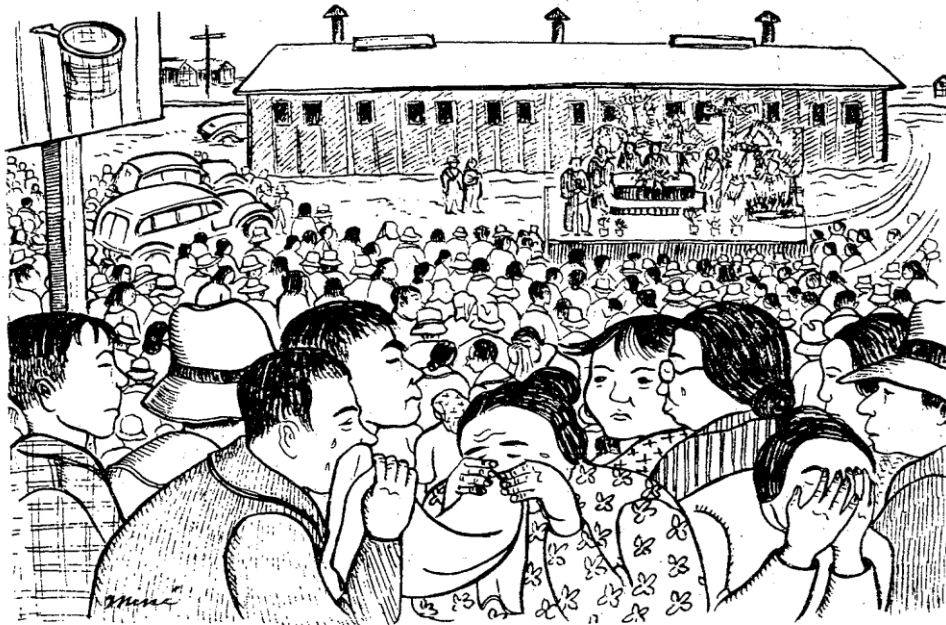


Figure 8: Miné Okubo, *Citizen 13660*, 180.

In this illustration, barracks lie behind the stage where the coffin and speakers stand; cars and a basketball hoop interrupt the uniformity of the crowd; and roads and

¹⁸⁴ For more on Okubo's use of space, see Xiaojing Zhou, "Spatial Construction of the 'Enemy Race': Miné Okubo's Visual Strategies in *Citizen 13660*," *MELUS* 32, no. 3 (Fall 2007): 51-73.

more barracks in the distance all offer spatial context for the memorial. This contextualization simultaneously illustrates the way that life continues after loss and how grief and loss inevitably intrude on everyday life. However, the barracks in the distance and the tight frame of the drawing signal how this loss – and all losses that occur in the camps – are different from those in the outside world. Internee grief is restricted by place, as they are unable to bury their dead in their hometowns. A cemetery existed in Topaz, but according to Leonard J. Arrington, no one was buried there: all 144 people who died in Topaz were “sent to Salt Lake City for cremation and their ashes were held at the relocation center for burial in the San Francisco area after the war.”¹⁸⁵ Okubo is acutely aware of how camp life intrudes on and restricts mourning rituals. Furthermore, she uses the everyday frames of camp life to illustrate how mourning for Wakasa’s death is confined within the camp. Although his death permeates the public sphere, grief over his death remains bound by the fences that surround Topaz.

Okubo also plays with the spatial arrangement of the drawing with her sight lines, giving the reader a distinct entry point into the memorial. In the Tsuno memorial, the eye follows an almost diagonal line, giving the reader a sense of the crowd narrowing into the stage. In this drawing, we still start in the back of the crowd, but we have a more front-centered view of the people. As such, we are not immediately drawn into the stage; instead, we regard the crowd, our eye drawn *across* the picture, absorbing the mass of people. With this vantage point, Okubo emphasizes the amount of people at the memorial. Furthermore, our perspective is slightly lower in this drawing versus the Tsuno one. As such, we get the sense that while we are in the back of the crowd, we are not on

¹⁸⁵ Leonard J. Arrington, *The Price of Prejudice: The Japanese-American Relocation Center in Utah during World War II* (Logan, UT: Utah State University, 1962), 24.

the outskirts. The reader stands with the mourners, not behind them. By incorporating the readers spatially into the mourning public, Okubo integrates us both physically and affectively, drawing attention to the parameters of mourning.

Whereas people looked around somewhat aimlessly in the previous illustration, this crowd seems more focused, connected to a singular lost object, a man whose death stemmed directly from the circumstances of internment. The three people at the forefront of this drawing express uncontrollable emotions as they sob inconsolably into their hands or handkerchief. Another looks down as a tear rolls down her cheek. Two of them, a man and a woman, share a handkerchief – their tears, visible expressions of grief, link them emotionally while the square of cloth connects them physically. The physical manifestation of grief – crying – counters the flatness of the figures, the external expressing deep emotion. Okubo looks on passively, not crying herself. However, she does not stand at the edge of the crowd, as in the Tsuno memorial picture; instead, she is more incorporated into the crowd, absorbed into the mourning community, looking back at us. Her gaze toward the reader invites us in: even if we do not share the grief knitting the community together, she implores us to acknowledge it, to recognize their grief and the losses inflicted on their community. By presenting the mourning community so distinctly and by spatially inviting the reader into it, Okubo presents an opportunity to recognize the Japanese American internees as a mourning public, as both grievers and grievable.

Okubo spends more time with the Wakasa memorial than the Tsuno one, giving the Wakasa funeral a second full page. She depicts the camp women actively partaking in the work of mourning as they fashion “enormous floral wreaths with paper flowers”

(*Citizen* 181). Flowers are traditional implements of mourning, signifying regrowth and rebirth.¹⁸⁶ The absence of fresh flowers in the desert leads to innovative crafting to fill the gap.¹⁸⁷ The most notable aspect of this drawing is Okubo's presence within it. Okubo places herself within her illustrations frequently, but most often, she observes the scenes.¹⁸⁸ In this scene, though, she holds a flower to add to the wreath; she becomes an active participant rather than passive voyeur. That she chooses this moment of mourning to be an agent in the scene signals her tacit inclusion in and approval of the communal grief.¹⁸⁹



Figure 9: Miné Okubo, *Citizen* 13660, 181.

¹⁸⁶ See Sacks, *The English Elegy*, 20.

¹⁸⁷ For more on crafting and loss, see Jane E. Dusselier's *Artifacts of Loss: Crafting Survival in Japanese American Concentration Camps* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2008).

¹⁸⁸ In *Imaging Japanese America*, Elena Tajima Creef notes that "by putting herself literally into the frame of every picture, Okubo not only aligns herself with the collective Japanese American community, but makes herself the subject of her own discourse and, in the process, inserts herself into the text, and into American history. As readers of *Citizen 13660*, Okubo's body becomes a conduit for our own symbolic, virtual journey into the world of the camps" (90).

¹⁸⁹ In "Gestures of Noncompliance," Chin reads this scene as Okubo preferring "constructive acts...to outspoken criticism" (34).

The memoir ends with Okubo's departure from the camp. The third to last image in the memoir features a photographer taking Okubo's picture, and she states, "I was photographed" (*Citizen* 207). The passive construction deprives Okubo – the artist whose pictures filled the visual gaps of the camera-less internees – of her perspective of herself and her experience. The government-issued photograph, another form of capturing, categorizing, and scrutinizing her, contains her within its narrow frame. Although she controls her own art, she cannot control the dominant frames (literally enacted here) that represent Japanese Americans. The power imbalance between the two modes of representation means that her drawings lie next to the other, previously discussed, visual depictions of Japanese Americans, unable to fully overtake them.

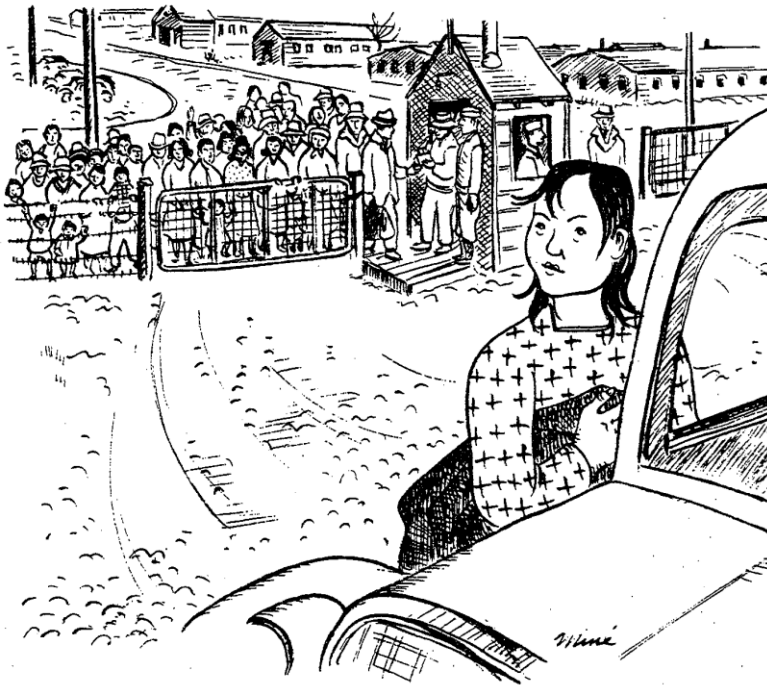


Figure 10: Miné Okubo, *Citizen* 13660, 209.

The last line of the narrative follows a trope of internment literature – an ending that at least ostensibly looks forward with optimism – as she remarks, “My thoughts

shifted from the past to the future” (*Citizen 209*).¹⁹⁰ This movement from past to future, however, is belayed by the accompanying drawing. In it, it is hard to ascertain where Okubo’s gaze looks: she could be looking forward, but she also seems to glance over her shoulder, back toward the camp and the internees standing behind the fence. This ambiguity undermines the positive prose ending. It leaves a Janus-faced protagonist, trapped looking both forward and back at once, glimpsing her future in New York but still trapped, like Lot’s wife, mourning the past.¹⁹¹

Later, when Okubo testified before the Commission on Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians for redress hearings in the early 1980s, she offered her 1944 *Fortune* article (“Issei, Nisei, Kibei”) and *Citizen 13660* as testimony.¹⁹² Forty years later, the public reception of interment and Japanese American expression was quite different. Even Okubo’s own discussion of interment changes. Robinson points out that in the 1980s she alters her terminology from “evacuees” and “relocation centers” to “internment camp” and “internee” and that “in her 1983 introduction to the book Okubo asserts that ‘there were untold hardships, sadness, and misery’ in the camps; this contrasts with her original version thirty-seven years earlier, in which, as previously noted, she described her experience more neutrally as a mixture of ‘joys and sorrows.’”¹⁹³ The fact that this text becomes testimony in the redress hearings and that Okubo’s own discussion

¹⁹⁰ See Monica Sone, *Nisei Daughter* (New York: Little, Brown, and Company, 1953); John Okada, *No-No Boy* (Rutherford, VT: Charles E. Tuttle, 1957); and Jeanne Wakatsuki Houston, *Farewell to Manzanar* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1973).

¹⁹¹ Song’s “Looking Back” influences my thinking here, as he states that in the end of both Marjane Satrapi’s *Persepolis* and Okubo’s *Citizen 13660*, presents situations in which our “subjectivities are paralyzed, unsure of what powers beacon us and what our attachments to others mean” (130).

¹⁹² Miné Okubo, “Issei, Nisei, Kibei,” *Fortune* (April 1944): 8. For more on her work for *Fortune* magazine and how the redress movements used Okubo’s work, see Christine Hong, “Illustrating the Postwar Peace: Miné Okubo, the “Citizen-Subject” of Japan, and *Fortune Magazine*,” *American Quarterly* 67, no. 1 (March 2015): 105-40.

¹⁹³ Robinson, *After Camp*, 83. I would also like to thank Greg Robinson for specifically pointing me to this change.

of internment emotions changes over time illustrates inscrutability's political potential. The ambiguity of the drawings means that readings of the text and their significance change over time: what is ungrievable in 1946 gradually becomes grievable in the 1980s. Okubo's memoir helps create a future in which redress is possible via its public, textual memorialization of Japanese American losses, even if those losses could not be recognized in their time.

Redress and Yoshiko Uchida's (Re)Stagings of Internment Loss

Post-*Citizen 13660* Japanese American representations of internment deal with similar interpretive ambiguity. Monica Sone's *Nisei Daughter* (1953), for example, offers cheerful affirmations of American patriotism amidst her account of internment and concludes on such an overtly assimilationist note that the reader is hard pressed to decide whether Sone's tone is nationalistic, ironic, or cynical. Caught between his pro-Japanese mother's loyalties and his own American citizenship, Ichiro, the protagonist of John Okada's *No-No Boy* (1957), exists in state of "dead aliveness," unable to act or even to feel.¹⁹⁴ These texts, among others, illustrate the limitation of what internment experiences and emotions could be publically circulated and understood in the immediate decade or so following the war.¹⁹⁵

However, as Judith Butler notes, normative structures that govern the recognition of subjects are not set in stone.¹⁹⁶ Rather, they "emerge and fade depending on broader operations of power," constantly in flux.¹⁹⁷ The ebbing of such schemas changes over

¹⁹⁴ Okada, *No-No Boy*, 73.

¹⁹⁵ Patti Duncan writes, "While marginalized people have sometimes successfully deployed the master's tools, including the dominant language, on their own behalf, we must continue to acknowledge the limitations and interrogate the social and political consequences of doing so." *Tell This Silence*, 79.

¹⁹⁶ Butler, *Frames of War*, 4.

¹⁹⁷ *Ibid.*

time, as is the case with internment. The interpretive ambiguity of Okubo's work means that readings of the text change over time, from the humor seen in the 1940s to the subversive elements in the text identified by later readers, scholars, and students. In familiarizing the mainstream public with Japanese Americans, Okubo helps disrupt those normative schemas and, in turn, facilitates the kind of interpretative structures that eventually allow readers to see the losses of internment.

The political upheavals of the 1960s and 1970s also opened up new possibilities for Japanese American expression as increased attention to multiculturalism shifted the frames of recognition throughout U.S. culture as a whole. During this time period, Japanese Americans start seeking reparations for internment, and in 1970, the JACL declared redress for internment as one of its goals.¹⁹⁸ The movement for redress increased the visibility and even the speakability of internment's wrongs and losses, first within the community itself and later in the larger U.S. public.¹⁹⁹ This augmented awareness facilitated the recuperation of emotion – that is, the ability for Japanese Americans to not only publically document and circulate their losses but also represent the emotional repercussions of loss. By the 1970s and 1980s, the larger U.S. political and cultural landscape also altered market conditions, allowing more critical work on internment to be published, including works that explicitly frame the confining structures of camp as both inducing and inhibiting mourning. In this section of the chapter, I will consider how restoring overtly emotional reactions to internment (grief, in particular) can be considered a crucial part of the redress movements.

To consider how literary production aids the emotional work of redress, I turn to

¹⁹⁸ Hatamiya, *Righting a Wrong*, xix.

¹⁹⁹ Other political contexts in this period, such as the Vietnam War and the general atmosphere of political upheaval, undoubtedly increase the "speakability" of internment.

Yoshiko Uchida's work. During her senior year at the University of California, Berkeley, Uchida moved with her family first to Tanforan, then to Topaz with her parents and her sister. Completing her degree remotely, Uchida obtained release from Topaz to move to Massachusetts where she earned her Master's degree in Education from Smith College. Since childhood, Uchida had been interested in writing, and she eventually stopped teaching to devote more time to writing. Her first children's book, *The Dancing Kettle*, came out in 1949, and over the course of her career she wrote many children's books and an adult memoir. Her writing for children found wide acclaim among educators and the Japanese American community.²⁰⁰ Most of her work deals with Japanese American identity, and some of her most famous children's books – including *Journey to Topaz* and the accompanying *Journey Home* – deal with internment.²⁰¹ Looking at *Journey to Topaz* (1971), which fictionalizes aspects of Uchida's own experience, and Uchida's adult memoir, *Desert Exile* (1982), in tandem reveals how these literary genres stage (and restage) the same experiences of internment to reframe its losses and its lessons for varied audiences.

In both books, Uchida identifies loss and grief as central to the civic empowerment of Japanese Americans in advocating for redress. *Journey to Topaz* and *Desert Exile* retells the stories of camp – and, more importantly, reinterprets them. Each

²⁰⁰ She received recognition from “National Council of Teachers of English, the American Library Association, the California Association of Teachers of English, a chapter of the Japanese American Citizen League, the International Reading Association, the National Council for Social Sciences, and the Children's Book Council. She also received the Bay Area Book Reviewers Award, two Commonwealth Club of California Juvenile Book Award Medals, the University of Oregon Distinguished Service Award, the California Japanese Alumni Association Award, the California Reading Association Award, the Japanese American of the Biennium Award, the Japanese American Citizens' League Award, the Nikkei in Education Award, and the Morris S. Rosenblatt Award from the Utah State Historical Society.” “Overview of Collection: Yoshiko Uchida Papers, 1948-1977,” Special Collections and University Archives, University of Oregon, accessed September 2015, http://nwda.orbiscascade.org/ark:/80444/xv44125#administrative_info

²⁰¹ Ibid. Also see Helena Grice, *Negotiating Identities: An Introduction to Asian American Women's Writing* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2002), 173-6.

book works to empower and teach different audiences, as different genres expand possibilities for emotional expression. Through several rewritings of internment, Uchida grafts the losses of internment onto the present moment, a palimpsestic loss that shades the present, one that makes a case for redress. The reinterpretation of internment lays the losses of internment bare but in different ways. *Desert Exile* writes to an adult audience, speaking as a testimony of loss and mourning – and the ways that the confinement of internment deepened that grief. On the other hand, *Journey to Topaz* addresses a younger audience and uses more overtly emotional scenes and language. The naked pathos of this book generates alternative modes of addressing internment losses and for recognizing Japanese Americans as mourning subjects. In both books, Uchida responds to the public frames of expressing grief through the conventions of each genre.

Through my examination of these texts, I specifically privilege Uchida's depiction of grief in children's/young adult literature. In fact, *Journey to Topaz* received more mainstream attention than *Desert Exile* as it was reviewed and advertised in the *New York Times* and the *Chicago Tribune*.²⁰² While at first glance, children's literature might be presumed to be an apolitical, even inferior genre given its younger audience and accompanying simplistic style, it is perhaps the most policed and hegemonic genre. In her work on children's literature, Christine Wilkie-Stibbs writes that “the child's bodily and spatial existence are arguably two of the most, if not *the* most, regulated, scrutinized, and surveyed sites. They are the focus of a battery of adult-defined, semi-punitive, legislative,

²⁰² Jane Harshaw Clarke, review of *Journey to Topaz*, by Yoshiko Uchida, *Chicago Tribune*, November 7, 1971, L14; “Scribner books boys and girls will flip over...,” *New York Times*, November 7, 1971, BRA22; Sidney Long, “Journey to Topaz,” review of *Journey to Topaz*, by Yoshiko Uchida, *New York Times*, March 12, 1972, BR8.

and regulatory systems administered through the various state apparatuses.”²⁰³ To publish in a genre for young audiences, authors must work within a narrow confine of what is considered acceptable for their consumption. I argue that Uchida uses those normalizing structures of children’s literature to incorporate Japanese American internment grief into dominant discourse. With a child protagonist, Uchida deftly demonstrates the loss of control, the forced helplessness of internment in a new way – the infantilization of all internees interpreted through this pre-adolescent character. A younger protagonist allows for more emotive expression since a child often does not see the bigger picture, the larger coordinates of loss that might contextualize immediate hurts; instead, she just feels the immediate impact of loss. Childhood becomes both a lived condition and a metaphor for what it is to be confined in such circumstances –always beholden to a hierarchical power (parent or state) with no access to the public conditions of grief. Thus, via her youthful protagonist, Uchida highlights the confining apparatuses of internment and how they affect its emotional resonances.

However, unlike *Desert Exile*, which makes clear the way physical constriction inhibited mourning practices, *Journey to Topaz* contains outbursts of clear emotion. In this text, emotion happens in excess, as it does with children. Emotion cannot be contained or confined – even as it reacts to (and is structured by) those conditions. As such, it becomes a potent political tool, the strong pathos exceeding the framings of internment grief in other contexts. The unconcealed displays of grief in *Journey to Topaz* invite empathy, an emotional pedagogy for the young reader.²⁰⁴ As such, the depiction of

²⁰³ Christine Wilkie-Stibbs, *The Outside Child In and Out of the Book* (New York: Routledge, 2008), 13.

²⁰⁴ Esther Mikyung Ghymn writes that Uchida’s text looks at internment “through the innocent eyes of a child. This perspective draws a child’s emotional response from the adult reader. ... [this] use of a simple

internment in this genre aims to create an emotionally (not just politically) informed populous, an aim in line with redress activism.

Like many internment accounts, much of Uchida's work deals with quotidian camp life. Since both *Desert Exile* and *Journey to Topaz* draw from the author's own experiences, they contain similar material. Certain stories, then, offer points of comparison for depictions of loss. One such case is the family dog, who they must leave behind when they go to camp. In *Desert Exile*, Uchida explains that she puts an ad in her college paper, looking for someone to adopt their collie, Laddie. She explains that they choose a "kind and genuinely concerned" boy to adopt Laddie:

We eventually gave the boy everything that belonged to Laddie, including his doghouse, leash, food bowl, and brushes.

It was a particularly sad day for my sister, who was the avid animal-lover of our family. It was she who had begged, cajoled, and coerced my parents into getting all of our dogs. But once they became our pets, we all loved them, and Mama used to cook a separate pot of vegetables to feed our dogs along with their cans of Dr. Ross's dog food. (*Desert* 61)

This account of Laddie's departure subtly stands in for the everyday losses of internment. Uchida specifically notes that while Laddie must leave home, he can take all of his material possessions with him, including his particular living space (the doghouse), unlike those sent to camp. But then the depiction becomes distanced, holding the lost object (Laddie) at arm's length – an indication of the frames the dictate expressions of grief. "We loved them all," she says, but she refers to "them," to all of the dogs the family

child's voice is perhaps the best way to get directly at certain basic emotions." *The Shape and Styles of Asian American Prose* (New York: Peter Lang, 1992), 71.

has owned, not just Laddie. It is hard to pinpoint the exact affective ties at play here as Uchida evokes more losses since it implies that the dogs she mentions have previously died. However, by comparing the love for and loss of Laddie to other, past loved and lost dogs, Uchida simultaneously makes Laddie's loss prosaic – losing a pet is a common event, one that has happened in their family already – and distinct because of the singular circumstances of internment. Thus, this loss carries other losses with it, encompassing former lost pets and alluding to lost material possessions.

In the following sentences, Uchida jumps ahead in time to complete the Laddie story: “Although the new owner of our pet had promised faithfully to write us in camp, we never heard from him. When, finally, we had a friend investigate for us, we learned that the boy hadn't had the heart to write us that Laddie had died only a few weeks after we left Berkeley” (*Desert* 62). Once again using the first person plural to describe concern felt for Laddie, Uchida creates a sense of belonging based on shared affective ties, while also spreading the feeling of loss among several people. Uchida's “we” diminishes individual emotion based on an individual's relationship to the lost object. Even the actions attributed to “we” distance the emotional impact of the loss on the grieving subjects. The forced passivity of internment – they cannot investigate on their own, so everything is hear-say through third parties (the friend and the new owner) – means that the Uchida family does not have first-hand knowledge of the loss. They sit in abeyance: having already lost Laddie in one sense, they do not yet know of this new loss. This suspension of extended grief illustrates a painful truth of internment: the world continues on while they sit in Topaz. Changes and losses that affected over 110,000 people happened every day, but they may not have found out about them until much later.

This temporal issue delays and complicates the grieving process. Uchida's memoir skirts this issue by only presenting the reception of such news and erasing the emotional reaction to it. The family "learns" of the death, but the boy does not have the heart. The relatively unemotional discussion of Laddie illustrates the suppression of grief the lack of public space for grief over the loss of everyday things that make up our lives – in other words, the main losses of internment.

Journey to Topaz relates a very similar situation as the Sakane family must decide what to do with their family dog, Pepper. At eleven years old, *Journey to Topaz's* protagonist, Yuki Sakane, is more malleable than the college-aged Yoshiko in *Desert Exile*. Yuki is old enough to understand internment, but not old enough to fully accept "shikata ga nai." In this account, Uchida centers the experience of loss on one subject – not the implied losses of an entire group of relocated people – and thus she can focus on that one person's grief. It is precisely because grief is *not* diffused over a cast of characters that Uchida can create an intimate relationship between her narrator and the youthful reader. Also, the rigid strictures of children's literature only sanction certain types of emotional expressions, ones deemed appropriate for young audiences. The grief over internment losses, then, is affirmed within dominant cultural codes while simultaneously acting as a subversive critique of those norms.

Yuki first responds to the dilemma by fantasizing about sneaking Pepper into the camp: "Secretly, Yuki hoped both Mother and Ken would overlook the whole problem and then maybe she could simply pick Pepper up and carry him into camp as though it were the most natural thing in the world. Maybe in all the excitement no one would even notice" (*Topaz* 35). This furtive wish is understandable and sympathetic, if naïve. Even

Yuki seems to sense that it is unrealistic, as she keeps it a secret from the rest of the family. Her older brother, Ken, puts an ad in the paper at his university for someone to take the dog – the path that Uchida herself took in her own life. Yuki argues with Ken about this decision, and when he asks her for an alternative solution, she sheepishly admits her plan. “I’m...well, I thought...I’m going to smuggle him into camp,’ Yuki said limply” (*Topaz* 36). The act of voicing this dream causes Yuki to realize that cannot come to pass. Her optimism ends, leaving her with an even more bitter reality.²⁰⁵

In *Melancholia and Maturation: The Use of Trauma in American Children's Literature*, Eric Tribunella argues that “trauma makes a certain kind of mature adulthood possible. To be mature is to be wounded, so maturity is a state of injury that is valued and valorized. Loss is one key way to produce this wound.”²⁰⁶ Tribunella discusses how the death of pets acts as a catalyst for the young protagonists’ transition into adulthood. In this case, though, Pepper’s death does not cause Yuki to abandon her childish fantasy of bucking governmental orders. Instead, her own public declaration induces her acceptance of the loss. Within the act of making her private desire public, Yuki realizes its futility. She starts with a declaration of individual intent (“I’m”) before breaking with ellipses, then downshifts to “I thought,” which couches her actions, pauses again, before “limply” finishing with an illegal plan (“smuggle”). Her inability to state her plan reflects a non-narratable trauma, and she understands that private wishes cannot withstand the sweeping arm of history. Yuki’s listless demeanor during a resistant speech act, followed by her complicit silence in giving up Pepper, demonstrates her maturity, at least according to

²⁰⁵ Yuki’s optimism evokes Lauren Berlant’s idea of cruel optimism, the notion that optimism can be toxic and harmful to certain subjects. See *Cruel Optimism*.

²⁰⁶ Eric Tribunella, *Melancholia and Maturation: The Use of Trauma in American Children's Literature* (Knoxville, TN: University of Tennessee Press, 2010), xiv.

Tribunella's definition of maturity as a regulating state that upholds the status quo.²⁰⁷ But Yuki's loss (and subsequent wound) comes from the incommensurability of grief and public framings of internment that deny loss.

In what follows, Uchida demonstrates that acceptance of loss need not equate to stoicism. Ken agrees to let Yuki help choose the person to take Pepper and, as in *Desert Exile*, a quiet boy named Andy seems to bond with Pepper. Yuki agrees to let Andy take him. But the reader of *Journey to Topaz* also gets to see how Yuki deals with the loss.

She gave Pepper one final hug and then ran into the house. She didn't want to stay and watch while Ken gave Andy Pepper's brush and comb and feeding dish. She hurried to her room and lay on her bed, holding her hands over her ears so she wouldn't hear Andy's car as it drove away with Pepper. Mother made her favorite barbecued spareribs for supper but Yuki could scarcely eat.

"I hate this whole stupid evacuation," she said grimly, and she ran outside, forgetting that there would be no Pepper to come bounding up the steps to greet her. She went to the fishpond and threw pebbles into it, watching the old gray carp appear from beneath the lily pads, opening his mouth for something to eat. But tonight he didn't amuse her at all. Yuki stood there watching until it was too dark to see, biting her lip to keep back the tears. (*Topaz* 37-8)

Giving Pepper away clearly impacts Yuki emotionally. Although she accepts and knows that Pepper must leave, she cannot directly witness it, and she cannot watch them pack up or watch the car pull away. Her declaration during the dinner she cannot eat does not speak of the loss she suffers but rather directs the emotion toward its cause – the evacuation. The scene oscillates between the immediate loss and its larger political

²⁰⁷ Ibid.

catalyst as we see the proximate source of Yuki's grief but also her helplessness before its ultimate cause. However, Uchida lingers not on Pepper, the lost object of affection, but on the mourning subject who, "biting her lip to keep back the tears," grieves its departure. Uchida moves beyond documenting the facts of loss to recording the emotional reaction – grief.

As we saw, *Desert Exile* immediately jumps ahead in time to inform the reader that Laddie dies soon after the family enters camp. This temporal rupture in *Desert Exile*'s timeline reminds us that Uchida is telling her story retrospectively, that the events are being described and catalogued with a larger narrative arc in mind. In other words, memoir comes pre-processed as it self-consciously reconstructs past events.²⁰⁸ Perhaps most importantly, memoir requires the writer to claim the experience as her own, which makes her vulnerable. Traise Yamamoto states that "however strongly they [Nisei women] might feel about their experiences of the camps, there is also a reluctance to speak about those experiences and feelings, a guardedness about the act of revelation."²⁰⁹ Telling the reader Laddie's ultimate fate right off the bat allows Uchida to move past the incident quickly. The fictional narrative, on the other hand, unravels the story in temporal order. The delay in the delivery of knowledge of Pepper's fate in *Journey to Topaz* allows both Yuki and the reader to live in another state of cruel optimism, hoping to hear about Pepper's new adventures, anecdotes that would temper his loss. Thus, we work through

²⁰⁸ See Rocío G. Davis, *Being Here: Reading Asian North American Autobiographies of Childhood* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2007). She states that "the genre [autobiography] problematizes two mutually enhancing processes – a simultaneous awakening of temporal and spatial consciousness; 'here' and 'now' become axiomatic of the subject's itinerary of selfhood and function as a frame for understanding and claiming the past. ... Reliving early memories or events that lead the subject to contemplate him- or herself as an individual heightens the performative aspect of autobiography as it foregrounds the manner in which personal circumstances and cultural contingencies function in the process of self-inscription" (2).

²⁰⁹ Traise Yamamoto, *Masking Selves, Making Subjects: Japanese American Women, Identity, and the Body* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1998), 106.

Pepper's first loss only to repeat the work of mourning later, amplifying those feelings and making loss constantly present in the text.

Much later in the narrative, while they are in Tanforan, Yuki mentions how "strange" it is that Andy had not updated them about Pepper and that her friends outside camp had not yet checked up on them, commenting that "it was as though they'd all forgotten that Pepper even existed" (*Topaz* 84). Mrs. Jamieson, a family friend, finally writes to her to give the sad news that Pepper has died and that no one else "could bear" to write to them (*Topaz* 84). "Don't grieve, my love," she tells Yuki, with some final comforting words about Pepper possibly being with other beloved deceased pets in "wherever it is that pets go" (*Topaz* 84). Mrs. Jamieson's directive to Yuki not to grieve and to instead find solace in a vague notion of a pet afterlife prescribes a suppression of emotion, an adult stoicism. However, Yuki ignores this injunction and runs to find a spot where she can be alone, where she

let the tears come, sobbing into her wet grimy palms until she heard voices approaching, and then she ran on. One of the worst things about being in camp was that there was no place to go to be alone ... Pepper was gone and there was nowhere she could go to grieve him. Yuki slumped to the ground and sat on the sun-dried weeds that grew at the edge of the camp. She turned her back to the barracks and the stables and all the people. She buried her face in her arms and didn't go back to her stall until it was long past time for supper. (*Topaz* 85)

Yuki's overflow of grief happens organically – she can "barely finish reading the letter" before emotion overcomes her (*Topaz* 84). Uchida carefully maps the spatial relations of the camp here, noting that "wherever [Yuki] went, people pressed close," to show the

cramped, overpopulated conditions of camp (*Topaz* 84). In this moment of grief, however, Yuki needs the proper space to mourn, to deal with her loss privately. Again, the confinement of camp not only causes loss but also shapes the way Yuki grieves. With no privacy and with literally no space available, Yuki must keep moving, holding in her tears and her emotions. In the end, she creates space to mourn in her own body, moving to the ground and turning her body away from everything, retreating into herself. Ironically, while Yuki has no private space to grieve, she also has no community of grief, for as she noted previously, everyone else seemed to have forgotten Laddie.²¹⁰ Deprived of private space in which to mourn, Yuki must make do without mourning rites and without fellow mourners. She is left surrounded by “sun-dried weeds” instead of funerary flowers, “bur[ying] her face in her arms” rather than burying her dog. With the lack of physical space, she carves out a temporal space for herself, ignoring supper time to grieve.²¹¹ With both private and public mourning made (nearly) impossible, this episode demonstrates how internment makes even the mundane loss of a pet – a trope of childhood experience and children’s literature – a complex bereavement process. However, Yuki demonstrates a response to loss that does not focus on anger or repression, but rather acknowledges sadness, acknowledges that we need space and time to deal with loss – in other words, Uchida uses Yuki to open up the range of emotional responses.

As previously mentioned, the loss of a pet often acts as an important early

²¹⁰ The “they” in that statement most directly refers to those outside the camp, but it also seems to include her family as well, since Yuki is the one writing about it, no one else mentions it, and Mrs. Jamieson’s letter is explicitly addressed to Yuki.

²¹¹ Dana Luciano discusses how time functions differently in times of loss and mourning in *Arranging Grief: Sacred Time and the Body in Nineteenth-Century America* (New York: New York University Press, 2007).

experience of loss that introduces children to the grieving process.²¹² These smaller losses teach children how to deal with other losses that happen in life – friends move, family members die, etc. Uchida’s work models the emotional work of mourning, illustrating not only how to mourn but also educating readers on who mourns. By integrating the grief of a Japanese American girl into a children’s literature tradition that focuses primarily on white children (and, to a lesser extent, on boys), Uchida’s work exemplifies developments in children’s literature during the 1960s and 1970s, when the genre expanded to include various ethnicities and more diverse viewpoints. Prior to 1960s, people of color were “virtually invisible in children’s literature” and when they were included, they “were stereotypically represented.”²¹³ Writing as early as the 1940s, Uchida pioneers children’s books for Japanese American children, with her earlier writing focusing on Japanese folk tales. With these works, Japanese American children can see themselves in represented in literature; furthermore, non-Japanese American children can read about and identify with Japanese American children.

Given the lack of depictions of children of color in children’s literature at the time, Uchida carefully crafts Yuki as a model protagonist. Yuki loves her family, listens to her parents, respects her elders, and even given the circumstances of internment, handles them obediently and with pluck. Furthermore, while she has Japanese heritage, she is in many ways a typical American child: for example, the book opens with her anxiously awaiting Christmas. Such characterizations fit into the ethnic literature structure that Rocío Davis describes: “Contemporary ethnic literature for children tends

²¹² See Marian S. Pyles, *Death and Dying in Children’s and Young People’s Literature: A Survey and Bibliography* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 1988), specifically “The Death of a Pet” (32-45).

²¹³ Maria Jose Botelho and Masha Kabakow Rudman, *Critical Multicultural Analysis of Children’s Literature: Mirrors, Windows, and Doors* (New York: Routledge, 2009), 73.

to highlight ways of affirming and celebrating cultural differences as they simultaneously seek ways to cooperate and collaborate across different ethnic boundaries.”²¹⁴ Yuki is an agreeable protagonist, a role model for children that parents – Japanese American or otherwise – would accept.²¹⁵ Her character’s lack of subversion makes her circulation in the American public – importantly, in American schools – acceptable, even desirable. Thus, the ability for audiences to recognize Yuki’s good traits allows her to present the story of internment to a younger audience.²¹⁶

Children’s literature not only expanded the scope of subjects represented in this period but also the topics explored. Not immune to the social upheavals of the 1960s and 1970s, children’s literature experienced the same loss of innocence that overtook the Cold War/Vietnam War-era world. Prior to 1965, “reality was tempered and selective for young audiences. Pain and fear were kept at some distance from child protagonists, wrongs were righted, injustice redressed; things generally turned out well at the end.”²¹⁷ However, “by the late 1960s, children's books had become a battleground for the personal, social, and political forces of a changing society.”²¹⁸ This rupture in the genre itself allows Uchida to insert internment stories, and the breaking of this frame gives her the opportunity to change the terms of recognition, to make Japanese American grief recognizable. Uchida records history for children, but also allows them to feel its

²¹⁴ Rocío G. Davis, “Ethnic Autobiography as Children’s Literature: Laurence Yep’s *The Lost Garden* and Yoshiko Uchida’s *The Invisible Thread*” *Children’s Literature Association Quarterly* 28, no. 2 (Summer 2003): 90-7.

²¹⁵ Violet H. Harada writes about how Uchida’s characters “display deeply ingrained beliefs in filial obligation, duty, and loyalty” (26). See “Caught Between Two Worlds: Themes of Family, Community, and Ethnic Identity in Yoshiko Uchida’s Works for Children,” *Children’s Literature in Education* 29, no. 1 (1998): 19-30.

²¹⁶ Danton McDiffett states that the target age group is fifth grade and above (60). See “Prejudice and Pride: Japanese Americans in the Young Adult Novels of Yoshiko Uchida,” *English Journal* 90, no. 3 (Jan 2001): 60-65.

²¹⁷ Anne Scott MacLeod, *American Childhood: Essays on Children’s Literature of the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries* (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 1994), 181.

²¹⁸ MacLeod, *American Childhood*, 182.

emotional repercussions too.²¹⁹

These representations are important for future political agency. As one of the most influential regulatory systems, schools help determine children's political development as they move from being regulated minors to upholding (or potentially subverting) those same systems in adulthood.²²⁰ While discussing ways to make sure that wide-scale discrimination seen during internment did not happen again, Okubo mentions education as a sort of social justice early intervention. She states that "textbooks and history studies on this subject should be taught to children when young in grade and high schools. Many generations do not know that this ever happened in the United States."²²¹ The Japanese American curriculum project, which formed in 1969, took up this mantle.²²² Started in the San Mateo City School District by Japanese American teachers, the group created materials for teaching Japanese American history, including internment.²²³ However, it is not enough to know the facts of internment: prevention of similar imprisonment also comes from recognition of others' grievability. Thus, education about internment cannot simply consist of recitation of facts; it must also educate emotionally to reshape normative subjectivity. Children's literature, which is also

²¹⁹ In "Caught Between Worlds," Harada writes that Uchida's "writing humanizes and contextualizes the necessity for personal cultural identity; it also speaks to the 'possibility of a heterogeneous, complementary human community,'" 29, quoting Cathryn M. Mericer, "Yoshiko Uchida," *Writers of Multicultural Fiction for Young Adults* Ed. M. Daphne Kutzer (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1996), 423-453 (425).

²²⁰ Roberta S. Trites writes, "When ideologies in YA novels focus specifically on government, they tend to convey to adolescents that they are better served by accepting than by rejecting the social institutions with which they must live. In that sense, the underlying agenda of many YA novels is to indoctrinate adolescents into a measure of social acceptance." See *Disturbing the Universe: Power and Repression in Adolescent Literature* (Iowa City, IA: University of Iowa Press, 1998), 27.

²²¹ Miné Okubo, "Statement before the Commission on Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians," *Miné Okubo: Following Her Own Road*, Ed. Greg Robinson and Elena Tajima Creff (Seattle, WA: University of Washington Press, 2008), 46-9 (48).

²²² Charles Hargrove, "Japanese American National Library: JACL Historical Collection, 1923-1995," March 2006, http://www.janlibrary.org/archives_jacl_history.php

²²³ Japanese American Curriculum Project, "About the Authors," *Japanese Americans: The Untold Story* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1971), iv.

often read in schools, can work toward this aim.

My discussion of *Citizen 13660* has already introduced the most infamous event in Topaz: the death of James Hatsuki Wakasa by a MP's bullet. Not surprisingly, *Desert Exile* and *Journey to Topaz* recount it in distinctly different ways. In *Desert Exile*, it comes shortly after recollections of other funerals, placing the incident in a context of mourning rituals within camp. Uchida tells the story of a woman who died unexpectedly and how her husband "was permitted to come to Topaz for her funeral, but only under escort by two armed guards" from Louisiana where he was interned in a separate camp (*Desert* 134). Initially lodged in the camp guardhouse, he was finally "permitted to remain in a barrack" but only with his guards placed next door and only after "outraged community welfare workers demanded his immediate release" (*Desert* 134). After these overwrought precautions, "he was allowed to stay in Topaz only long enough to attend the funeral, with no time to mourn his loss in the comforting presence of his friends, and was promptly sent back to his Louisiana internment camp" (*Desert* 134). The repetition of "permitted" and the use of passive voice in this passage make it clear that the restrictions on the movements of individual bodies affect public expression of emotion. Internal feelings of grief cannot be denied by a political system, but those in power can (and do) limit how those feelings are made public. They can control where you mourn (in the guardhouse), with whom you mourn (next to armed guards), and for how long you may mourn for (attend the funeral and immediately leave). Permission is granted for only the perfunctory performance of rituals that makes no allowance for the emotional work of mourning that ritual ought to enable. By constraining the mourner, camp officials either dismiss or diminish the expression of grief, thereby deprecating the mourner's loss. Thus,

Desert Exile illustrates how the dampening of emotional response comes not just from an individual subject (or a collective ethnic group) but from the confining structures of internment.²²⁴

Uchida follows this anecdote with a recollection of a funeral for a friend's father that she attended, stating that the friend comes to the camp from a Colorado school and that "it must have been devastating for her to see the bleakness of Topaz for the first time, knowing her father had spent his last days in such a place" (*Desert* 134). Through the eyes of her friend, Uchida illustrates the lack of solace that Topaz provides: survivors know that their loved ones died degraded, in a decidedly uncomfortable place. Once again, the circumstances of confinement within the camp wounds mourners and makes loss worse. However, the (forced) intimacy of camp means that the community comes together to help mourn the deceased. Uchida mentions the "cascades of crepe paper flowers painstakingly made by some Issei women" that "decorated" the coffin (*Desert* 134). The careful work of the women demonstrates the importance of maintaining rituals – even with the absence of fresh flowers, they work to create a semblance of normalcy. This moment echoes Uchida's father's experience in Montana, with the community coming together to offer a tribute to the deceased. Such experiences illustrate the way that confinement within the camps produced a communal impulse, breaking down the barriers surrounding personal, private grief, as a sense of loss spills into the camp's public life as they mourn together.

But Uchida quickly reminds the reader that while confinement can bring people together, it mostly divides and even causes loss. She writes that "many of those who died in Topaz were buried in the desert, and it seemed a bitter irony that only then were they

²²⁴Sara Ahmed discusses the sociality of emotion in *The Cultural Politics of Emotion* (1-19).

outside the barbed wire fence” (*Desert* 134). It should be noted that this statement differs from other records indicating that while there were funerary and memorial services held, no one was actually buried in Topaz’s cemetery. Nonetheless, Uchida’s point illuminates camp views of death and perhaps even sheds light on why people were not buried there. Death brings freedom from the bounds of camp, but it also means a division of the community: the boundaries of camp, marked with barbed wire, divide mourners and their lost loved ones. With her pointed accounts of mourning in Topaz, Uchida demonstrates the ways that expressions of grief were always mitigated by camp confinements and limits. The matter-of-fact statements of loss show the hardships of camp and inextricably intertwine mourning and internment, part of the burgeoning discourse of grievance in the 1980s.

When it comes to Wakasa’s death a few pages later, *Desert Exile* emphasizes the community’s anger and outrage. Like Okubo, Uchida mentions the guard’s claim that he called out and that Wakasa tried to escape by going under the fence before she states that the body lay three feet within the fence and that Wakasa most likely could not hear the MP’s warning. She then describes the internee reaction:

The death caused an uproar throughout the camp. Everyone was outraged that the MP had not fired a warning shot before aiming to kill. How far, after all, could the man have gone, even if he had crawled under the fence. If it happened once, the residents reasoned, it could happen again. And what about the safety of the children? Block meetings were held, investigations got under way, and the Spanish consul arrived once more in great haste. A week later, the furor still hadn’t abated. We never learned what the punishment, if any, was meted out to

the guard, but a campwide funeral was held for the victim, and he was laid to rest in the desert with reverberations of the event still shaking the entire camp. (*Desert* 140)

In the first sentence, Uchida pairs “death” with “uproar,” thus denoting an angry, and importantly, public response. After words like “uproar” and “outraged,” Uchida quickly shifts away from the gut reaction to rational questioning of the event. The downshift from public upheaval to reasoning through the incident and its future implications illustrates the difficulty of Japanese American emotional response about such events during and even post-internment. The internees have a clear reason for their outrage, but Uchida shows that they have to offer rational concerns – the virtual impossibility of escape under those circumstances, the possibility of reoccurrence, and the potential threat to children – to have their opinions heard.

Outrage and grief are twinned emotions here, with one begetting the other. Grief over the incident immediately turns to anger over its preventability, and when ire produces nothing, only grief remains. But that grief has no public outlet: beyond the camp fences, few know or mourn Wakasa’s death. The shifting signification of this loss – a massive upheaval in Topaz is mostly unnoticed by the greater American public – signals the ways that epistemological frames change based on community. A mourned, valued life in one subset of the population is ungrievable in the mainstream. Wakasa’s death highlights the divide across these dueling epistemological frames, and it illustrates how emotions cannot cross them. With no larger public outlet for the cycles of anger and grief, Wakasa’s death becomes part of the injustices of internment, a grief that eventually forges grievance.²²⁵ When Uchida published *Desert Exile* in 1982, these grievances

²²⁵ In *The Melancholy of Race*, Anne Anlin Cheng writes that “the vocabulary of grievance (and its implied

finally had a public outlet through the Commission on Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians, which started work in 1980.

Over a decade earlier *Journey to Topaz* crosses those epistemological boundaries, shifting the frames of recognition by placing emotions in a child, a less politically charged subject. Furthermore, the fictional space allows Uchida to take some artistic liberties with the Wakasa story that make his loss more affective. For example, she notably reconfigures Wakasa's place in the camp community. The real victim was a bachelor with no family in the camp, but in *Journey to Topaz*, it is Mr. Kurihara – the married grandfather of Emi, Yuki's best friend in camp, and the Sakane family's neighbor – who meets this fate. With this rewriting, Uchida raises the stakes of his death, making him grievable not just as a symbol of camp injustice but also as a loved relative and friend. Situating him in close proximity both physically and emotionally to Yuki, Uchida sees to it that the reader has spent a lot of time with Mr. Kurihara and his family. When he dies, Yuki – and, through her, the reader – has an emotional tie to him that increases the emotional impact of his death. In this instance, the fictionalization of the Wakasa incident allows Uchida to tie it to the emotional center of the novel.

Mr. Kurihara and Mr. Toda, another family friend, hunt for arrowheads near the fence, and while doing so, a guard shoots Mr. Kurihara (this is essentially what happened to Wakasa). In this case, however, there is no uncertainty about what Mr. Kurihara was doing: there is a witness with him when he died, and there is no ambiguous spinning of the story to exculpate the MP. Mr. Toda runs frantically over to Mrs. Kurihara to tell her

logic of comparability and compensation) that constitutes so much of American political discourse has ironically deflected attention away from a serious look at the more immaterial, unquantifiable repository of public and private grief that has gone into the making of the so-called minority subject and that sustains the notion of 'one nation'" (6).

the story, which the Sakanes hear as well. When Mrs. Kurihara returns after going to the hospital to see him, she stops by the Sakane's shelter:

“He is dead,” she said simply, and she slumped down into a chair by the stove, unable to say anything more. She looked as though she were living in a nightmare.

Mother put an arm around her shoulder to comfort her, trying to think of the right words to say. “He was a victim of the war, Mrs. Kurihara,” she said at last, “just as surely as the brave boys who are dying in the Pacific. He is at peace now and won't ever suffer again.”

Mrs. Kurihara nodded, but Yuki wasn't sure she had heard. (*Topaz* 119-20)

The plain delivery of the news, with no emotion expressed through words, mirrors the official reports of his death that suppress emotional reaction. Instead, only Mrs. Kurihara's body displays the loss, “slumped” down, looking “as though she were living in a nightmare.” This description internalizes the loss since neither Yuki, her mother nor the reader can see what Mrs. Kurihara sees, how grief has shifted her world into a nightmare – at once untellable and incomprehensible to the public. Uchida acknowledges the problem of communicating grief, but rather than simply portray grief as unspeakable, she shows how loss can connect people.

Instead of expressing her own sorrow and sympathy for Mrs. Kurihara, Mrs. Sakane focuses on the deceased, positioning his death as part of a larger system of loss. By calling Mr. Kurihara a victim of war and comparing him to the “brave boys” fighting overseas, she rewrites the meaning of his death. Of course, “the brave boys who are dying in the Pacific” almost certainly refers to American soldiers, but the distinct place (“the

Pacific”) means that it could also refer to Japanese soldiers. Many Japanese Americans still had family in Japan, so war casualties could affect them in different ways. Mrs. Sakane’s ambiguous identification pays tribute to Mr. Kurihara’s own liminal position between Japan and America. It also acknowledges that the losses of war are not limited to one side or one nation. By acknowledging the different types of losses that come out of war, Mrs. Sakane’s consoling words make a case for greater recognition of the grievability of various populations, even those at odds with one another.

After the scene with Yuki, her mother, and Mrs. Kurihara, Uchida widens the scope of mourning to include the entire camp:

All of Topaz was shocked over Mr. Kurihara’s death. They grieved for him because he was the first to die in this lonely desert camp and he would be the first to be buried in the desert, outside the barbed wire that had enclosed him while he was alive. They were angry because he really need’t have died and because it could happen to any of them.

The women of the church made artificial flowers out of bright-colored crepe paper and Yuki and Mother went to help cut and paste and roll the crepe paper into clusters of brilliant flowers. They made several wreaths and a large spray to cover the plain wooden casket. (*Topaz* 121)

Uchida gives specific aspects of Mr. Kurihara’s death certain emotional reactions, using clear referents and repeated structures to clearly correlate the causes of emotions. The facts of his death cause shock, grief comes from the singularity of the event (he is the first camp death), and anger comes from the preventability of his death and the possibility of repetition.²²⁶ This separation of emotion demonstrates a desire to compartmentalize, to

²²⁶ This is not historically accurate. The first death in Topaz was Koza Baba on October 9, 1942. “First

separate and organize emotional response. Uchida again mentions the camp-wide funeral preparations, with Yuki and her mother participating in the collective mourning ritual. However, in *Journey to Topaz*, we move past the presentation of fact, past the public display, to an individual contemplation of grief and reflection on these public manifestations of grief.

We move from the general camp reaction to the women to Yuki herself sitting at the funeral – from public to private (and private contemplation of the public): “Yuki had never been so close to death before. It filled her with a chilling fear, for it held the awfulness of forever” (*Topaz* 121). The inclusion of fear here departs from other accounts of grieving the loss of Wakasa. In this case, the fear is not about internee safety or present conditions; rather, Yuki fears the “awfulness of forever,” the permanent separation of loved ones. As Yuki listens to the Buddhist funeral ceremony, she thinks about Pepper and what Mrs. Jamieson had told her about Pepper finding other deceased pets in the afterlife, and muses that if they found each other, “then maybe Emi’s grandfather could somehow link up with them too, even though he never knew them in life” (*Topaz* 121). These two moments of loss come together, and “Yuki felt a little better,” getting comfort from the idea of an afterlife and of loved ones together. Yuki groups Pepper, Mrs. Jamieson’s parrot, and Mr. Kurihara together, even though the three have little in common, and she acknowledges that they did not know each other in life. However, in her mind, they reside together. Her internal map of losses makes sense to her and also models a route to consolation for young readers.²²⁷ But beyond that, loss escapes the confines of camp, allowing Yuki to find solace in this imaginative lack of boundaries.

Death,” *Topaz Times*, October, 14, 1942, 4.

²²⁷ I am influenced by Jonathan Flatley’s idea of “affective maps” in *Affective Mapping*.

During the funeral, Yuki looks at the grave marker covered with the flowers she helped make, and

She almost felt as though Emi's grandfather were standing right there with all of them. He wouldn't have cared much for all the crying, Yuki thought. And he probably would not have minded too much being left alone in the desert ... he had grown quite fond of the desert. He said its vastness fascinated him even as the ocean did. Yuki knew that from the times she had walked with him. Yuki looked at Mrs. Kurihara now, her head bowed low with grief, and wished she could tell all this to her, but she didn't know how. Instead, when no one was looking, Yuki took her best arrowhead from her pocket, polished it on her skirt, and pushed it quickly into the sand beside Mr. Kurihara's newly made grave. (*Topaz* 121-2)

After Yuki has internally mapped Mr. Kurihara, she can project him onto the external terrain, as she pictures him amongst the mourners. She imagines his reactions, from his dislike of the congregations' tears to his pleasure at his burial spot, and she wants to publicly express her feelings, to share the thoughts that give her solace with his openly grieving widow, but cannot find the way to do so. Instead, she offers a silent tribute. This action momentarily suspends reality, as the funeral was held within the fence, and Yuki could not possibly have been next to the grave. This scene oscillates between placing Yuki in the midst of the other mourners and her seemingly being alone. The fictive space releases us from the constraints of time and space, allowing for a proper tribute, a fulfilling and comforting mourning experience. In this way, Uchida creates a positive model for dealing with loss, reconstructing the Wakasa funeral not just to publicly mourn those lost in *Topaz* but also educate others about those losses.

The novel ends with Yuki's father obtaining a work release and the Sakane family leaving Topaz for Salt Lake City. As they depart, Yuki waves goodbye to their friends remaining in camp. They reenter the outside world, and the book concludes, "It was good to be back" (*Topaz* 149). This statement reverses Okubo's future-oriented ending in *Citizen 13660*, positioning the camp exit as a return, not forging a new path. They move back to move forward. The dual motions of these books – moving forward, moving back – signal the hardships, the constant struggles for recognition and grievability post-war.

In January 2015, the Topaz Museum opened at the site of the camp in Delta, Utah. The museum contains artwork and artifacts from camp – objects used and craftwork done while in camp – and the Museum Board owns the camp's site where visitors can take tours.²²⁸ The first exhibit, entitled *When Words Weren't Enough: Works on Paper from Topaz, 1942-1945*, displayed work by artists from the camp, including Okubo.²²⁹ The exhibit's title indicates the legacy of unspeakability when it came to internment, the way Japanese Americans had to find alternative means to express themselves and their griefs. But thanks in part to authors like Okubo and Uchida, the losses of internment have transformed into a legacy of political activism dedicated to "ensur[ing] that a similar denial of civil rights will never happen to any future generation of Americans."²³⁰

²²⁸ *Topaz Museum*, accessed September 12, 2015, <http://www.topazmuseum.org/>.

²²⁹ "When Words Weren't Enough: Works on Paper from Topaz, 1942-1945," January 29, 2015, <http://www.topazmuseum.org/news-events>.

²³⁰ *Topaz Museum*, accessed September 12, 2015, <http://www.topazmuseum.org/>.

Chapter 3 – “If We Must Die”: Grieving George Jackson and Attica

“The savage repression of blacks which can be estimated by reading the obituary columns of the nation’s dailies, Fred Hampton, etc., has not failed to register on the black inmates. The holds are fast being broken. Men who read Lenin, Fanon, and Che don’t riot, ‘they mass,’ ‘they rage,’ they dig graves.”

-George Jackson, *Soledad Brother*²³¹

The specter of imprisonment haunts American literature. From figurative representations to literal stories of captivity, confinement echoes throughout the American literary world from Mary Rowlandson to Harriet Jacobs to Herman Melville’s *Bartleby* to Richard Wright’s *Bigger Thomas* to post-9/11 poetry by Guantanamo Bay detainees. Although confinement is usually associated with criminality – as in *Native Son* and others – captivity narratives were a prolific genre in early American culture (and beyond, as Rowlandson’s 1682 tale, a best-seller at the time, remains in contemporary anthologies and classrooms). This important genre often features an American colonist captured by a Native American tribe or another othered group. As the frontier closed and as native populations were killed and contained, this genre naturally diminished. However, given the rising incarceration rates in the United States and increasing interest in prisoner education, the captivity narrative has reemerged. But these new “captivity narratives” produced by prisoners – literary testaments to their condition – no longer have the same cultural capital they once did. Despite existing in a long legacy of American

²³¹ *Soledad Brother: The Prison Letters of George Jackson* (New York: Coward McCann, 1970; Chicago: Chicago Review Press, 1994), 27. All quotations are from the Chicago Review Press edition.

literature, contemporary prison literature is often relegated to a niche genre, defined (and often tainted) by its location, with few individuals' texts transcending their origins. Just as those original captivity narratives examined native cultures vis-à-vis colonial culture and provoked emotional responses to the suffering depicted, modern captivity narratives also reflect on U.S. culture and grapple with the emotional toll of imprisonment.

The twentieth century saw a rise in prison populations and, accordingly, in the theorization of prison. Since Foucault's famous study, *Discipline and Punish* (original French, 1975; English translation, 1977), scholars of prison culture have discussed how prison helps us understand formations of political subjectivity, freedom, and citizenship.²³² Indeed, critics often explore the way that prison writing functions within the disciplinary structures of power in carceral systems – and works as a tool of resistance against them. For example, Dylan Rodríguez argues that imprisoned writers resist their disappearance from the social and political landscape and “generate new symbolic and spatial terrain for political struggle against a state regime.”²³³ In other words, the act of composition and publication becomes not only a way to participate in public discourse but also a resistance against social death. Other scholars like Michael Roy Hames-Garcia position prisoners as “praxical” theorists of freedom and justice, whose theoretical constructions take on material concerns given that abstractions like “freedom” and “justice” directly affect their everyday lives.²³⁴

Implicit in these claims are critiques of American culture and politics. Prison

²³² Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1977; New York: Vintage Books, 1995).

²³³ Dylan Rodríguez, *Forced Passages: Imprisoned Radical Intellectuals and the U.S. Prison Regime* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2006), 37.

²³⁴ Michael Hames-Garcia, *Fugitive Thought: Prison Movements, Race, and the Meaning of Justice* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2004), xlv.

writing has much to teach us about American culture and literature, as H. Bruce Franklin argues in the first full-length study of prison writing in the U.S., *Prison Literature in America: The Victim as Criminal and Artist*.²³⁵ Franklin links prison writing to African American culture and positions both as fundamental to constructions of American identity. By bringing prison writing to the forefront of American literature, he shows the diffusion of prison ideology across American life and the literary canon. Even prison writing's common tropes can function as a critique of American ideals: Peter Caster argues that prison writing's frequent emphasis on collective identity – a mode of sociality in a space marked by solitude and isolation – highlights “a social subjectivity emphasizing an engagement with history and a collective sense of the self in that history at odds with the American ideal of autonomous individualism.”²³⁶ This chapter engages these critiques of larger American political culture in relation to prison but shifts the focus to prisoner emotional expressions. By making prisoners' emotional identities central to these discussions, I argue that such private expressions are important to understanding constructions of public and political subjectivities.

While the field of prison studies often discusses social death, it focuses on political aspects and neglects emotional reactions. For example, in studies of George Jackson's work, tender, human moments are mentioned (they are part of what made his best-selling collection of letters, *Soledad Brother*, so popular) but then are frequently shuttled to the sidelines in favor of his political analysis. When an emotion is discussed, it is almost always anger. For example, in his introduction to the first edition of *Soledad*

²³⁵ Franklin, *Prison Literature in America*. Originally published as *The Victim as Criminal and Artist: Literature from the American Prison* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978). All quotations are from the Lawrence Hill edition.

²³⁶ Peter Caster, *Prisons, Race, and Masculinity in Twentieth Century U.S. Literature and Film* (Columbus, OH: Ohio State University Press, 2008), 4.

Brother, Jean Genet writes that “anger alone illuminates his [Jackson’s] style and his thinking, and a kind of joy in anger” (*Soledad* 335). But by making anger the most visible feeling, we lose sight of further complexities in Jackson’s writing and in prisoner self-representation. Some of the most intimate instances in his texts happen around moments of loss, and a careful examination of such occasions shows how the political and personal are intertwined. To recover prisoner grieving strategies enhances our understanding of the conditions of social death, offering insight into prisoner subjectivity and reflecting on the processes of mourning in a culture that enables these losses.

Prison is fundamentally linked to loss – dispossession, deprivation, civil death, and actual death. In a place defined by near constant, ongoing loss, achieving psychic rebalance and positive engagements with the world is rarely an option; rather, prisoners endure a profoundly melancholic process of continuous reinjury. The material and psychic conditions of incarceration also restrict emotional expression. Emotions surrounding grief, especially sadness, are incredibly vexed, generally unsanctioned in the daily routines of prison, as prison writers from Chester Himes to Malcolm Braly have testified. This blocked emotional expression especially affects male inmates, for whom “hardness” and stoicism are privileged.²³⁷ As such, prison is paradoxically both a place of persistent grief and foreclosed mourning (mourning referring to the rituals and practices that help one cope with loss).

To build an archive of prison grief, I focus on writing from imprisoned people rather than the imagined space of prison. American cultural knowledge of prison often comes from frequently sensationalized and reductive fictional accounts. Since the late

²³⁷ See Caster’s *Prisons, Race, and Masculinity* and Auli Ek, *Race and Masculinity in Contemporary American Prison Narratives* (New York: Routledge, 2005).

1960s and early 1970s marked a time of heightened prison unrest and, consequently, prison visibility in the American mainstream, I examine two sets of texts from this period. George Jackson, internationally acclaimed author and political prisoner, wrote the aforementioned *Soledad Brother* (1970) and a political manifesto, *Blood in My Eye* (1972), before his untimely death in California's San Quentin State Prison.²³⁸

Responding to Jackson's demise and to awful living conditions, prisoners on the other side of the country in New York's Attica Correctional Facility revolted, taking over a section of the prison for several days before a tragic massacre left forty three dead. The Attica upheaval, the largest prison riot in U.S. history, spawned myriad writing in different genres before, during, and after the event. These interlocking events create a quagmire of loss and textual trails of grief.

Since testimonies about atrocities of imprisonment and grief over losses wrought by prison are often made public via prison writing, I consider how the genre of prison literature offers a window into the lives of ever-increasing American prison population. This genre, like its ancestor, the captivity narrative, revolves around the subject and how prison shapes his or her life. Avery Gordon posits a specific "methodology of imprisonment" that prisoner writing deploys: she describes it as "a body of subjugated knowledge, which shows and tells how to live in the space of death, dispossession, and disenfranchisement," one that analyzes the prison regime.²³⁹ Even Doran Larson's claim that we should define the genre by specific tropes and traits, not by subject position or experience, still acknowledges that prison writing emerges out of specific structures of

²³⁸ George Jackson, *Blood in My Eye* (New York: Random House, 1972; Baltimore, MD: Black Classic Press, 1996). All quotations are from the Black Classic Press edition.

²³⁹ Avery F. Gordon, "Methodologies of Imprisonment," *PMLA* 123, no. 3 (May 2008): 652-7 (654).

power and modes of resistance.²⁴⁰ However, within the genre of prison literature, writers use other literary genres, and I want to underscore the importance of specific generic choices within prisoner writing. From autobiographical genres to political treatise to poetry, the prison writing I examine operates across a literary spectrum, and these literary modes function as crucial interpretative tools.

In this chapter, I trace the way that Jackson and the Attica writers textualize loss, specifically focusing on how their chosen genres offer different affective and political potentials. Jackson, for example, moves from personal letters to political treatise, using both genres to comment on the constant state of loss experienced by marginalized populations and to reject sentimental reactions to grief. I argue that Jackson recircuits grief from personal feeling to public import, demonstrating the political potentials for revolutionary reactions to loss. The Attica writers take up this mantle, focusing on public constructions of grief following the riot as they reinterpret the revolt. While Jackson uses an unconventional genre for grief (political manifesto), Attica prisoners tap into the conventional literary genre of mourning – elegy – to gain ethos. These elegies use a predictable mode of expressing grief but deploy it in unconventional ways, transforming the lyric elegy – a personal poem focused on interior emotion – into a contemplation of the external social forces that regulate articulations of emotion. These circulations of loss disrupt popular conceptions of prisoner identity and create potentials for public recognition of prisoner emotions and subjectivity.

“Dying, but Fighting Back”: George Jackson’s Modes of Mourning

If we must die – let it not be like hogs

Hunted and penned in an inglorious spot,

²⁴⁰ Larson, “Toward a Prison Poetics.”

While round us bark the mad and hungry dogs,
Making their mock at our accursed lot.

...

Like men we'll face the murderous, cowardly pack,
Pressed to the wall, dying, but fighting back!

-Claude McKay

At one point in *Soledad Brother*, George Jackson laments his continued imprisonment and then quotes the entirety of Claude McKay's famous sonnet, "If We Must Die." Pouring out of him, sans line breaks, the poem becomes a lyric meditation on the conditions of social (and even physical) death in the carceral space. Jackson himself was put in prison in 1960 at age eighteen after pleading guilty to stealing seventy dollars from a gas station: his sentence was one year to life, and due in part to his political work, he was never paroled (*Soledad* 16). Later, Jackson was one of three men (the "Soledad Brothers") accused of killing a guard – if convicted, he would receive the death penalty. In this letter, Jackson follows the poem by writing, "I don't mind dying but I'd like to have the opportunity to fight back" (*Soledad* 103). He divines his fate elsewhere in the text too, always with this same wish – to strike a blow against the forces that will eventually kill him. Specifically, he battles the prison system, and by extension, a racist U.S. culture that disproportionately incarcerates black men. Life is ultimately unsustainable under conditions of confinement, and resistance gives meaning to his eventual death. These circumstances shape Jackson's understanding of loss, and his parsing of emotions related to death – specifically grief – is conditioned by the terms of imprisonment. I position mourning as central to Jackson's texts, an aspect of his writing

often overlooked by critics.

Jackson's textual strategies and literary framings shape his grief and reframe mourning. His use of both the epistolary collection/personal narrative and the political manifesto creates different registers for conveying grief. In the first, *Soledad Brother*, he constantly fights against emotion, denying and suppressing it. Nonetheless, these moments of repression do not fully contain his feelings as they bubble to the surface. Loss is always present in this text, and Jackson particularly draws our attention to the public conditions of grief. The genre of personal narrative via epistolary invites a reading of personal and political intertwinings, helping us see loss as both a private and public phenomenon. *Soledad Brother's* presentation of loss sets up Jackson's extended consideration of grief in the political treatise *Blood in My Eye*. This text transforms the stringent political and revolutionary form of the political manifesto by including emotional concerns and literary practices of mourning. Grief becomes mobile, no longer bound by generic shackles, as Jackson places it in the treatise to demonstrate how grief is diffused through different facets of life – and how it impacts not only personal life but also political practice. In converting intimate grief into public idiom, Jackson redistributes the emotional impact of loss. His focus on mourning in this genre deemphasizes the individual and focuses on critiquing and dismantling the racist practices that cause loss.

Jackson's increasing emphasis on violent revolution shapes his understanding of grief since revolutionary action inevitably yields casualties, losses that further the political cause. Loss, then, is not only the condition of racial oppression but a crucial part of resisting it – part and parcel of political change. Extending this view, Jackson's texts

deny vulnerability and sentimentalism in the face of loss and call for celebration rather than sorrow. This mode of mourning contradicts and disrupts mainstream notions of grief, helping make visible the ideological frameworks governing emotional expression. In other words, Jackson speaks out against a political culture that simultaneously causes the losses of prisoners (and other marginalized populations) and yet denies their grief. Such interpretations of grief were put into practice upon Jackson's death, as his texts influenced how his political community mourned him. While scholars like Rebecca N. Hill and especially Dan Berger have explored reactions to Jackson's death, I will demonstrate how Jackson prescribes these types of mourning and memorialization.²⁴¹ Via two very different genres, Jackson transforms the affective work of mourning from exhaustive emotional outpourings to a reinvestment in political activism, energy directed outward toward changing society. Read in tandem, *Soledad Brother* and *Blood in My Eye* present public representations and expressions of grief (mourning, in other words) as crucial resources for resisting and rejecting systems of oppression.

Soledad Brother is a major text in the field of prison literature. Prison writing has long sparked curiosity from mainstream audiences because, as Auli Ek writes, prison autobiographies are “discursive site for satisfying voyeuristic pleasure” where the reader’s “gaze” on the prisoner “affirms social and moral hierarchies” via the criminal behavior of the inmate.²⁴² Indeed, prison writing frequently focuses on the personal experience of the inmate, often appearing in the form of personal narrative styles like letters or autobiographies. Also, much of the poetry and fiction that comes out of prison

²⁴¹ Dan Berger, *Captive Nation: Black Prison Organizing in the Civil Rights Era* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2014) and Rebecca N. Hill, *Men, Mobs, and Law: Anti-Lynching and Labor Defense in U.S. Radical History* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2008).

²⁴² Ek, *Race and Masculinity*, 48.

is heavily influenced by personal experience. This emphasis on the prisoner's incarcerated life drives *Soledad Brother*. Ioan Davies notes that prison autobiographies "are centered on a debate that the prisoner has with the world and himself on the nature of his 'crimes' and the meaning that prison has given to his life."²⁴³ *Soledad Brother* fits this model: even though the text is not a traditional autobiography, the letters are specifically chosen and presented to highlight Jackson's identity as a prisoner. After attorney Fay Stender collected them, the letters were curated by Jackson and editor Gregory Armstrong – a process that I will briefly comment on later – and Jackson composed a brief autobiography for the beginning of the text. The emphasis on criminality in prison literature creates the main trope of this genre: "a narrative of rebirth" that fits in with the (supposed) rehabilitative aims of prison.²⁴⁴ However, Jackson's work chafes against this structure, and in fact other writers of this time period, like Eldridge Cleaver, also resisted this trope.²⁴⁵ My examination considers how Jackson reframes the "contemplation of death" and the "sharpened...sense of death and apprehension of violence" inherent to prison writing in ways that subvert the norms of the genre – i.e. fighting for social change instead of seeking penance.²⁴⁶

Jackson denies feelings and emotions throughout *Soledad Brother*, statements that most critics take at face value. Michelle Koerner claims that much of *Soledad Brother*'s power comes from Jackson's "total refusal to adjust to existing conditions of capture, enslavement, and incarceration," including the "feeling of being captured."²⁴⁷ However,

²⁴³ Ioan Davies, *Writers in Prison* (Cambridge, MA: Basil Blackwell, 1990), 106.

²⁴⁴ Smith, *Prison and the American Imagination*, 6.

²⁴⁵ Davies, *Writers in Prison*, 109.

²⁴⁶ Davies, *Writers in Prison*, 16, 18.

²⁴⁷ Michelle Koerner, "Line of Escape: Gilles Deleuze's Encounter with George Jackson," *Genre* 44, no. 2 (Summer 2011): 157-80 (164, 170).

this resistance is hard won: throughout *Soledad Brother*, Jackson overtly battles emotion, striving for control over his feelings. He feels that he “has been victimized by his emotions,” and he tries to escape the pain (*Soledad* 143).

This struggle is most evident in Jackson’s frequent communications with his parents. Sometimes affectionate, otherwise adversarial, these letters offer insight into Jackson’s emotional state and expression. He is especially influenced by observations of his father. Jackson characterizes him as man who has “years and years of regret and grief, discomfort, and defeat” stemming from racism that resides “within him, still jammed back in the dark corners of his mind” (*Soledad* 136-7) and who yet “lived his entire life in a state of shock” with no “overt manifestation of *real* sensitivity, affection, or sentiment” (*Soledad* 240). In other words, the state of “neo-slavery” (Jackson’s terminology) leaves black men politically impotent and emotionally paralyzed – deeply affected by their losses but unable to express them. He sees this mindset as constitutive of this generation of black men, positing that “there are no [psychologically] healthy brothers of his generation, *none at all*” (*Soledad* 240). These observations inform Jackson’s mentality: he aims to avoid his father’s fate by banishing feeling and by transforming negative affect into positive political action.

For Jackson, emotional response distracts from more politically productive aims. For example, he writes that the “bitter experience” of oppression “seems to be bringing out the worst in us instead of our best. Instead of growing thoughtful and determined, they get more emotional and mindless” (*Soledad* 159). A clear split exists in Jackson’s mind – “mindless” emotions divert us from “thoughtful and determined” actions that could counter hegemony. This division distinctly influences his reactions to loss. For the

prisoner – and the marginalized, colonized peoples he describes in his books – loss is quotidian, and grief always lingers.²⁴⁸ Scholars like Karla FC Holloway have explored how this condition shapes traditional black mourning rituals in the U.S., but Jackson offers alternative practices that reject sentimentalism.²⁴⁹ His work strives to recognize and fight the causes of racism instead of reacting to the feelings engendered by domination. Jackson recognizes the challenges of changing this mentality as he switches pronouns (“us” to “they”) between sentences, subtly demonstrating his own struggle in adopting this view. He later declares that “we must not allow the emotional aspects of these issues [of European colonialism], the scum at the surface, to obstruct our view of the big picture, the whole rotten hunk [of capitalism]” (*Soledad* 236). In other words, emotion works against political action as it impedes resistance against the major apparatuses of oppression. Even as Jackson denies the power of emotion, we see his desire to rethink typical emotional expressions and representations, creating different emotional registers for representing negative affects like loss and grief.

He theorizes these alternative reactions when his maternal grandfather dies. Jackson rebukes his parents for letting his grandfather die in poverty and, after offering personal remembrances, writes, “I don’t know how anyone else views the matter and don’t care, but now for me his is one more voice added to the already thunderous chorus that cry from their unmarked and unhallowed graves for vindication” (*Soledad* 108).²⁵⁰

Jackson does not reside in sorrow, nor do his deceased rest in peace; rather, the dead call

²⁴⁸ According to Ruth Wilson Gilmore, this vulnerability to premature death is the definition of racism. *Golden Gulag*, 28 qtd. in Gordon (652).

²⁴⁹ Karla FC Holloway, *Passed On: African American Mourning Stories, A Memorial* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2002).

²⁵⁰ Jackson later adapts this sentence while discussing Jonathan’s death in *Blood in My Eye*: “Jonathan is calling from the grave, adding another voice to the many thunderous graveyard affirmations which, for us blacks, speeds the revolution to its ultimate issue” (26).

for change. They want “vindication,” not recognition. For Jackson, the legacies of death in and from oppressive conditions call not for grieving but for a new politics that eliminates the systemic precariousness of black lives. So while *Soledad Brother* certainly employs anger in this mode of political resistance, it also activates grief as a crucial tool.

Soledad Brother's reconceptualization of emotions culminates in the final letter. This missive to his mother discusses his brother's death, an event that moved him deeply and became influential in his later writings. On August 7, 1970, seventeen year old Jonathan Jackson entered the Marin County courthouse and interrupted the trial of James McClain. Distributing guns to three prisoners – McClain and two witnesses for the case, William Christmas and Ruchell Magee – the men took presiding Judge Harold Haley, a guard, prosecutor Gary Thomas, and three female jurors hostage, herding them out of the building. While departing, they came up on police barricades and the ensuing shootout left Haley, McClain, Christmas, and Jackson dead and others injured. The courthouse disruption was part of a protest calling for the release of the “Soledad Brothers.”²⁵¹ According to Gregory Armstrong, Jackson was grief-stricken but proud upon learning of his brother's death.²⁵²

The letter is remarkably taciturn. Jackson briefly hails Jonathan in revolutionary terms and praises his mother for not crying before saying, “I can't go any further, it would just be a love story about the baddest brother this world has had the privilege to meet, and it's just not popular or safe – to say I love him” (*Soledad* 329). This tender

²⁵¹ Jackson details these circumstances in the opening of *Soledad Brother* (3-16). For more on this incident, see Hill and Cummins. Hill claims that the Black Panther Party was involved and that Jonathan Jackson was not informed that these co-conspirators backed out of the raid (304). It is unclear if Jackson knew what his brother planned to do; he denied it and reports from fellow prisoners said he was upset by it, but others claim that Jackson planned Jonathan's actions (Cummins 183-4).

²⁵² Gregory Armstrong, *The Dragon Has Come* (New York: Harper and Row, 1974), 131-3.

statement is undercut by Jackson's self-proclaimed vulnerability, potential weakness that operates in several ways. Given the constant surveillance and censorship in prison (he even comments in one letter that he is not sure if it will ever reach its recipient), none of his communications were "safe," even love (*Soledad* 278). Such precarity also affects Jackson's gender identity. Although Jackson rebelled against the elder generation of emotionally-stunned black men, he also operates within his contemporaries' discourses of masculinity: for a black prisoner with Jackson's political sensibilities, "manhood" was often constructed around militancy, hardness, and hyper-masculine attributes.²⁵³ To admit love, grief, and sorrow, even for a family member's demise, threatens that image. We see here another reason for Jackson's restructuring of grief (and personal narrative) as he makes emotional expression appropriately masculine by placing it within a revolutionary context.

Jackson's sentence hinges on this final phrase ("– to say I love him"). He breaks the prose with a dash, detaching this clause from the rest of the sentence. In doing so, he separates the personal meaning of his brother's death (what it means to "I") from the larger meaning that Jackson ascribes to it ("the baddest brother *this world* has had the privilege to meet"). This moment shows the individual, private reaction to his brother's loss. Then the paragraph breaks, leaving us with the end of the letter: "Cold and calm though. 'All right, gentlemen, I'm taking over now'" (*Soledad* 278). This abrupt break makes the referent here unclear. Ostensibly "cold and calm" refers to Jonathan Jackson's demeanor while in the courthouse. However, it also douses the warm, personal sentiments. Simultaneously, "cold and calm" becomes an approach to revolutionary

²⁵³ See Ek, especially chapter 2, and Caster, especially chapter 3, for extended discussions of prison and black masculinity.

action and a response to loss, the two linked in the denial of personal attachment. Instead of lingering in a state of feeling, Jackson redirects his grief to action.

In this final line, Jackson quotes what were supposedly his brother's words as he stood in that courtroom, but this quotation does not appear in the press reports of the situation. News sources like the *Los Angeles Times* quote Jonathan as saying, "This is it! Everybody line up!"²⁵⁴ The mainstream press depicts him as a nameless, faceless criminal whose language reflects a frantic stick-up, while Jackson writes of a wise-beyond-his-years revolutionary whose elegant rhetoric ("gentlemen") indicates the "cold and calm" intents of radical politics.²⁵⁵ Through this ventriloquism, Jackson destabilizes the narratives of Jonathan's death and loss, allowing for alternative interpretations and emotional reactions. By countering official accounts, Jackson rewrites the larger meaning ascribed to his brother's actions. He calls into question the underlying systems of interpretation that govern the way we see black lives (and deaths), using loss as a mode of critique.

Grief for Jonathan extended beyond the Jackson family. On August 15, 1970, Black Panther leader Huey Newton spoke at a memorial for Jonathan Jackson and William Christmas that drew a large crowd (up to 1000 people). The memorial took place in West Oakland, California, "the birthplace of the Black Panther Party."²⁵⁶ Indeed, the imagery of Jonathan's death in the mainstream press revolves around the Black Power iconography. For instance, the picture that accompanied the *Philadelphia Tribune's*

²⁵⁴ "Judge, 3 Others Slain in Gun Battle at Court," *Los Angeles Times*, August 8, 1970, 1. According to Gregory Armstrong, Jackson listened to radio reports of the incident, which may be the source of the quotation (132).

²⁵⁵ At least one article sympathetically depicts Jonathan as a misguided youth rather than a hardened criminal. "Jonathan Jackson bright student: his principal," *Afro-American*, August 29, 1970, 3.

²⁵⁶ Leroy F. Aarons, "Funeral Rites Held for Court Killers," *Washington Post*, August 16, 1970, A11.

article about the memorial features a close up of two men raising their arms in the Black Power salute.²⁵⁷ The *Pittsburgh Courier* (a prominent African American newspaper) and the *Washington Post* ran a photo of Jonathan's casket being carried into the church.²⁵⁸ People flank the casket as it enters, with some giving the Black Power salute. The juxtaposition of the coffin, the central emblem of mourning, with the explicitly political gesture shows the way that this funeral was positioned as a radical political rally, not just as a personal show of grief. In moments like this one, we see Jonathan Jackson's transformation into a political martyr – and the direct link between affective labor and political labor.

The memorial was broadcast on KPFA radio, a Berkeley, California station part of a progressive radio group called Pacifica Radio. Newton read a statement from George Jackson, which he prefaced by stating that the passage would be published in Jackson's upcoming book of letters (referring to *Soledad Brother*, which was released later that year). The full eulogy follows:

To the Man-Child,

Tall, evil, graceful, brighteyed black man-child – Jonathan Peter Jackson – who died on August 7, 1970, courage in one hand, the assault rifle in the other; my brother, comrade, friend –the *true revolutionary*, the black communist guerrilla in the highest state of development, he died on the trigger, scourge of the unrighteous; soldier of the people; to this terrible man-child and his wonderful mother, Georgia Bea, to Angela Davis, my tender experience, I dedicate this selection of letters; to the destruction of their enemies, I dedicate my life.

²⁵⁷ “2000 at Rites for Youths Slain in Court Outbreak,” *Philadelphia Tribune*, August 22, 1970, 6.

²⁵⁸ Leroy F. Aarons, “Funeral Rites Held,” A11 and “Farewell Salute,” *Pittsburgh Courier*, August 22, 1970, 24.

(*Soledad Brother*)²⁵⁹

Jackson takes an often sentimental genre (the eulogy) and turns it into a celebration of loss and revolutionary action. Discarding traditional tropes of consolation and peaceful rhetoric, he instead embraces death as part of revolution. This acceptance extends to the dedication: Jackson often predicted his own death, giving “I dedicate my life” both a metaphorical and a literal meaning. Indeed, Dylan Rodríguez notes that “Jackson resists state violence *while embracing its inevitable fate*” – that is, death.²⁶⁰ Existing in a state of already being lost (social death in prison) while also always on the precipice of physical death changes the terms of grief. As such, Jackson redeploys the emotional energy spent grappling with loss toward “the destruction of enemies.” This eulogy becomes the dedication to *Soledad Brother*, thus contextualizing the book in terms of mourning – a mourning that resists sentimentality and fights back against oppression.

The letters of *Soledad Brother* conclude after Jonathan’s death. However, Jonathan reappears in Jackson’s second book, *Blood in My Eye*, a political treatise composed of long letters and essays. When it was released, reviews of the book noted the importance of loss to this text, but this insight has since fallen out of critical conversations.²⁶¹ While not as well-received as *Soledad Brother*, it received praise for its writing and its ideas: David Lewis’s *New York Times* review of the book deems Jackson’s essay on fascism “rather better than some of the papers on the subject annually read

²⁵⁹ “Black Panther Party: Funeral of Jonathan Jackson and William Christmas, August 15, 1970,” Real Audio, Pacifica Radio and Moffitt Library, University of California, Berkeley, <http://oskicat.berkeley.edu/record=b15838493~S1>. I have punctuated this passage as it looks in the dedication to the first edition of *Soledad Brother*, although Newton’s reading would suggest different grammatical structures as it emphasizes different things and is generally more fragmented. This part of the speech starts at approximately 10:19 in the recording.

²⁶⁰ Rodríguez, *Forced Passages*, 121.

²⁶¹ William Doyle-Marshall, “From Prison Walls,” review of *Blood in My Eye*, by George Jackson, *The Hartford Courant*, April 2, 1972, 6F and Colin McGlashan, “Super spade,” review of *Blood in My Eye*, by George Jackson, *The Guardian*, May 11, 1972, 16.

before the American Historical Association.”²⁶² Certainly Jackson’s chosen genre is part of the reason for the lukewarm reception of this second book. The political manifesto lacks the personal testimony and insights into prisoner humanity that so attracted readers to *Soledad Brother*. Indeed, near the end of *Blood in My Eye*’s composition, his editor, Gregory Armstrong, commented on the lack of humanity in it.²⁶³ Perhaps this was Jackson’s point. According to Eric Cummins, Armstrong’s strong editorial hand significantly shaped *Soledad Brother*: Armstrong “contributed greatly to keeping the book a personal narrative, preventing it from becoming a polemic or practical guide to revolution, as Jackson might have preferred it to be, and as his final book, *Blood in My Eye* (1972), was to become.”²⁶⁴ As previously mentioned, Jackson appeared skeptical of autobiographical and personal writing as he strained against the conventions of the genre. Brian Conniff argues that Jackson seemed to understand the “conventional convict autobiography” as an “almost failed genre” with a “tendency to create in its subject a sense of uniqueness [that] militates against any analysis of common oppression” – thus working against many of Jackson’s political commitments.²⁶⁵ As such, the genre switch allows Jackson to further the political theorization that he starts in *Soledad Brother*. Although the two books are extremely different, Jonathan Jackson’s death forges a bridge between them, an aspect of *Blood in My Eye* – perhaps the most “humanizing” part of the text – that has been largely overlooked.

By including discussions of his brother’s death in the political manifesto, a genre

²⁶² “Last will and testament of a ‘Soledad Brother,’” review of *Blood in My Eye*, by George Jackson, *New York Times*, April 16, 1972, BR32.

²⁶³ Armstrong, *The Dragon Has Come*, 204.

²⁶⁴ Eric Cummins, *The Rise and Fall of California’s Radical Prison Movement* (Palo Alto, CA: Stanford University Press, 1994), 174-5.

²⁶⁵ Brian Conniff, “The Prison Writers as Ideologue: George Jackson and the Attica Rebellion,” *Prose and Cons: Essays on Prison Literature in the United States*, Ed. D. Quentin Miller (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2005): 147-73 (156).

that focuses on larger vectors of power rather than individual introspection, Jackson transitions grief from personal emotion to political power. This genre is predicated discursively on rational appeals, one that has public meaning and, as Janet Lyons points out, has been historically linked to bourgeois public sphere formations.²⁶⁶ Of course, the bourgeois establishment hardly has a monopoly on manifestoes: writing one allows Jackson to memorialize Jonathan in the vein of Marx, Mao, Guevara, and Lenin, whose works inspired him. By including grief in a text that aims to create a politically-minded group, Jackson destabilizes the rational basis of public formation and creates space for the formation of emotional publics. In turn, paying attention to systemic structures allows Jackson to deploy grief in a different way. Rather than position Jonathan's death as a personal, private loss, the political treatise allows him to further emphasize Jonathan's loss as significant on a larger scale. Shared losses become a key part of creating a revolutionary community, an international group forged not only through shared political commitment but also through shared grief and a desire to redeploy it toward a better political future.

The epigraph to *Blood in My Eye* immediately connects this political text to the personal mourning of Jackson's brother:

My dear only surviving son,

I went to Mount Vernon August 7th, 1971, to visit the grave site of my heart your keepers murdered in cold disregard for life.

His grave was supposed to be behind your grandfather's and grandmother's. But I couldn't find it. There was no marker. Just mowed grass. The story of our past. I sent the keeper a blank check for a headstone – and two extra sites – blood in my

²⁶⁶ Janet Lyons, *Manifestoes: Provocations of the Modern* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1999), 2.

eye!!!

Jonathan was killed on August 7, 1970, and he was subsequently buried in Mount Vernon, Illinois's Bethel Cemetery. Jackson does not name the author of the letter, and the writer remains contested. A 1972 Bantam edition cites Jackson's father, Lester, as the author, and journalist Paul Liberatore concurs²⁶⁷; however, other editions of the book leave the author anonymous, and both Julian Moynahan, who reviewed the book for *The Observer*, and scholar Joy James claim that Jackson's mother, Georgia, wrote the letter.²⁶⁸ No matter who wrote the letter, Jonathan's death indeed helped reconcile Jackson to his parents, especially his mother. By opening with this letter, Jackson creates a continuation between the final correspondence from *Soledad Brother* and this new work, the enduring legacy of Jonathan's death as related to Jackson's political aims. It immediately contextualizes the book in terms of grief but shifts the framework from personal to political, as mourning becomes affective labor supporting – not adjacent to – political work.

When the letter writer finds that the grave is not there, the short, staccato sentences turn into fragments. The lack of direct connection between clauses – the missing subjects or verbs – mimics the lost storyline. With no marker, no public recognition of loss, the past is subsumed back into the earth (“grass”). The ground is

²⁶⁷ Joy James, “Introduction: Violations,” *Warfare in the American Homeland* Ed. Joy James (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2007): 3-16 (16). Paul Liberatore, *The Road to Hell: The True Story of George Jackson, Stephen Bingham, and the San Quentin Massacre* (New York: Atlantic Monthly, 1996), 95.

²⁶⁸ James, “Introduction,” 11 and 16. Julian Moynahan, “The ghost of San Quentin,” review of *Blood in My Eye*, by George Jackson, *The Observer*, May 7, 1972, 37. While James cites an article title of an interview with Georgia Jackson as evidence of her authorship (16), other media interviews with Lester Jackson in 1971 support his authorship of the letter. In an interview on July 29, 1971 with David Holmstrom, Lester calls Jonathan “[his] heart,” the same phrasing as the letter (“Interview with a ‘Soledad Dad,’” *The Christian Science Monitor*, July 29, 1971, 5). And in an August 23, 1971 interview, Lester discusses visiting the grave site and buying a second plot for George (“‘Killing Expected,’ Jackson’s Dad Says,” *The Hartford Courant*, August 23, 1971, 12).

meticulously groomed (“just mowed”), neatly covering up the brutally-engendered loss that lies beneath. The writer links this particular burial site to “the story of our past.” “Our” motions beyond the family line, extending to the larger African American population and perhaps even to others whose losses are not marked and acknowledged publicly. By stripping the epigraph of specific identifying details, Jackson further widens the scope of grief beyond his family’s personal losses. The epigraph sets the tone for the rest of the book – an excavation of uncomfortable and vicious pasts, once lost and now recovered to undergird revolution.

The climactic titular imagery (“blood in my eye!”) immediately conjures visions of tears, an expected response given the graveyard setting, the lost family members, and the situation. However, the different bodily fluid in the eye subverts expectations (and implies anger, as in “seeing red”). The incongruity here highlights an unconventional approach to loss – not just the loss of family members, but of lineage and of the past. The hybrid affect – blurred blood and tears – shows the unexpected potentials for loss, with violent revolution replacing sadness. Even this portion of the book not written by Jackson himself demonstrates a reaction to loss that restructures the functions of grief, and it sets the tone for the rest of the book.

If Georgia Jackson is indeed the writer, then this letter rewrites the conventions of a familiar figure in prison literature – the long-suffering mother. Her association with the feminine and the domestic means that she can perform the affective work of grieving for the prisoner: her appearance in prison texts often signals a release of emotion as she becomes a repository of grief. Joy James discusses such dynamics in her essay about women’s roles in prison activism.²⁶⁹ However, in Jackson’s writing, he reforms this

²⁶⁹ Joy James, “Sorrow: The Good Soldier and the Good Woman,” *Warfare in the American Homeland*:

vision of the prison mother, as Georgia Jackson subverts the tropes in both Jackson's own and other media representations. She often refuses the traditional affective work of mourning for her sons, instead directing it toward the injustices that caused her loss.²⁷⁰ For Georgia to have blood, not tears, in her eyes would mean that even the subject position most prone to expressions of grief can redirect and recircuit emotional impulse toward political action.

Loss saturates *Blood in My Eye*, especially the first section which features Jonathan Jackson prominently. Before discussing Jonathan's role in the book, however, I want to explore the other ways Jackson invokes loss, scenes that contextualize the way he writes about his brother. One important example is the gravedigger, a key figure in Jackson's vision of revolution. Jackson makes loss part of revolutionary consciousness and education – it is the apex of this preparation: “We have the foundation of our strategy. We have studied Marx and Lenin for description and history of the modern industrial state. We've organized our thoughts and trained our bodies for the ordeal of ‘gravedigging’” (*Blood* 28). However, Jackson notes that “the gravedigger needs a bodyguard to protect him at this work, or else the grave may be his own” (*Blood* 55-6). As such, the gravedigger is in a precarious position as the man who makes fascism's gravesite may fall into it himself, a casualty of the revolution.²⁷¹ While Jackson frames the gravedigger as a positive figure who buries fascists, the vulnerability of that position lingers. For Jackson, standing on precipice of the grave, no matter why you are there,

Policing and Prison in a Penal Democracy Ed. Joy James (Durham: NC: Duke University Press, 2007): 58-73.

²⁷⁰ Jackson discusses the role of black mothers, mourning, and the revolution in *Soledad Brother* (298-9). *The Black Panther* also praises Georgia Jackson in their coverage of both Jackson brothers' deaths.

²⁷¹ While Jackson acknowledges the vulnerability of the gravedigger in his text, one prisoner who knew Jackson claims that it only refers to digging the grave of fascism. See Cummins, *Rise and Fall*, 204.

defines the state of black Americans and other colonized peoples: one wrong move puts you in a grave.

Throughout the text, Jackson mentions the dangers of revolution and the inevitable casualties: “If we accept revolution, we must accept all that it implies: repression, counter-terrorism, days filled with work, nervous strains, prison, funerals” (*Blood* 48). He states that “funerals can be used as an issue [to spur revolution], since there will be so many of them” (*Blood* 49). Thus, the gravedigger switches codes: he digs the grave of the fascist/capitalist system in the United States, but in other moments, he buries the casualties of revolution. He is a figure of twinned celebration and mourning, a sign of triumph and a sign of loss all at once.

By positing funerals as an expected result of revolution, Jackson reshapes the way we think about mourning rituals. Instead of simply staging displays of exhaustive emotion, grieving rituals transform into political acts that further revolution. For example, he writes about funerals for the first wave of “soldiers” who will start the revolution:

These comrades must make the first contribution. They will be the first to fall. We gather up their bodies, clean them, kiss them and smile. Their funerals should be gala affairs, of home-brewed wine and revolutionary music to do the dance of death by. We should be sad only that it’s taken us so many generations to produce them. (*Blood* 49)

Jackson explicitly pairs the affective labor of mourning with political labor. His reverence for the dead bodies reflects an old-fashioned, homespun approach to the dead. As opposed to the sanitized (and corporatized) management of bodies in hospitals and in funeral homes, Jackson advocates a closer physical relationship to the deceased. This

interaction with the corpses through gathering, cleansing, and even kissing them serves not to sadden the mourners but to cheer them. They see the evidence of the revolution, its material manifestations, and smile. The scene of the funeral is curiously high and low brow – a “gala affair,” implying an event of great importance that ends up in the tabloids, but they drink “home-brewed” wine and dance to their own music. A society party featuring revolutionaries doing “the dance of death,” Jackson’s “gala” is a bit ironic, subverting expectations. Jackson’s ideal funeral disrupts conventional mourning rituals that take death and loss very seriously. Paying respect to the dead happens not with prayers and solemnity but instead with an irreverence for tradition. He thus offers an alternative to prescribed emotional responses – one that can help create a revolutionary community.

Jackson’s idea of funerals both stems from and deviates from black funerary tradition. Karla FC Holloway discusses the importance of funerals in twentieth century African American communities, noting that they

depended on the spectacle of the moment to involve the community of mourners as fully as possible in the emotions and the ceremony of the event. Community involvement in the African American funeral ceremony took its significance (if not its actual practices) from West African cultures that attended to death and burial as an important, public, elaborate, and lengthy social event.²⁷²

Such practices often included music and dancing, as in Jackson’s described funeral.²⁷³

Jackson’s emphasis on community coming together and on festivity at the funeral comes in part from these traditions he would have been familiar with. However, Holloway also

²⁷² Holloway, *Passed On*, 173-4.

²⁷³ Holloway, *Passed On*, 175.

discusses the dynamic quality of funerals, the weeping and overt emotional expressions of grief, which are missing at Jackson's revolutionary funeral.²⁷⁴ Furthermore, she emphasizes the importance of the black church in the community and in mourning ritual, which Jackson completely omits.²⁷⁵ In fact, when Jackson discusses Jonathan's funeral with Gregory Armstrong, he is "suspicious" about the fact that it would be held at a church.²⁷⁶ When he asks if there will be a priest, Armstrong says no, affirming it will be a "revolutionary" funeral and that the church setting was more about having enough space for the memorial.²⁷⁷ Denying this key part of the black funeral is part of Jackson's rerouting of grief. Instead of operating in the religious domain, mourning is removed to the political realm. This deviation from customary practices works toward the transformation of grief from emotional and personal labor to public, political work.

These prescribed reactions to loss shade our understanding of Jonathan's appearances in this book. Jackson continually circles back to his dead brother and draws on him (and his loss) as political inspiration especially in the first section, "Letter to a Comrade." Critics comment on Jonathan's martyrdom in the book, which Jackson strategically constructs and incorporates into mourning practice.²⁷⁸ However, there is no overt sentiment here; rather, Jackson uses grief to diagnose public ills. Jonathan's death takes on greater public import, one with more long-lasting implications than the moments immediately following his death, transcending the ephemera inherent to many mourning genres. References to Jonathan remind us of the vulnerability of revolutionaries while simultaneously reconceptualizing these losses.

²⁷⁴ Holloway, *Passed On*, 154-5.

²⁷⁵ Holloway, *Passed On*, 150-1.

²⁷⁶ Armstrong, *The Dragon Has Come*, 139.

²⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁷⁸ Berger, *Captive Nation*, 160-1.

Much of this section discusses revolutionary tactics and necessary personnel, especially the soldiers of revolution. Jackson refers to them as

terrible Jonathans teathed on the barrel of the political tool, hardened against the concrete of the most uncivilized jungles of the planet – Chicago, St. Louis, Los Angeles, San Francisco – tested in a dozen fires. ‘Tall, slim youth’...the new nigger, with a gun and the eyes of the hunter, the hunter of men. (*Blood* 48-9)

By calling all these revolutionary warriors “terrible Jonathans,” Jackson links all the soldiers who have fallen or will fall to his brother. His brother exists in many avatars, hailing from all over the nation, the same build, same eyes, and same political consciousness. The replication of Jonathan allows Jackson to reattach himself to his cause through his brother’s future in others and in the possibilities that they create through their actions. However, they are all just as vulnerable as Jonathan was since revolutionary existence anticipates casualties – hence, Jackson’s need for mourning practices that redirect emotional energy spent grieving toward political productivity.

This passage also harks back to one of Jackson’s favorite writers. Che Guevara’s *Guerrilla Warfare* opens with a two page dedication to his good friend, Camilo Cienfuegos, who died in a plane crash in 1959.²⁷⁹ Guevara writes,

‘There will be many Camilos,’ said Fidel; and I can add, there were Camilos, Camilos who finished their lives before completing the magnificent circle that carried Camilo into history. Camilo and the other Camilos (those who did not arrive and those who will come) are the index of the forces of the people. They are the highest expression which a nation produces in a time of war for the

²⁷⁹ Che Guevara, *Guerrilla Warfare*, 3rd edition (Wilmington, DE: Scholarly Resources, 1997; Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 1985), 47-8. Originally published in 1960. All quotations are from the Scholarly Resources’ edition.

defense of its purest ideals, fought with faith in the achievement of its noblest ends.²⁸⁰

Jackson rewrites this multiplication with his own brother but shifts the context to urban America.²⁸¹ By mimicking Guevara's pluralization of his dead comrade, Jackson places Jonathan in a revolutionary tract of grief. He extends Guevara's use of grief in this genre by tracking it through the text rather than relegating it to the preface, a move that situates grief as central to political action instead of placing alongside politics. He shows the way that revolutionaries are in a position highly prone to loss and grief but also a position that needs an alternative way of deploying grief, one that extends and expands the life of the community rather than collapsing its attentions to one individual.

The soldiers are multiplied here but that does not take away from the significance of their actions. Indeed, Jackson often references Jonathan's death to discuss its "real significance" and to counter official accounts that cannot be trusted, as when he concludes this section of *Blood in My Eye* by explaining that "escape from the myth, the hoax, by moving people into action against the terror of the state – counter-terrorism – is the real significance of the August 7th affair" (*Blood* 96). This legacy is what Jackson wants for his brother, one imbued with political meaning and continuance. The language of "significance" surrounds the Jackson brothers. For example, in Huey Newton's statement from George Jackson's memorial service (printed as the afterword of *Blood in My Eye*), he says,

But we know that there are two kinds of death, the reactionary death and the revolutionary death. One death is significant and the other is not. George certainly

²⁸⁰ Guevara, *Guerrilla Warfare*, 48.

²⁸¹ Jackson mentions Camilo Cienfuegos in *Soledad Brother*, 314.

died in a significant way, and his death will be very heavy, while the deaths of the ones that fell that day in San Quentin will be lighter than a feather. (*Blood* 174)

Newton used these same words at Jonathan Jackson's memorial. In that eulogy, he said, "Death is a necessary end. It comes to everyone. But it varies in its significance. To die for the reactionary racist is lighter than a feather. But to die for the people and the revolution is heavier than Mount Tai."²⁸² Just as Jackson prescribes certain ways of mourning, this repeated quotation prescribes certain ways of dying. This kind of death is not only politically productive but also personally consoling; the "significance" of their losses acts as a salve for grief. Furthermore, the repeated statement is a modified quotation from Mao Tse Tung (who was quoting an ancient Chinese writer) that appears in the extremely popular Chairman Mao's Little Red Book, widely circulated by the Black Panthers.²⁸³ By quoting Mao, Newton positions both Jackson brothers in a larger framework of global revolution, extending the affective ties outside the bounds of the nation.

Jackson accurately predicted that he would die young and in prison, and in *Soledad Brother* he writes,

I don't want to die and leave a few sad songs and a hump in the ground as my only monument. I want to leave a world that is liberated from trash, pollution, racism, poverty nation-states, nation-state wars and armies, from pomp, bigotry, parochialism, a thousand different brands of untruth, and licentious usurious

²⁸² "Black Panther Party: Funeral of Jonathan Jackson and William Christmas, August 15, 1970." This part of the speech occurs at approximately 16:10 in the recording.

²⁸³ In "Serve the People," Mao writes, "All men must die, but death can vary in its significance. The ancient Chinese writer Szuma Chien said, 'Though death befalls all men alike, it may be heavier than Mount Tai or lighter than a feather.' To die for the people is heavier than Mount Tai, but to work for the fascists and die for the exploiters and oppressors is lighter than a feather." As listed in *Quotations from Chairman Mao Tse-Tung*, Ed. Stuart Schram (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1968), 97.

economics. (266)

Jackson does not plan his death; rather, he plots his own mourning. *Blood in My Eye* and *Soledad Brother* offer blueprints for Jackson's mourners, from his suggestions about the political positioning of funerals to the fact that Jackson wants more than "a few sad songs" to memorialize him. He wants mourners to advocate for political change, to intertwine their affective response with their political cause. Yet even as Jackson anticipates his reception, there is a sense of volatility, the inability to contain and conscript reception (in those "thousand different brands of untruth" he wants to banish), especially given the varied populations that read and react to his works, including the text of his life itself. Indeed, both Berger and Cummins have commented on the malleability of Jackson's public image and its manipulations and deployment by various groups.²⁸⁴ The construction of his mythos – by his own writing and also by many others for varied purposes – creates a multiplicity of George Jacksons. Finding the "real" Jackson is impossible as he remains shrouded, existing amongst the tension between his various legacies. This slipperiness fits into Jackson's coding of grief: it tears focus away from the individual loss (even of Jackson himself) and instead centers on the larger systems of power that cause loss.

On August 21, 1971, George Jackson was killed in San Quentin prison. Berger offers an extensive account of how Jackson, having obtained a gun, attempted to escape and killed several people, although some of what exactly happened remains murky.²⁸⁵ His death reverberated through the national community and sparked heated debates. Due

²⁸⁴ Berger, *Captive Nation*, 165-6 and Cummins, *Rise and Fall*, 172.

²⁸⁵ Berger, *Captive Nation*, 133-8. Many people questioned the circumstances surrounding his death, including James Baldwin. "Baldwin Charges Jackson Was Murdered in Prison," *New York Times*, August 25, 1971, 14.

to Jackson's public persona and fame (or notoriety), his death and the mourning rituals following it received quite a bit of coverage in mainstream outlets. For example, *New York Times* writer Tom Wicker used his column, "In the Nation," to discuss Jackson's death just a few days after the latter's demise. "Death of a Brother" details the social issues surrounding Jackson's life and his death, explaining why Jackson held such symbolic appeal for African Americans and calling Jackson's life, not his death, "indisputably an American tragedy."²⁸⁶ Wicker places Jackson into a larger trajectory of race relations, carceral constructs, and impoverishment. Jackson's unique presence in the public eye – the way he transcends conventional narratives about convicts and makes this usually invisible subject position visible – makes his death a prime moment to critique systemic social problems.

However, readers did not all agree with Wicker, who had basically reiterated Leftist views of Jackson. "An outpouring of mail" came rushing in that "accused [Wicker] of all sorts of sins."²⁸⁷ The *Times* published four letters responding to Wicker's column, one that agreed with it, stating that Wicker "has become the conscience of mankind," and three that vehemently condemned it. One of those detractors deems "Death of a Brother" "without a doubt irresponsible journalism at its very worst" because it openly questions the circumstances surrounding Jackson's death.²⁸⁸ The other two make similar claims, both offended by Wicker's defense of a criminal and by Wicker's supposed desire "to build George Jackson into a symbol of black oppression."²⁸⁹

The *Times* also ran an editorial called "Tragedy at San Quentin..." that offered an

²⁸⁶ Tom Wicker, "Death of a Brother," *New York Times*, August 24, 1971, 37.

²⁸⁷ Tom Wicker, "Surface and Core," *New York Times*, September 9, 1971, 43.

²⁸⁸ "Comments on 'Death of a Brother,'" *New York Times*, September 4, 1971, 20.

²⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

opposing viewpoint, the titular ellipses calling the designation of “tragedy” into question.²⁹⁰ It interrogates national mourning over Jackson and deems Georgia Jackson’s outrage over her son’s death – she claimed that it was planned by authorities – an outburst provoked by extreme grief. While the author says that the family of “the dead prisoner...is entitled, in its grief, to believe whatever gives comfort,” the rest of the nation should not “explain away acts of savagery as the inevitable reaction to social inequities.”²⁹¹ The author designates the family’s grief as idiosyncratic and personal, with no relation to larger systems of power. He argues that “the social revolutionary’s hope in this country is still in the life of the law, not the death of its guardians.”²⁹² To deny grief as a community-building emotion – and as a resource for political change in public discourse – is in direct opposition to Jackson’s own take on mourning in his work. (Although, interestingly, the *San Quentin News*, San Quentin State Prison’s in-house newspaper run by convicts, takes a similar tactic in its brief “In Memorium” piece: although noting the grief for the deceased, it also calls the unnamed Jackson’s actions “insane and pseudopolitical” and not representative of most prisoners).²⁹³

However, the divided reactions to Jackson’s death do start conversations and conflicts that clearly “stir the senses, the blood...[that] will objectify, enrage, direct” (*Blood* 34). That is Jackson’s definition of consciousness, an engagement with the world necessary for revolution. Thus Jackson’s own death raises awareness about knotted issues of racism and incarceration, the issues he cared about, even though the plural reactions are disjointed. Support for Jackson in the mainstream media draws out and makes widely

²⁹⁰ “Tragedy at San Quentin...,” *New York Times*, August 25, 1971, 36.

²⁹¹ *Ibid.*

²⁹² *Ibid.*

²⁹³ “In Memorium,” *San Quentin News*, September 17, 1971, 1.

visible his community of supporters, another front of attack on oppression from this unnumbered emotionally-knit contingent. Furthermore, the varied response demonstrates how Jackson's loss provokes uncontained and unpredictable emotional reactions. Instead of prompting conventional mourning (and consensus in performing it), it creates conflicts. These dialogic responses make loss and grief points of contention and political discourse, exposing the emotional ideologies that frame representations of mourning.

Jackson was widely mourned amongst the Left, and within Jackson's own political community, mourners take their cues from Jackson himself.²⁹⁴ As seen in *The Black Panther*, the Party adopts Jackson's philosophy about death and grief – that it is fundamentally a part of their political and revolutionary identity and something to be celebrated. *The Black Panther* dedicated the August 28, 1971 issue to Jackson, and the cover is a picture of Jackson with the headline “George Jackson Lives!”²⁹⁵ Claude McKay's “If We Must Die,” that anthem of vulnerability and resistance Jackson quoted in *Soledad Brother* (and the poem from which this chapter takes its title), adorns the memorial announcement.²⁹⁶ Like Jackson, the speaker of the poem recognizes his own doom and the futility of his quest but embraces it. By using this poetic expression of resistance in Jackson's memorial, the Black Panther Party links his legacy to a rejection of traditional sentimentalism in favor of furthering commitment to political change. It also connects him and his writing to a larger history of black literature. The issue features many of Jackson's own writings, some of which went into *Blood in My Eye*. Angela Davis writes a prominent article on Jackson's death that concludes by “saluting” his

²⁹⁴ For more on wide-spread memorialization of Jackson, see Berger, *Captive Nation*, 144-7 and 161-3 and Hill, *Men, Mobs, and Law*, 308-9.

²⁹⁵ *The Black Panther*, August 28, 1971, cover and page 2.

²⁹⁶ “Revolutionary Memorial Services for George Jackson, Field Marshal, Black Panther Party,” *The Black Panther Party*, August 28, 1971, 3.

family in their grief and acknowledging her own feelings of loss and love toward him:

I can only say that in my continuing to love him, I will try my best to express that love in the way he would have wanted – by reaffirming my determination to fight for the cause George died defending. With his example before me, my tears and grief are rage at the system responsible for his murder.²⁹⁷

In the message she sent to be read at Jackson's memorial, she even quotes him on mourning Jonathan, writing, "Let us not weep. George did not want tears. So he had said: 'We gather up our dead, clean them, kiss them, and smile; the tears we save for the victory. If we see the spring after this protracted war, then we can cry for Jonathan and all the rest. We'll know what they missed.'"²⁹⁸ Davis's responses demonstrate how Jackson prescribed mourning over his own death and how his tactics for grief help form larger radical communities.

In a memorial service very similar to Jonathan Jackson's, held before Jackson's burial beside his brother in Mount Vernon, Illinois, the Black Panthers celebrated Jackson's life and legacy. *The Black Panther* published messages received and read at the memorial, like the second Davis quotation above. Such messages demonstrate the community solidified in Jackson's death, especially the prison community, which is heavily represented in the messages. Those who wrote include the other Soledad Brothers (John Clutchette and Fleeta Drumgo), "Black Convicts" from Illinois State Penitentiary, the "Folsom Cadre" of the Black Panther Party, and various prisoners from Soledad

²⁹⁷ Angela Yvonne Davis, "A Statement on Our Fallen Comrade, George Jackson," *The Black Panther*, August 28, 1971, 18-9 (19).

²⁹⁸ "The Following Messages Were Read by Bobby Seale, Chairman, Black Panther Party at the Revolutionary Memorial Service for Field Marshal George Jackson," *The Black Panther*, September 4, 1971, B.

Prison, Tehachapi Prison Camp, and Washington State Penitentiary's Death Row.²⁹⁹ Many of them echo Davis's points, as in a message from prominent members of the Black Panther Party like David Hilliard and in one from the Black Militant Front which says that "to mourn the tragic death of this Revolutionary Soldier in any way other than combat is absolute disrespect."³⁰⁰ Alongside these messages are others from prominent people like Jean Genet and James Baldwin, plus a Congressman from California (Ronald V. Dellums) who wrote offering assistance to Georgia Jackson.³⁰¹ Jackson's death mobilizes disparate people, creating an odd *mélange* that forms a community of politicized grief – one that Jackson himself predicted and prescribed.

Meanwhile, across the country, prisoners in New York's Attica Correctional Facility were stirred by Jackson's death and organized a make-shift memorial within the prison. In his memoir, *The Brothers of Attica*, Richard Clark describes the memorial:

What happened was that a few days after George Jackson was murdered, we decided to have a memorial day for him at Attica. Instead of the two tallest inmates leading the companies to the mess hall, black inmates led the companies, and we all wore black armbands. Then in the mess hall we didn't eat. Instead there was silence, and we stared at our food.³⁰²

Like Jackson, the Attica inmates are acutely aware of how prison prevents certain types of mourning, instead choosing a form of resistance that prison authorities could not

²⁹⁹ *The Black Panther*, "The Following Messages Were Read by Bobby Seale, Chairman, Black Panther Party at the Revolutionary Memorial Service for Field Marshal George Jackson," September 4, 1971, B, I, K.

³⁰⁰ *The Black Panther*, "The Following Messages Were Read by Bobby Seale, Chairman, Black Panther Party at the Revolutionary Memorial Service for Field Marshal George Jackson," September 4, 1971, C.

³⁰¹ *The Black Panther*, "The Following Messages Were Read by Bobby Seale, Chairman, Black Panther Party at the Revolutionary Memorial Service for Field Marshal George Jackson," September 4, 1971, B, K, L.

³⁰² Richard X. Clark, *The Brothers of Attica* (New York: Links, 1973), 69.

realistically stop. And the display clearly shook up the guards, as no one interrupted it.³⁰³

Sam Melville, a white inmate associated with the Weathermen (a radical group), helped organize the memorial. Although Melville could not participate in the event because he was in solitary confinement, he celebrated its success in his prison newsletter, *The Iced Pig*.³⁰⁴ Melville writes,

U r beautiful brothers! Strength & Solidarity r t greatest weapons to gain dignity. Strength and Solidarity is what u showed on the 27th. As if one man, there was silence & fasting at t noon mess in memory of our revolutionary brother George Jackson. Many brothers wore black arm bands defying t pig' barbaric dress code.³⁰⁵

Melville used his illicit, underground newsletter to create his own network of prisoner solidarity and political engagement. *The Iced Pig* ran for three issues, one in July 1971 and the other two in August 1971. This furtive publication “was handwritten, carbon-copied, and distributed by hand, secretly, passed from one group to the next.”³⁰⁶

Although some prisons had, and still have, internal newspapers, Attica only had one for a specific population.³⁰⁷ As with many publications for confined populations, these newspapers tended to contain relatively innocuous information, unlike the racial political rhetoric found in *The Iced Pig*. That Melville linked mourning to “strength and

³⁰³ For other accounts of the protest, see Lee Bernstein, “The Age of Jackson: George Jackson and the Culture of American Prisons in the 1970s,” *The Journal of American Culture* 30, no. 3 (September 2007): 310-23 (320-1).

³⁰⁴ “We’ve had a hectic time here recently. A lot of activity around George Jackson followed by a visit from the Herr Commissioner of correction. I’ve just emerged from a 14-day KL so I get all this second hand, but all the lumpen are very excited at the strong display of solidarity exhibited last Friday.” Samuel Melville, *Letters From Attica* (New York: William Morrow and Company, 1972), 172.

³⁰⁵ Melville, *Letters from Attica*, 170.

³⁰⁶ Melville, *Letters From Attica*, 161 (footnote).

³⁰⁷ *Attica: The Official Report of the New York State Special Commission of Attica* (New York: Praeger, 1972), 87-8.

solidarity” (and even further, to “dignity”) – and that he circulated it in alternative media – demonstrates how prisoners circumvent the dehumanizing prison apparatus.

In a letter to John Cohen, Melville is more specific about what happened. He writes that

not a man ate or spoke – black, white, brown, red. At the midday meal (the large meal in prison), not a man ate or spoke – black, white, brown, red. Many wore black armbands. The priest was asked to say a prayer, & after some to-do, did so. No one can remember anything like it here before.³⁰⁸

Mourning became a practice of (apparently unprecedented) interracial solidarity. As Clark mentioned, the prisoners deliberately reorganized the order they entered the mess hall to let black inmates enter first, an act of resistance against racial oppression. The armbands allowed the prisoners to temporarily supersede racial differences as this uniform display reflects political solidarity. As with Jackson’s work, mourning merged with political protest and resistance. By purposefully deciding not to speak, the men make a distinct gesture that simultaneously encapsulates how language cannot adequately express grief and how prison denies inmates a space for both emotion and political discourse. This mourning ritual disrupts the carceral space and highlights the void of prisoners’ voices in the public sphere beyond the prison.

Less than two weeks later, the men of D block in Attica claimed a section of the prison, took guards as hostages, and listed demands for prison reform in what became the largest prison riot in U.S. history. The standoff between Attica prisoners and the state lasted from September 9, 1971 to the morning of September 13, 1971 when Governor Nelson Rockefeller gave orders for state troopers to retake the prison by force. Forty

³⁰⁸ Melville, *Letters from Attica*, 172.

three men died, including ten hostages, and all but four of them perished at the hand of the state. Spread over the front pages of newspapers nationwide, the riot created a rupture in normative public culture, making typically invisible prisons hypervisible as Attica invaded citizens' homes and everyday lives via media coverage. The Attica revolt brought prison suffering and loss to the forefront of American culture, a prime example of prison mourning – and its denials.

“Honor Us though Dead”: Elegizing Attica

“...it is a heartbroken rather than an angry book.” –Kurt Vonnegut, on Tom Wicker's Attica riot memoir, *A Time to Die*³⁰⁹

Textuality and reading practices played a major role in constructing Attica. Brian Conniff notes that inmates used common tropes of prison writing “to tell their story *as it was happening*” and argues that the Attica massacre was caused, in part, by a failure of the government to “read” the inmates attempts at self-determination.³¹⁰ Reading Attica continued in the years that followed, as accounts appeared in many different genres – manifestos, witness accounts, polemics, memoirs, letters, and elegies – and even in mixed media like *Fighting Back!*, a collection of poetry, illustrations, essays, and photos that was published by the Attica Defense League.³¹¹

Publishers capitalized on the market for first-hand stories about the riot. Knopf Doubleday published warden Russell Oswald's account of the riot, and observers Herman Badillo and Tom Wicker – the *New York Times* columnist whose sympathetic depictions of George Jackson were the reason Attica inmates invited him – both released

³⁰⁹ Kurt Vonnegut Jr., “Tom Wicker Signifying: *A Time to Die*,” review of *A Time to Die*, by Tom Wicker, *New York Times*, March 9, 1975, SM29.

³¹⁰ Conniff, “The Prison Writer as Ideologue,” 171.

³¹¹ *Fighting Back!: Attica Memorial to the People – 1974* (Buffalo, NY: Attica Now, 1974). Hames-Garcia writes about this publication in *Fugitive Thought* (193-247).

memoirs.³¹² Wicker's book was predictably reviewed in many mainstream venues, including a piece in his home paper penned by Kurt Vonnegut.³¹³ It also won the 1975 Mystery Writers of America Edgar Award for Best Fact Crime book, giving us a sense of how books about Attica were popularly received.³¹⁴ Richard X. Clark's book was originally under contract with Random House, showing the interest major publishing houses had in inmate perspectives, but Clark pulled it after edits were made that did not meet his approval.³¹⁵ According to Leonard Levitt, who worked with Clark on the book, Clark's account of events did not support what other inmates saw, and Random House wanted a cohesive narrative.³¹⁶ Indeed, Michael Hames-Garcia points out that the individualistic focus of Clark's narrative goes against the collectivist impulse of other inmate writing like that seen in publications like *Fighting Back!* (which Clark did not contribute to).³¹⁷ However, Random House's original contract with Clark demonstrates their belief that public interest was high enough to yield sales (and thus warrant publication). Indeed, it is important to note that many of these texts were intended for mainstream audiences, not only niche reading groups.

The popular consciousness of Attica in the years that followed came not only from these textual productions but also from ongoing legal battles, as over sixty inmates faced charges stemming from the riot. While existing in separate spheres, these two

³¹² Herman Badillo and Milton Haynes, *A Bill of No Rights: Attica and the American Prison System* (New York: Outerbridge and Lazard, 1972); Russell Oswald, *Attica: My Story* (New York: Knopf Doubleday Publishing Group, 1972); and Tom Wicker, *A Time to Die: The Attica Prison Revolt* (New York: Quadrangle, 1975).

³¹³ Vonnegut, "Tom Wicker Signifying," SM29.

³¹⁴ "Edgars Database," Mystery Writers of America, accessed September 2015, <http://theedgars.com/awards/>.

³¹⁵ Letter to David Lubell, August 29, 1972, Random House Records, 1925-1999, Box 1322, Folder Clark, Richard X. and Schaap, Dick, *The Brothers of Attica – Correspondence and Contracts*, Columbia University Rare Book and Manuscript Library.

³¹⁶ Leonard Levitt, e-mail message to Katherine Stanutz, October 28, 2014.

³¹⁷ Hames-Garcia, *Fugitive Thought*, 244.

threads nonetheless mutually inform one another. In her discussion of the twentieth century confluence of trauma and trials in *The Juridical Unconscious*, Shoshana Felman notes the importance of “literary justice.” She argues that “literature is a dimension of concrete embodiment and a language of infinitude that, in contrast to the language of the law, encapsulates not closure but precisely what in a given legal case refuses to be closed and cannot be closed.”³¹⁸ Literature thus offers an alternative authority to state power and procedure – and to the confining restrictions of state-determined “justice.” The parallel discourse of prison literature offered both psychic and material aid to Attica prisoners (*Fighting Back!* was sold to help fund the Attica Defense League). Furthermore, prisoners responded to and participated in trials of public opinion held in the media. With scant resources to “fight back” against mountains of legal briefs and the shouting of media voices, prisoners’ voices were often, as usual, drowned out. As such, I argue that the prisoners deployed *literariness* to place themselves within a larger historical and aesthetic trajectory that gives their words gravitas and contextualizes their actions.

The most famous literary work associated with Attica was originally misidentified. *Time* magazine ran several different articles about Attica in late September 1971, and in their main cover story, they comment on prison reading practices, noting that prisoners circulated smuggled revolutionary prose along with “clandestine writings of their own; among them was a poem written by an unknown prisoner, crude but touching in its would-be heroic style.”³¹⁹ The accompanying photo of this supposedly unknown prisoner’s work shows a scrap of paper containing a portion of Claude McKay’s sonnet, “If We Must Die,” a poem that stemmed from 1919 race riots (and was

³¹⁸ Shoshana Felman, *The Juridical Unconscious: Trials and Traumas in the Twentieth Century* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002), 8.

³¹⁹ “War at Attica: Was There No Other Way?,” *Time*, September 27, 1971, 20.

also featured in *The Black Panther*'s "Revolutionary Memorial Services" for George Jackson and gave *Fighting Back!* its title).³²⁰

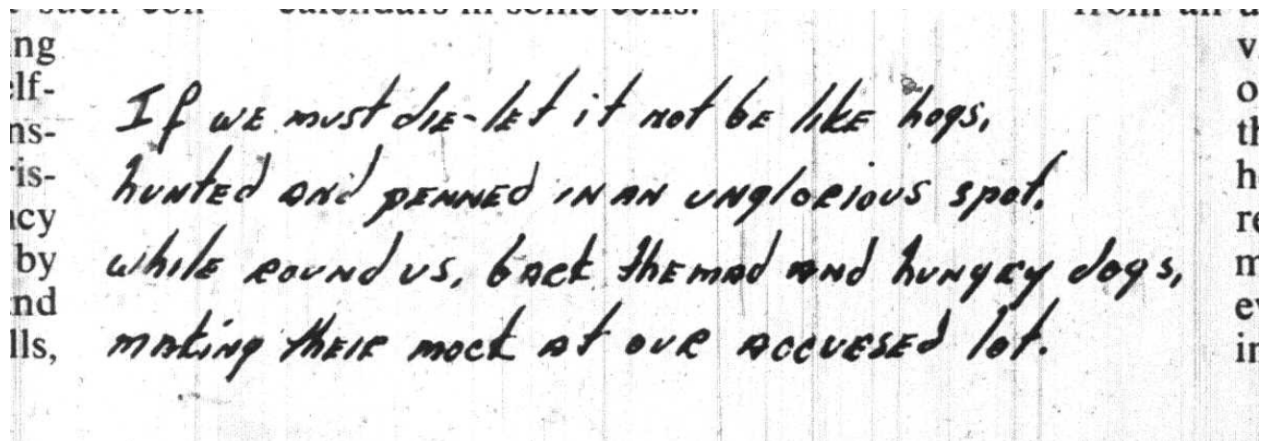


Figure 11: *Time*, September 27, 1971, 20.

Time subsequently printed two letters to editor correcting the mistake. The first, from Grace Amigone in Buffalo, states that *Time*'s "writers show a sad lack of knowledge of black literature. The poem that you quoted in your Attica story, supposedly written by an inmate, is actually by Claude McKay, one of the first major Negro poets."³²¹ Underneath, the editor acknowledges that "in accepting the handwritten copy as the original work of a prisoner, TIME indeed erred badly."³²² In the following issue, *Time* printed a stern reprimand from none other than Gwendolyn Brooks:

Sir: In your cover story on Attica, you say: "They passed around clandestine writings of their own; among them was a poem written by an unknown prisoner, crude but touching in its would-be heroic style." Please tell the poetry specialist who gave us the above that his "find" is a portion of one of the most famous poems ever written—known to Hitler, elementary school children to say

³²⁰ "Revolutionary Memorial Services," *The Black Panther*, 3.

³²¹ "Letters," *Time*, October 11, 1971.

³²² Ibid.

nothing of Winston Churchill. The poem is entitled “If We Must Die,” and the black poet is Claude McKay (1890-1948).³²³

She goes on to quote the poem in full. As both letters to the editor imply, the excerpted poem (and its circulation within the prison) situates Attica – and its textual productions – in a larger trajectory of black oppression and black writing. Although the revolt came from interracial solidarity, many of the prisoners (but none of the guards) were black and much of the violence and issues in prison came from racist practices.³²⁴ *Time*'s misattribution and the subsequent corrections speak to a larger lack of awareness of black literature.

Furthermore, H. Bruce Franklin points out that “literature by prisoners has to overcome great prejudices” as evaluations of literary products are often influenced by our knowledge (or perceived knowledge) of authorship.³²⁵ Written by a prisoner, McKay's elegant, well-crafted sonnet transforms into a “crude” poetic product treated condescendingly even in compliment. Place may mark the text, but McKay's words also reframe the spatial context. Copied from memory, existing in fragmented form, and circulating within prison walls, the words take on new meaning, especially given the urgency and precariousness inherent to the poem. In McKay's sonnet, the collective speakers are compared to animal (“hogs”), dehumanized and degraded. Attica prisoners made it a point to say that they were men, not animals in their demands: “WE are MEN! We are not beasts and do not intend to be beaten or driven as such.”³²⁶ But they are not

³²³ “Letters,” *Time*, October 18, 1971.

³²⁴ *Attica: The Official Report*, 24.

³²⁵ H. Bruce Franklin, *Prison Literature in America*, 235.

³²⁶ This statement was part of the Five Demands of Attica Inmates, read aloud at the prison on September 9, 1971. This line was printed in various periodicals on September 10, 1971. Fred Ferretti, “Convicts Revolt at Attica, Hold 32 Guards Hostage,” *New York Times*, September 10, 1971, 1 and 71 (71).

the only animals in these lines – the prisoners (guards, the state, society at large) are “mad and hungry dogs.” The rhyme between “hogs” and “dogs” connects the two groups: if the prisoners are animals, then so are the people who imprison them. The fragmentation is also important as it highlights confinement. For these men, this poem is not a hypothetical – it is an articulation of their circumstances and a call to resist them. However, the excerpt also cuts off the action of the poem, leaving it suspended in the subjunctive (“if...let”). It is a poem of possibility, of hope in a hopeless situation – a reinterpretation of the riot. Reading McKay in Attica reorients our perception of the events, as the aesthetics of poetry give authority to prison experience and prison voices, which were often silenced in mainstream media accounts of the revolt.

Furthermore, McKay’s form is crucial and influential. He famously conveyed black resistance via very traditional Western forms like the sonnet during the Harlem Renaissance, a time of formal innovation and experimentation.³²⁷ By deploying the sonnet in service of political protest, he joins a long legacy of revolutionary poetry, inserting racial concerns into a lineage that includes poems like Percy Shelley’s “England in 1819” and the roughly contemporaneous “Easter, 1916” by W.B. Yeats. While George Jackson’s alternative genres for grief demonstrate a maverick subversion of mourning expectations, McKay’s appearance in Attica reminds us that conventional literary genres can be put toward political protest.

Poetry was also a part of Attica post-riot through a poetry workshop sponsored by

³²⁷ For more, see James R. Keller, “‘A Chafing Savage, Down the Decent Street’: The Politics of Compromise in Claude McKay’s Protest Sonnets,” *African American Review* 28, no. 3 (September 1994): 447-56 and Sonya Posmenier, “The Provision Ground in New York: Claude McKay and the Form of Memory,” *American Literature* 84, no. 2 (June 2012): 273-300.

several non-profits, one of the rehabilitative measures implemented in the facility.³²⁸ Celes Tisdale directed the workshop, which started on May 24, 1972 and eventually produced *Betcha Ain't: Poems from Attica* (1974). In the introduction to the collection, Tisdale writes, "Our writers [sic] workshop at Attica, out of which was born this book, was the result of Attica: September 9-13."³²⁹ Obviously, the uprising led to the funding that made the workshop (and its subsequent publication) possible, and this introduction also marks the riot and reactions to it as the driving force behind the collection.

To consider how literariness reconceptualizes the events and ramifications of those September days, I primarily focus on three elegies about the riot from *Betcha Ain't*. Attica prisoners use elegy, the traditional poetic genre of mourning, to craft emotional histories that counteract the invisibility of prisoner emotion in the public sphere. Lyric poetry allows prisoners to abandon the narrative of the riot – which often contained tricky tendrils of controversy and disputed claims – and to focus on the feelings evoked by the riot and its aftermath. This register brings prisoner emotions surrounding the riot, so often left in the shadows of the larger narrative, to the forefront. By writing elegies, the prisoners insert themselves in a long-standing genre of loss and grief. Thus they position themselves and their deceased comrades in an emotional genealogy and assert that their fallen belong amongst those mourned in a high literary style. Through elegy, they write themselves into larger narratives of grief, using a genre specifically marked as one for grief to make the losses legible in the wider public sphere.

But these poems do not offer a sense of resolution; instead, they maintain the jagged edges of grief and rage. They draw from McKay's modernist era, when elegies

³²⁸ *Betcha Ain't: Poems from Attica*, Ed. Celes Tisdale (Detroit, MI: Broadside, 1974), 11-2.

³²⁹ *Betcha Ain't*, 11.

broke from tradition, expressing vehemence and refusing consolation – Jahan Ramazani notes that these traits are constitutive of modernist reworkings of elegy.³³⁰ Like those early twentieth century elegies, the open emotional wounds that these poems expose and prod demonstrate the futility of traditional mourning, acting as a form of political protest. The Attica writers’ resistance, similar to Jackson, comes in the form of critiquing the social forces and apparatuses that govern emotional response and public displays of mourning, ultimately creating new understandings of who is grievable. They also comment on larger structures of emotion and public constructions of (and receptions of) grief. In other words, elegy becomes a genre for speaking out against the forces that dismiss prisoners’ subjectivity. Elegy allows prisoners to recover repressed grief *and* to simultaneously speak the grievances that caused (and continue to cause) grief.

Anne Anlin Cheng discusses the relationship between grief and grievance – particularly how grief (“suffering injury”) often transforms into quantifiable, legalistic grievance (“speaking out against that injury”).³³¹ While Cheng maintains a separation between grief and grievance, the Attica writers demonstrate how grief and grievance might be merged and expressed simultaneously. By conducting these articulations through poetry, Attica inmates use literary authority to transcend registers. Focusing on emotional testimony, not narrative or legal testimony, this literary genre offers prisoners an alternative way of articulating grievance. The grief that lingers in and alongside the unrieved (and unrieved) bodies of the Attica prisoners both highlights dehumanizing carceral ideologies and shows the cracks in the system. This breaking of the frame, as Judith Butler might say, comes from a moment of twinned grief and grievance: the

³³⁰ Ramazani, *Poetry of Mourning*.

³³¹ Cheng, *The Melancholy of Race*, 3.

emotional register of grief bolsters claims of injustice and vice versa. To illustrate this pairing, I juxtapose my readings of the poems with contextualizing analysis of media reports to show the ways these forms interact.

As a whole, *Betcha Ain't* is an eclectic and energized collection. The elegies about the riot are particularly noteworthy, and in his groundbreaking overview of prison literature, H. Bruce Franklin singles out Sam Washington's "Was It Necessary?" and Mshaka (Willie Monroe)'s "Formula for Attica Repeats" as "striking."³³² As Franklin points out, both of these poems "present the primary contradiction as not between white and Black, or even between guards and prisoners, but between the forty-three murdered victims at Attica....on one side and the power incarnated in the man soon to be appointed vice-president on the other."³³³ "Formula for Attica Repeats" follows in full.

.....and when
the smoke cleared
they came aluminum paid
lovers
from Rock/The/Terrible,
refuser
of S.O.S. Collect Calls,
Executioner.
They came tearless
tremblers,
apologetic grin factories

³³² Franklin, *Prison Literature in America*, 274.

³³³ *Ibid.*

that breathed Kool
smoke-rings
and state-prepared speeches.
They came
like so many unfeeling fingers
groping without touching
the 43 dead men
who listened...
threatening to rise
again....³³⁴

Bell Gale Chevigny notes that prison poetry from the 1970s is “often stamped with Black Arts movement stylistics,” and we see that here with Mshaka’s slashes (“Rock/The/Terrible”) which are similar to Sonia Sanchez’s poetic technique.³³⁵ As such, he places his poem squarely within a prominent literary movement.

Bookended by extended ellipses, Mshaka’s elegy offers a sense of unfinished business; there is no resolution as the poem literally trails off into nothingness. It details what happened after the uprising (“when / the smoke cleared”) and the social and psychological ramifications (or lack thereof). However, he does not focus on the prisoners’ experience after the uprising or his own feelings, thus circumventing individual or collective mourning within the prison walls. Instead, he focuses on the rupture point that the uprising caused – the public interest and attention paid to this oft-ignored population after the riots. The poem centers on an amorphous “they,” an

³³⁴ *Betcha Ain’t*, 27.

³³⁵ *Doing Time: 25 Years of Prison Writing*, Ed. Bell Gale Chevigny (Arcade Publishing: New York, 1999): xxi.

undefined group associated with Governor Rockefeller. By focusing his elegy not on the lost objects of the Attica uprising but on the complicated public that witnessed the event and consumed media reports about it, Mshaka demonstrates an understanding of the social forces that constrain grief and grievability, the way that public construction of affect and emotion splinters and complicates portrayals of loss. Specifically, he portrays the state/outside world as distinctly (if artificially) separate from the inmates, the friction between the two publics highlighted through pronoun use (“they”).

Indeed, the organization of mourning rituals often maintained a divide between the guards and the inmates, even though they were killed by the same people – the troops Rockefeller dispatched. Initially, newspapers reported that prisoners slashed the throats of the hostages, prompting the troops to fire.³³⁶ The next day, the medical examiner’s report indicated that the hostages died from gunshot wounds, not stabbings.³³⁷ It also corrected the erroneous report that one hostage had been castrated. Hostages’ families were understandably shocked and dismayed at this news, but some people in the town of Attica refused to believe the reports and continued to blame the prisoners. The conflicting reports – and conflicting sources of blame for the tragic events – caused great confusion, both in terms of collating a cohesive narrative of events and in terms of emotionally comprehending this eruption of anger and grief.

The funerals for the guards received quite a bit of coverage, especially the first funeral for William Quinn, which was publicized with pictures and articles in such

³³⁶ Fred Ferretti, “9 Hostages and 28 Prisoners Die as 1,000 Storm Prison in Attica; 28 Rescued, Scores are Injured,” *New York Times*, September 14, 1971, 1.

³³⁷ Fred Ferretti, “Autopsies Show Shots, Not Knives Killed 9 Attica Hostages, State Admits Error,” *New York Times*, September 15, 1971, 32.

periodicals as the *Chicago Tribune*, the *Los Angeles Times*, and *The [Baltimore] Sun*.³³⁸

In its coverage of the funeral for guard Carl W. Valone, the *New York Times* juxtaposed accounts of his grieving mother with presiding Reverend James P. Collins's call for a maximum security facility for revolutionaries.³³⁹ Collins, along with others, used the time and space allotted for mourning to make political statements indicting other riot casualties. Mourning was often only aligned with the guards; it rarely applied to inmates, and when it did, such inclusion was noteworthy. For example, a candlelight vigil memorializing guards in front of the facility also included prayers for all the dead, a significant divergence: "It [the memorial] was called specifically to honor the guards who had been killed. But William Cruros, a guard at Elmira and president of the union, introduced five clergymen whose brief prayers, scripture readings and short statements broadened the memorial to include inmates who were killed."³⁴⁰

On September 18, 1971, the divide between mourning for the guards and mourning for the inmates became even more pronounced in the pages of the *New York Times*. On the front page, an article covering memorials for the guards lies directly next to, but separate from, an article about the inmates' families.³⁴¹ The first hails the far-reaching participation in the mourning rituals for the guards, noting how prison guards from other states came to Attica for the funerals, which other publications point out as

³³⁸ "Attica Buries William Quinn, the 1st to Die," *The [Baltimore] Sun*, September 16, 1971, A1; Vincent Butler and Joseph Zullo, "Funeral Rites Held for 1st Guard Killed in Attica Prison Uprising," *Chicago Tribune*, September 16, 1971, 2; "Services Held for First Guard Slain in Revolt," *Los Angeles Times*, September 16, 1971, A24.

³³⁹ McCandlish Phillips, "Prison Chaplain, at Guard's Funeral, Asks for Separate Facility for Revolutionaries," *New York Times*, September 17, 1971, 31.

³⁴⁰ David K. Shipler, "Memorial for Guards at Attica Also Remembers Dead Inmates," *New York Times*, September 17, 1971, 31.

³⁴¹ Both articles are listed under the dual title, "Attica in Mourning as Rites Are Held for 6," but the accompanying photograph is of a guard's funeral. Barbara Campbell, "Inmates' Kin Critical," *New York Times*, September 18, 1971, 1 and David K. Shipler, "Guards Come From Afar," *New York Times*, September 18, 1971, 1.

well. *Time*, for instance, notes that

prison officers, state troopers and other lawmen [from New York and beyond] arrived in Attica to attend a solemn and trying round of wakes and funerals for the slain hostages. Dressed in trim uniforms and saluting sharply, but sometimes weeping, they helped the town mourn.³⁴²

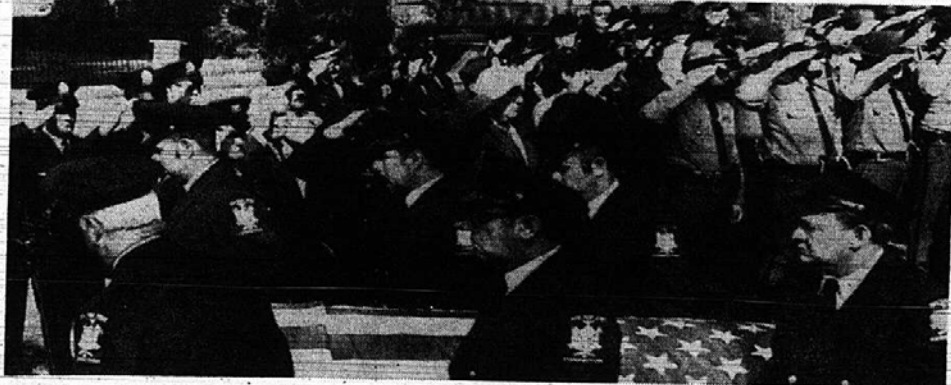
The second *New York Times* article, on the other hand, explains how the inmates' families experienced the rituals of mourning quite differently. Some families "first heard of a death through news reports and were later sent a telegram."³⁴³ One family profiled, the McNeils, "never received official notification" of their son's death, and they still waited for his body to be sent home."³⁴⁴ The picture of the family shows them not at a funeral – obviously, since the body had not even arrived yet – or in a pose of mourning, but defiantly looking at the camera lens. The iconography of grief does not apply to inmates or their families; they only have grievance.

³⁴² "War at Attica," 22.

³⁴³ Barbara Campbell, "Inmates' Kin Critical," 14.

³⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

Attica in Mourning as Rites Are Held for 6



Coffin of Sgt. Edward T. Cunningham, a slain hostage, is carried past correction officers and troopers in Attica. Associated Press

Guards Come From Afar

By DAVID K. SHPLER
Special to The New York Times

ATTICA, N. Y., Sept. 17 — Today was a long and sorrowful day for the village of Attica.

From early morning until late afternoon, there was scarcely a moment without a funeral, a cortege or a graveside ceremony in progress.

Six dead guards and civilian employees, killed in the police assault on the Attica

Correctional Facility Monday, were mourned at services that brought prison guards and policemen from Maryland, Rhode Island, Pennsylvania and around New York State to stand silently in ranks, saluting the coffins as they passed from funeral home to hearse, from church to

Continued on Page 14, Column 6

Inmates' Kin Critical

By BARBARA CAMPBELL

A year ago Mr. and Mrs. Preston McNeil, as a last resort to keep their son out of trouble, persuaded him to give up his parole and return to prison for the last 18 months of his sentence.

Today their son, Lorenzo, who was 29 years old, is dead, killed along with 29 other inmates when the police stormed Attica Correctional Facility on Monday after a five-day inmate revolt.

All over the state, families like the McNeils are mourning their dead, following the release yesterday of a complete official list of victims.

The release of the list ended the frustration, anxiety and worry of other families of the 1,200 inmates involved in the incident who, during the week, had tried unsuccessfully to find out who was

Continued on Page 14, Column 6

Figure 12: *New York Times*, September 18, 1971, 1.



MOURNERS: Mr. and Mrs. Preston McNeil, right, parents of one of the inmates killed at Attica, at their Queens home yesterday. They were waiting for the body of their son, Lorenzo, to be brought home. With them is Lorenzo's aunt, Miss Catherine Allen. The New York Times/Tyrone Dukas

Figure 13: *New York Times*, September 18, 1971, 14.

Returning to Mshaka's poem, he portrays the greater public – the “they” that mostly refers to government officials but also implicitly includes reporters and the general public who consumed the event – as unaffected and emotionless when faced with the prison population. Their responses to the losses of Attica are rote, prepackaged (“state-prepared speeches”), and mechanized (“grin factories”). He emphasizes the physical body here, showing the lack of affect (“tearless tremblers,” “unfeeling fingers,” “groping without touching”). Flipping the script, Mshaka makes the observers unfeeling, not the inmates. The way that the Attica losses fail to affect – and further, fail to create the kind of haptic connections that could facilitate recognition – shows the breakdown of affect and emotion as political tools for inmates. When the reactions to loss only further illustrate the gaps between people – the lack of connection, the erasure of feeling illustrated in “*unfeeling fingers*” and “groping *without* touching” – the problems that caused Attica remain. We have learned nothing from the losses, and in the final lines, Mshaka finally mentions the lost men of Attica, whose deaths remain unsettled due to the lack of political resolution.

However, in his mention of the men, we have an opening for change. He states that “43 dead men” are “threatening to rise / again,” and this number includes all of the deceased, including hostages. Unlike mainstream divisions of the deceased – grievable guards and ungrievable inmates – and even unlike his divisions within his own poem (the constant use of “they” to demarcate inside and outside the prison) Mshaka links all the deceased (not just the prisoners) as victims of an oppressive carceral system that threatens all of U.S. society. This small but significant inclusion alters grievability. Grief becomes an inclusive rather than exclusive emotion, one that connects victims of

oppression rather than dividing them in a racist system that only deems some lives meaningful. Mshaka uses grief to speak grievances, thus linking the systems that cause loss to loss itself.

At least one non-prisoner recognized the disparate way the emotional impact of the Attica riot was reported. In a letter to the editor published in the *Washington Post* on September 19, 1971, Harold Eisberg of Frederick wrote,

From your lead editorial “The Slaughter at Attica” (Sept. 14), one is led to believe that the only lives lost are those of the nine guards. And the ‘horrible price to pay’ was the ‘death of the hostages.’

But your headline, accurately based on the incomplete reporting available, speaks of 37 deaths. Could you find no single tear to drop for one of the them not in the lamented nine, their wives, fathers, mothers, children, lovers?³⁴⁵

This condemnation of uneven mourning pierces the blockade between the two categories of deceased, momentarily making visible the lack of prisoner grievability. However, prisoners were grieved amongst each other, and some prisons gave inmates time to grieve.³⁴⁶ As reported in the *Los Angeles Times*, thirty-three Attica prisoners wrote a “proclamation-in memorium in solidarity with bereaved on behalf of our slaughtered brothers.”³⁴⁷ The awareness of the public (at least temporarily) that the prisoners do mourn is ostensibly linked to the reforms and rehabilitative measures implemented in Attica after the riot.³⁴⁸ However, another elegy points us to the way that empathy for

³⁴⁵ “Letters To The Editor: The Storming of Attica Prison: Its Origins and its Legacy,” *Washington Post*, September 19, 1971, D7.

³⁴⁶ John Darnton, “Protests Mount, Prayers Offered: Jersey Prisoners Allowed a Time for Tribute,” *New York Times*, September 18, 1971, 15.

³⁴⁷ “33 Attica Rebels Issue a ‘Memorial’ to Slain,” *Los Angeles Times*, September 22, 1971, A4.

³⁴⁸ *Attica: The Official Report*, 468-70.

inmates is ephemeral.

Like “Formula for Attica Repeats,” John Lee Norris’s “Just Another Page” reflects on the aftermath of the uprising and on its larger, public significance.

A year later

And it’s just another page

And the only thing they do right is wrong

And Attica is a maggot-minded black blood sucker

And the only thing they do right is wrong

And another page of history is written in black blood

And old black mamas pay taxes to buy guns that killed their sons

And the consequences of being free...is death

And your sympathy and tears always come too late

And the only thing they do right is wrong

And it’s just another page.³⁴⁹

Norris’s anaphora unfolds an avalanche of grievances. The paratactic structure of the lines eliminates any hierarchy in terms of the ideas here, revealing that Attica was not actually a rupture point in history but “just another page.” The poem – like the others – looks at Attica within a larger scope of social, political, and literary history. Relegating the riot to the realm of the quotidian ironically devalues the revolt, prodding at desensitized responses that ignore continuous violence. And yet, the literariness of the genre and the carefully constructed form anchor it from the ephemera of constant periodical page turnover.

Through his main conceit, Norris, like Mshaka, shows his awareness of the public

³⁴⁹ *Betcha Ain’t*, 30.

networks that disseminate information and control narratives. The page is metaphorical, but it also alludes to the literal pages of newspapers and magazines that covered the story. By referring to the material networks that shape public knowledge and emoting, Norris draws attention to the hypotaxis of public discourse. There are no public frameworks that can fully integrate the Attica prisoners and their plights into the mainstream. This elegy further illustrates the limitations of emotion as an instrument for political change, since “sympathy and tears always come too late.” The emotional residue of Attica wipes away quickly as the public turns the page and moves on to another newsworthy event. Attica gets lost in the journalistic ephemera of history and loses its meaning over time. Norris thus demonstrates the perception gap between the public and prisoners via media modes – the riot’s aftereffects still ricochet through the prison while the prison reseals itself, again largely invisible to the outside world. But in this collection of poetry about Attica, each page is a testament to the prisoners’ humanity and ability to – and need to – grieve and to have that grief acknowledged.

Anchored in irony and rage, Sam Washington’s “Was It Necessary?” attacks the causes of loss as he outright questions the state’s actions in lines that repeat through the poem:

Was it really necessary?

Did they really have to carry

Rifles and shotguns?

Let’s ask the gov’,

Who’s so full of love!³⁵⁰

In subsequent stanzas, he builds on this structure, adding varied lines after the first triad.

³⁵⁰ *Betcha Ain’t*, 43.

It moves from the interrogative to the imperative, with the word “really” insinuating the proper response for the question and with repeated bitter, sarcastic references to Governor Rockefeller. In the final stanza, Washington vents his rage in escalating lines:

Was it really necessary?
Did they really have to carry
Rifles and shotguns?
Rock on T.V., says he didn't know,
While 43 are helping daisies to grow!!
Does it sound like I'm angry?
Damn right, my heart pains me!!
Let me tell you something,
Since it's time for me to split.
Don't ask the governor nothing, Man,
Cause he's full of it.
Peace.

Washington's conclusion is deeply unsatisfying. Juxtaposing Rockefeller's denial with the consequences of his actions – the forty three dead men (like Mshaka, including both guards and prisoners in his body count) – Washington demonstrates how those in power deny culpability. He abandons the question-to-action movement of the previous stanzas, pausing here to reflect on his state of being. Emotion explicitly enters the poem here, as he anticipates the reader's reaction (“Does it sound like I'm angry?”). He claims anger, but the bodily feeling he describes is different: “my heart pains me.” He does not name the emotion here specifically, instead circumventing overt emotion through the

metaphoric use of body parts (“heart”) and a verb (“pain”) that can lead to a vast variety of emotions. The slipperiness of certain emotions (grief, sadness, etc.), along with the ironic, subversive use of “love” through the poem, are all reminiscent of Jackson’s writing, distilled in poetic form.

At the end of the poem, Washington moves from collective (“let us”) to individual (“let me”), and changes the mode of information delivery. Instead of going to the source of power to discover information, which has shown to be unreliable, Washington takes the power of historical interpretation into his own hands. He instructs the readers – commands with an imperative verb – not to trust authority. In fact, this whole poem questions epistemological modes and systems of information transmission: the public has a question, so they turn to the person in power, who transmits his canned messages via the media (“Rock on T.V.”). Washington’s sign-off (“Peace”) concludes this decidedly unpeaceful poem ironically; in a world where such a travesty stands, there can be no peace. But Washington’s agency at the end, his claiming of history and rewriting it through poetry, subverts the hierarchies of historical and emotional narrative formation. Indeed, the Attica writers use poetry as a reclamation of history, one that only be done in alternative form, as poetic aesthetics give them the platform to express their own experience (emotional and otherwise), grief, and grievance. In other words, poetry allows for a more egalitarian telling of history – and for new modes of addressing injustice.

The poets in this workshop obviously wanted to circulate their work outside of the prison. About nine months after the workshop started, Tisdale wrote about publication plans, noting that he would go to Detroit to speak to Dudley Randall of Broadside Press, a major Black Arts Movement publisher whose lineup included authors like Gwendolyn

Brooks and Etheridge Knight.³⁵¹ Less than five months later, Tisdale indicated that Broadside would publish the book, noting that he is “really pleased that [they] chose a Black publisher or that they chose [the Attica writers].”³⁵² The Attica poets clearly positioned their work in the context of black artistic production, if not explicitly within the Black Arts Movement, thus giving their work a larger aesthetic and political context beyond the prison.³⁵³

The poems’ origin in Attica was also of commercial note. Although the collection maintained the title *Betcha Ain’t* (taken from a poem within the collection), Tisdale wrote that Randall wanted to change it to *Attica: Poems from Within* because he “felt that the word ‘Attica’ would be a better selling point – more attractive to the eye in a bookstore.”³⁵⁴ Nevertheless, the book ended up being a hit for Broadside. In a list of best-selling Broadside books in November 1983, *Betcha Ain’t* ranks fifth, and Julius E. Thompson notes that the collection was one of the books that “had sold well at Broadside for some time.”³⁵⁵ Publications such as the *New York Amsterdam* and *The New Republic* mentioned it favorably.³⁵⁶ It also appears in an overview of Broadside Press written by Helen Vendler and published in the *New York Times* (Vendler calls the book part of “a history of the feelings of black prisoners”).³⁵⁷ The acclaim is almost surely heightened due to the circumstances of the writing, but it should still be noted that the prisoners had

³⁵¹ *Betcha Ain’t*, 55. Tisdale mentions meeting Randall in late July 1972 (52-3).

³⁵² *Betcha Ain’t*, 57.

³⁵³ For more on the intersection of prison writing and the Black Arts Movement, see Lee Bernstein, “Prison Writers and the Black Arts Movement,” *New Thoughts on the Black Arts Movement*, Ed. Lisa Gail Collins and Margo Natalie Crawford (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2006), 297-316.

³⁵⁴ *Betcha Ain’t*, 59.

³⁵⁵ Julius E. Thompson, *Dudley Randall, Broadside Press, and the Black Arts Movement in Detroit, 1960-1995* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland and Company, 1999), 192.

³⁵⁶ Ruby Dee, “...Swingin’ Gently,” *New York Amsterdam News*, July 16, 1977, C10; Doris Grumbach, “Fine Print: Small Presses at Work,” *The New Republic*, February 22, 1975, 32.

³⁵⁷ Helen Vendler, “Good Black Poems One by One,” *New York Times*, September 29, 1974, 459.

positive visibility in high profile publications and were well-regarded specifically for their literary acumen.

However, in the long-term, *Betcha Ain't* has been, like other such collections, relegated to the genre niche of “prison writing,” unread by many. The long-term political impact of Jackson and Attica is similar. Both incidents set off a clamor for prison reform and larger social reform that made some important gains but then soon fizzled out. As Brian Conniff argues, “Jackson's death and the Attica rebellion were ‘incommensurable’: that is, they were public acts that dramatize the divisions in American society so powerfully that they seem to deny any common ground for progressive or productive reform.”³⁵⁸ The political potential set off by the grieving texts discussed here remains exactly that – potential. The relative silence of these texts in contemporary culture speaks volumes – we would rather see sensationalized fictions of prison and prison violence instead of the emotional wreckage left in the wake of such brutality. And in a quiet spot in Mount Vernon, Illinois, Jonathan and George Jackson share a tombstone, a testament to the hope of their attempts at political change: “There is no speech nor language, where their voice is not heard. Ps. 19:3.”³⁵⁹

³⁵⁸ Conniff, “The Prison Writers as Ideologue,” 149.

³⁵⁹ “George Lester Jackson,” *Find a Grave*, accessed September 21, 2015, <http://www.findagrave.com/cgi-bin/fg.cgi?page=pv&GRid=35347490&PIpi=17156021>.

Chapter 4 – Beyond the Crying Indian: Representing Loss in *House Made of Dawn* and *Almanac of the Dead*

“Language is limited. We know that because we know that there are things we can perceive but not express. ... Language cannot express what is inexpressible, and yet we live with inexpressible all the time.” –N. Scott Momaday³⁶⁰

In 1971, Keep America Beautiful released a famous environmentalism public service announcement (PSA). An American Indian man in traditional garb canoes down a river and runs into litter in the water, his profile set in relief against smokestacks.³⁶¹ He docks the canoe and walks up to a highway with cars rushing by. One driver throws a full bag of fast food trash that breaks in front of the Indian man’s feet. The camera pans up to the man’s face as a single tear slides down his cheeks.

The ad’s emotional resonance relies on two stereotypes related to Native Americans: “associating Indians with nature, simplicity, and an unspoiled environment” and the vanishing Indian trope.³⁶² American Indians have long been depicted in American culture as a vanishing or, since the late nineteenth century, vanished race. Relatedly, the PSA implicitly relies on the audience linking Native Americans and loss.³⁶³ The Crying Indian represents a lost past and a presumed lost people as he stands alone in modern America. Contemporaneous to the ad, the American Indian Movement (AIM) fought back against colonizing practices that oppressed and caused many tribal

³⁶⁰ Charles L. Woodard, *Ancestral Voice: Conversations with N. Scott Momaday* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 1989), 105.

³⁶¹ Throughout this chapter, I refer to indigenous people from North America as both Native Americans and American Indians, using the terms interchangeably.

³⁶² Wendy Melillo, *How McGruff and the Crying Indian Changed America: A History of Iconic Ad Council Campaigns* (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Books, 2013), 104.

³⁶³ Dana Luciano reads the loss of this image as well, but focuses on the temporality of loss and progress of modernity depicted in the PSA. *Arranging Grief*, 1-2.

losses. As such, the tear in this PSA evokes not just environmental losses but also the losses of the Native American people – the Trail of Tears, for example. Indeed, the Ad Council’s press release particularly noted that Iron Eyes Cody was “full-blooded Cherokee,” one of the tribes involved with the 1830s forced migration.³⁶⁴ The Council’s press release is undoubtedly aimed more toward asserting Cody’s identity, but the link to the Trail of Tears still stands.³⁶⁵

The PSA appropriates Native American loss in service of an environmentalist message; as Jennifer K. Ladino points out, “success at raising environmental awareness comes at the expense of Native American interests,” as the tears at the end of the PSA “overshadow an even greater cause for shedding tears.”³⁶⁶ Given that ad exists concurrently with American Indian political activity, including the 1969-1971 occupation of Alcatraz and the 1973 conflict at Wounded Knee, mainstream culture directs our emotional expectations and reception of American Indians in a different direction.³⁶⁷ This appropriation of native losses erases Native American grief – and centuries of violence and subjugation. Indeed, Native American grief and loss during the late twentieth century becomes a hollow proposition, even taken for granted. Just as the reservation space quarantines American Indians and their cultural practices from mainstream discourse, the modes of representing indigenous peoples also function as confining apparatuses.

³⁶⁴ Melillo, *McGruff and the Crying Indian*, 124.

³⁶⁵ Interestingly enough, Cody was actually Italian American, a fact which came out in 1996 and which he denied, maintaining his native heritage. See Amy Waldman, “Iron Eyes Cody, 94, an Actor and Tearful Anti-Littering Icon,” *New York Times*, January 5, 1999, A15.

³⁶⁶ Jennifer K. Ladino, *Under the Sign of Nature: Reclaiming Nostalgia: Longing for Nature in American Literature* (Charlottesville, VA: University of Virginia Press, 2012), 122.

³⁶⁷ About 80 people occupied Alcatraz Island in November 1969, calling for the return of certain federal lands to native peoples. In February 1973, members of the American Indian Movement took over Wounded Knee to protest conditions on the Pine Ridge Indian reservation. The government worked to retake the town, ultimately succeeding after a few months, but with deaths resulting on both sides. For more on both events, see Paul Chaat Smith and Robert Allen Warrior’s *Like a Hurricane: The Indian Movement from Alcatraz to Wounded Knee* (New York: New Press, 1996).

Conventional expressions of loss and grief are largely void of significance as cultural representations of American Indians are often predicated on loss, ghostliness, and death.³⁶⁸ Such depictions naturalize native victimization and devastation, thus rendering their losses as inevitable. How, then, do Native Americans represent emotions relating to loss and grief beyond these limiting frameworks? How does American Indian literature grapple with these issues related to portraying mourning?

Arnold Krupat's *That the People Might Live: Loss and Renewal in Native American Elegy* is the first full-length study on native expressions of grief. While traditional elegy is not a part of Native American cultures, Krupat identifies other literary and oral performances that perform elegiac functions. He argues that Native American elegiac representations often revolve around consoling the collective group so that the community can "survive and thrive despite their loss" and "restore healthy communal relations."³⁶⁹ This work draws especially from Gerald Vizenor's concept of "survivance," his theory of modern Native American cultural production that rejects victimization and Western domination and instead celebrates the vibrancy of continuing native cultural practices.³⁷⁰ So Krupat focuses on these internal community functions of loss, a project that relates to Craig Womack's point about the importance of understanding the community and primary culture that native writing stems from.³⁷¹ On the other hand, I

³⁶⁸ See Renée Bergland about "ghostliness," haunting, and vanishing as related to Native Americans in fiction. *The National Uncanny: Indian Ghosts and American Studies* (Hanover, NH: University Press of New England, 2000).

³⁶⁹ Arnold Krupat, "*That the People Might Live*": *Loss and Renewal in Native American Elegy* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2012), 6 and 13.

³⁷⁰ See Gerald Vizenor, *Manifest Manners: Postindian Warriors of Survivance* (Hanover, NH: University Press of New England, 1994).

³⁷¹ Craig S. Womack, *Red on Red: Native American Literary Separatism* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1999), 4. See also Robert Warrior's discussions of American Indian nationalism and cultural sovereignty in *Tribal Secrets: Recovering American Indian Intellectual Traditions* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1995).

examine how Native American writing works to make those losses more widely understood in mainstream American discourse and to make them politically relevant, engaging a long tradition of critics who have examined the intersections of Native American and Western culture (or mainstream American culture – I use the terms somewhat interchangeably, as Western thought and/or European Americans generally dictate mainstream media focus and cultural dissemination).³⁷² My focus lies primarily with the permeability of these cultural boundaries, especially the way that literature and other informational and affective networks cross them. This project of portraying native grief works both within the realm of reclaiming and extending native cultural practices but also as a form of critiquing dominant representations of indigenous peoples.

This chapter engages these issues through N. Scott Momaday's *House Made of Dawn* (1968) and Leslie Marmon Silko's *Almanac of the Dead* (1991).³⁷³ Given Momaday's training in Western literary tradition (and the evocations of it in his writing) and Silko's clear understanding of and engagement with her Western audience in *Almanac*, these writers provide productive works for discussing how American Indian political resistance grapples with the intersections of Western and indigenous communities, specifically regarding the cultural politics of representing loss and grief. Indeed, both books are heavily steeped in loss, engaged in the immediate losses affecting the main characters and in cultural losses affecting larger communities of indigenous peoples in the Americas. But while both are written by canonical American Indian

³⁷² See, for example, James H. Cox, *Muting White Noise: Native American and European American Novel Traditions* (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 2006); Joanna Hearne, *Native Recognition: Indigenous Cinema and the Western* (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 2013); Shari Huhndorf, *Going Native: Indians in the American Cultural Imagination* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2001); Louis Owens, *Other Destinies: Understanding the American Indian Novel* (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 1994).

³⁷³ N. Scott Momaday, *House Made of Dawn* (New York: Harper and Row, 1968) and Leslie Marmon Silko, *Almanac of the Dead* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1991).

writers, these novels are extremely different. The themes of Momaday's *House Made of Dawn* are common to much of Native American writing – alienation of native peoples in modernity, emphasis on native ritual, and navigation between native and mainstream culture – and Momaday's work heavily influenced other indigenous writers, including Silko. While *Almanac of the Dead* certainly deals with some of these issues, it radically deviates from the fictional productions by other native (and non-native) writers in this time period (and even from Silko's other texts). Its sprawling form alone distinguishes it, and its ambitious scope with diverse characters and locales actually takes focus away from native subjects. In fact, it could be argued that the most plausible protagonist is a white woman. I have chosen to compare these ostensibly dissimilar texts – instead of, say, comparing *House Made of Dawn* to Silko's *Ceremony* (1977), a logical (and frequent) pairing – to demonstrate how such varied works participate in a similar project of representing indigenous loss, a mode of engagement that counters hollowed constructions of native grief in larger American culture.

House Made of Dawn and *Almanac of the Dead* resist overt acknowledgements of these losses and of accompanying grief, reacting against a Western audience that often represents native peoples as lost (or affected by loss). Both novels are invested in the way cultural networks frame native loss and the way that narrative strategies can subvert these accounts. Rather than capture Indian loss via a central mourning figure like the Crying Indian, both books focus on characters with fractured subjectivities. Momaday's protagonist, Abel, is not a self-contained character, but one whose interiority spreads throughout the narrative via frequent interludes of non-linear stream-of-consciousness. On the other hand, Silko's wide-ranging novel contains dozens of characters, and even

the main characters are written with little insight into their emotional mechanics. While their methods – excessive interiority as opposed to internal opacity – differ, both authors use these strategies to destabilize cohesive subjectivity and deemphasize mourning subjects. Instead, both books represent loss through mood, creating affective environments instead of emotional subjects to critique mainstream frameworks for expressing loss that often reduce American Indian grief to a cliché.

Affect theorists draw crucial distinctions between emotion and affect. For example, Brian Massumi conceives of affect as a “nonconscious” embodied reaction manifesting “in purely automatic reactions”; it never quite becomes coherently cognized.³⁷⁴ It is raw and unprocessed feeling, inherently nonlinear.³⁷⁵ Furthermore, affect does not necessarily need a subject – it is always kinetic, moving between bodies. Emotion, on the other hand, harnesses affect and makes it understandable and knowable. It stops the movement of affect and locates it in a subject, shaping the forces of affect into recognizable and namable feelings (like “anger” and “sadness”).³⁷⁶ The distinctions between these two related concepts offer another way of thinking about public framings of loss. Emotions are tamed affects, controlled and circulated by dominant culture. Such ideology also governs representations and understandings of emotions like grief and their reception. Affect thus proves a useful network to resist these confines. Affect describes what lingers in text of the novels, getting at the unspoken, even unsayable, sense of loss that pervades. Indeed, both books point us to what is *felt* but not overtly stated or named – and what cannot be placed into conventional frameworks of emotional expression. This

³⁷⁴Brian Massumi, *Parables for the Virtual: Movement, Affect, Sensation* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2002), 24-5.

³⁷⁵ Massumi, *Parables for the Virtual*, 26.

³⁷⁶ Massumi, *Parables for the Virtual*, 26 and 28.

distinction between affect and emotion draws attention to the ways feeling is socially produced and imposed on groups like Native Americans, thus constraining capacities for grieving but simultaneously offering opportunities for subversion.

Momaday and Silko's generic choices facilitate the creation of critically probative affective spaces. Momaday's novel, for instance, uses a common character type (the world-weary and shell-shocked veteran) in a familiar genre (the return home from war novel) to make the plights of Native Americans in the post-war period accessible to non-native readers. As such, he provides a generic "map" for Western readers. Even the act of writing a novel, as opposed to poetry, oral tradition, or other genres, was important. In an interview, Momaday recalls Vine Deloria Jr.'s statement that the novel was an important genre for young Indian writers as it gave them more exposure to mainstream audiences.³⁷⁷ But Momaday's novel is remarkably unconventional as his not-always-linear narrative and intertextuality throughout make fragments that readers piece together.³⁷⁸ Such techniques both reflect the reservation-dwelling American Indians' disjunction from mainstream U.S. life and link the novel to American modernist modes of writing, demonstrating the dual and dueling epistemological frames at play in the novel. On the other hand, Silko engages postmodern encyclopedic narrative practices in her sprawling novel that expands its focus outward from native communities to the larger culture and politics of the Southwestern borderlands, thus interacting with competing modes of thought and representation. Their decisions regarding genre and form force the

³⁷⁷ *Conversations with N. Scott Momaday*, Ed. Matthias Schubnell (Jackson, MS: University Press of Mississippi, 1997), 101-2.

³⁷⁸ Bernard Selinger discusses Momaday's engagement with the bildungsroman genre especially in regards to Abel's sense of self and if he ever achieves a cohesive self-identity or continues to be fragmented. "House Made of Dawn: A Positively Ambivalent Bildungsroman," *Modern Fiction Studies* 45, no. 1 (1999): 38-68.

reader to think about the structures that we use to affectively and emotionally map ourselves. This spatial awareness also challenges the confinement of reservation spaces and probes the already porous nature of reservation boundaries.

These texts point out the ways that dominant epistemologies leave certain types of emotional expressions off the map, and I argue that Momaday and Silko respond by manipulating the affective modes of their texts. Geographer Ben Anderson's theorizes such "affective atmospheres" which he aligns with "perpetually forming and deforming" collective affects.³⁷⁹ These spaces are slippery and constantly shifting, shaping one's experience of a situation (or text) but never quite reaching the level of language. As such, they become fruitful places to critique ideologies of sentiment and emotional representation.³⁸⁰ Affective atmospheres in these novels destabilize dominant discourses of emotion regarding Native American loss. Affect helps these writers create a space between competing ideologies, an area to reflect on both communities, native and mainstream. This affective space offers a way out of confined grief—that is, grief only acknowledged in one space (indigenous) and disregarded or emptied in another. Affective atmospheres in these novels allow for loss that can be sensed and felt by readers but not bounded by ideological constraints of representation.

The narrative tones in these novels are crucial to creating affective resonances. Indeed, Sianne Ngai associates tone with affect, calling it "a feeling which is perceived rather than felt and whose very *nonfelnness* is perceived."³⁸¹ While both Momaday and Silko depict perceived feelings surrounding loss, their methods differ. The surfeit of

³⁷⁹ Ben Anderson, "Affective Atmospheres," *Emotion, Space and Society* 2 (2009): 77-81 (78-9).

³⁸⁰ This discussion of the spatial contexts of grief is also influenced by Jonathan Flatley's *Affective Mapping*, which theorizes "affective mapping" as a mode of reformulating melancholic attachments into positive and productive relationships with political futures.

³⁸¹ Sianne Ngai, *Ugly Feelings* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2005), 76.

interiority in *House Made of Dawn* diffuses loss throughout the narrative, creating the mournful tone of the novel that remains unresolved, never letting Abel or the reader process feelings of grief. Silko, on the other hand, resists grief, and detachment takes over as the prevailing mode of the novel. This remoteness and refusal to engage with feeling redirects conversations about native loss to an examination of grievances and an undoing of the violent losses of colonialism.

Suspended Grief in N. Scott Momaday's *House Made of Dawn*

“A story does not have to be told to exist.” –N. Scott Momaday³⁸²

With 1968's *House Made of Dawn*, winner of the 1969 Pulitzer Prize, N. Scott Momaday spurred an upsurge of interest in and publication of American Indian writing, often referred to as the Native American Renaissance. The novel follows World War II veteran Abel as he struggles to readjust to life on the reservation in 1945 and then in 1952 Los Angeles after a prison term. It centers on a major topic in the Native American novel that Sean Kicummah Teuton describes as starting with D'arcy McNickle's *The Surrounded* (1936): the unmoored and liminal position of American Indians in modernity.³⁸³ Indeed, *House Made of Dawn* is certainly concerned with dislocation and is often discussed in this context. However, it is also a novel of losses, both overt and implicit. From Abel's own losses, mostly of his own sense of identity, to Francisco's death, to a pilgrimage to a grave, to the losses wrought by termination and relocation policies, even to the griefs of tertiary characters, like Milly mourning her deceased child, this novel grasps for ways to deal with loss in a modern world that increasingly refuses to

³⁸² *Ancestral Voices*, 120.

³⁸³ Sean Kicummah Teuton, “The Native American Tradition,” *The Cambridge History of the American Novel*, Ed. Leonard Cassuto, Clare Virginia Eby, and Benjamin Reiss (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 1107-1121 (1111).

acknowledge grief. And yet, while critics mention the losses in the novel, the novel's modes of representing grief remain under-examined. Two critics who explicitly address loss are Jennifer K. Ladino and John J. Su.³⁸⁴ They both frame their discussions in terms of nostalgia, arguing that Momaday's novel reinscribes loss as part of an alternative cultural nostalgia that rewrites or reconceives of historical memory, allowing for further native agency and self-determination. But nostalgia and grief have different emotional relationships to the past and to loss. A warmer feeling, nostalgia is a glance backward with wistfulness and longing for reclamation. Grief is often a harsher and sadder emotion due to a severed past. Certainly the two feelings can (and do) inform each other, but I specifically approach Momaday's novel through prevailing cultures of mourning and expressions of native grief.

In this section, I explore how *House Made of Dawn* is centrally concerned with public registers of grief and how American Indians navigate different cultural codes when representing loss. As previously mentioned, dominant American culture often frames Indians as relegated to the past and as always connected to loss, a move that deems them no longer relevant and that refuses to deeply engage with grief. I argue that *House Made of Dawn* is centrally concerned with these insufficient cultural frameworks for representing Indian loss and grief in mainstream American culture. But Momaday does not make mourning a readily apparent theme; rather, grief lingers throughout the novel, diffused throughout the various narrative registers of the novel. The gaps in Momaday's text help craft the affective landscape of the novel so that readers can see the contrasting and overlapping epistemologies that exist between and amongst native and Western

³⁸⁴ Ladino, *Under the Sign of Nature*, and John J. Su, *Ethnics and Nostalgia in the Contemporary Novel* (New York, Cambridge University Press, 2005).

culture. Momaday makes us aware of the cognitive and emotional frames that we use to map our lives, and in highlighting them, shows what is missing from those frames, with particular attention to the epistemologies that govern how we perceive loss.

While the novel has an investment in the cultural norms that influence character development, it is also deeply concerned with interiority. The primary narrative register is an unsituated subjective voice that is linked, but sometimes only tenuously, to Abel. There is a surfeit of interiority in this novel, an excess that spills over from any simple category of subjectivity, creating a diffusion of feelings throughout the novel. Grief escapes Abel's unlocated person and circulates throughout the novel, not named but felt. With this affective presence, Momaday lets the reader sit with the feeling rather than trying to identify and contain it, creating a suspended contemplation of loss that remains unresolved. This sensory engagement with loss creates alternative modes for representing grief and bypasses the lack of viable cultural frameworks for native mourning.

Momaday himself discusses the novel's roots in loss. In November 1969, *Akwesasne News* reprinted an article about a talk Momaday gave during which he specifically uses the word "loss," and its mention slips from metaphorical loss to material loss. Calling the interaction between Indians and mainstream America a "confrontation" that is "essentially violent," Momaday says that such violence is "one of the manifestations of a loss of identity."³⁸⁵ Loss then becomes tangible: "'A lot of those boys died violent deaths – friends of mine on the reservation. A number are dead now – fights, automobile accidents, alcoholism."³⁸⁶ Years later, in response to a 1982 interview question about how he names his characters, Momaday recalls the man who inspired

³⁸⁵ Myra MacPherson, "Pulitzer Prize Winner N. S. Momaday, Talks 'Psychic Dislocation' Problem," *Akwesasne Notes*, November 1969, 11.

³⁸⁶ *Ibid.*

Abel's name. Before noting that Abel is a common Pueblo name, he mentions his neighbor named Abel "who blew his brains out at the reservation."³⁸⁷ Momaday's modeling of Abel comes from this lost generation, American Indian men who returned from war to two clashing worlds, neither of which they fit into anymore. The terminology in these moments shifts the discussion from "psychic dislocation" – which Momaday calls "today's plight of the American Indian" – to actual losses.

However, the relationship between displacement, perhaps the central issue of the book, and loss is slippery. Critics often focus on the displacement aspect; for example, Sean Teuton writes about the importance of Abel's "somatic place" – that is, how he integrates his body with a sense of the landscape and earth.³⁸⁸ But this conversation often masks the loss of self (or sense of self) inherent to the concept of displacement. When loss becomes framed as dislocation, it is spatialized. It is also embodied, as loss (of identity, language, placement) resides within the bodily constraints of Abel for most of the novel. In that context, loss should be locatable, but its association with the negative (*dis*-location) means that as Abel's person remains fragmented. As a hollowed out subject, Abel is incapable of mourning, and indeed his losses manifest as a loss of self (or of the ability to articulate his subjectivity). Momaday plays with the notion of the lost or vanished Indian via Abel, his absent subjectivity a representation of (and even a consequence of) stereotypical American Indian depictions. Abel is already marked as a lost (and losing) man. Thus, thinking about Momaday's spatialization of loss allows us to focus on the frames of knowledge and recognition that govern representations of American Indian loss and grief (or conceal such depictions).

³⁸⁷ *Conversations with N. Scott Momaday*, 118-9.

³⁸⁸ Sean Kicummah Teuton, *Red Land, Red Power: Grounding Knowledge in the American Indian Novel* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2008), 51.

The novel itself pays close attention to the importance of language and representational proficiency (or rather, Abel's lack of it). These two concepts merge when Abel contemplates his problems:

His return to the town had been a failure, for all his looking forward. He had tried in the days that followed to speak to his grandfather, but he could not say the things he wanted; he tried to pray, to sing, to enter into the old rhythm of the tongue, but he was no longer attuned to it. And yet it was there still, like memory, in the reach of his hearing, as if Francisco or his mother or Vidal had spoken out of the past and the words had taken hold of the moment and made it eternal. Had he been able to say it, anything of his own language – even the commonplace formula of greeting “Where are you going” – which had no being beyond sound, no visible substance, would once again have shown him whole to himself; but he was dumb. Not dumb – silence was the older and better part of custom still – but *inarticulate*. (*House* 53).

Much critical attention has been paid to passages like this one, particularly in light of Momaday's *The Man Made of Words*, which comments on the necessity of language to one's identity.³⁸⁹ Abel's inability to speak is also part of a larger context of the loss of native cultures and especially native language. Momaday makes a distinction here in terms of the type of language Abel wants to speak (“*his own language*”) – it claims Abel's heritage and connection to culture through language.³⁹⁰ But he is displaced from his culture, this register collapsed as a structure through which Abel could understand

³⁸⁹ N. Scott Momaday, *The Man Made of Words: Essays, Stories, Passages* (New York: Macmillan, 1998).

³⁹⁰ Connected to the displacement model, Lee Schweninger writes about how the loss of language is linked to Abel's disconnection with the land. *Listening to the Land: Native American Literary Responses to the Landscape* (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 2008), 134.

himself and loss. Passages like this one demonstrate Momaday's attention to epistemological structures and rhetorical frameworks that shape articulations of loss and what happens when those frameworks leave something to be desired.

Several of Momaday's word choices in this passage demonstrate the importance of systems of articulation, especially as regarding grief. For one, Abel is not "attuned" to spoken language— in this context, unable to tune into the patterns of language. But "attuned" also refers to sonic harmony, to reaching a specific pitch. Abel can no longer access this register of communal understanding and belonging, this frame of reference for his existence. Language taunts Abel, just out of reach: "it was there still, like memory, in the reach of his hearing, as if Francisco or his mother or Vidal had spoken out of the past and the words had taken hold of the moment and made it eternal." Language, a dynamic system and process, becomes objectified here, taken out of temporal context and hardened, made "still" (the word can function two ways here) and "eternal." It also exists outside of Abel, as the comparison with memory makes it clear that this is not memory and thus does not reside within him. By crystallizing language this way, Momaday gives loss substance, shaping a dynamic practice (self-articulation in language) into an external object of grief.

However, this mode of framing language also creates both formal and sensory confusion. The form of language described – words from the past made eternal – could easily refer to writing. However, the senses evoked are auditory ("hearing," "spoken"). As these two forms of linguistic articulation merge, Abel's frame of reference for language becomes further disordered. While Abel wants to find the "rhythm of the tongue" – language located (literally here) in the body, in impromptu articulations – he

instead sees it as fixed, hardened in time. However, the narrative here rejects the materiality of language, saying it has “no visible substance” and “no being beyond sound.” The irony is apparent – although this passage is about spoken word, readers see language on the tangible page, in Momaday’s written word. With this synesthetic relationship to language, Momaday works toward a hybridity of oral and written culture. Indeed, Momaday frequently speaks about the connections between oral traditions and literature, saying that the “storyteller’s attitude” links the two and that the same principles that “make...great literature are the very things that inform oral tradition at its best and distinguish a great storyteller.”³⁹¹ He even says that for him personally, writing is very similar to speaking to an audience and that his “physical voice” influences his writing: “I listen to what I write. I work with it until it is what I want it to be in my hearing. I think that the voice of my writing is very much like the voice of my speaking.”³⁹² For Momaday, storytelling transverses these mediums and senses, as it can apply not only to reading and writing but also to visual culture.³⁹³ We even see the visual in this passage when Abel thinks that his use of language “would once again have *shown* him whole to himself.” For Momaday, unlocking different sensory perceptions simultaneously is part of his mode of storytelling. It is also part of his affective sense of loss – through a sensory overload via synesthesia, we *sense* how Abel has lost something.

Furthermore, the stressed difference between “dumb” and “inarticulate” is important. “Inarticulate” in this context most obviously refers to Abel’s inability to make himself understood intelligibly and lucidly. However, “articulate” also refers to structures

³⁹¹ *Conversations*, 41 and *Ancestral Voices*, 121.

³⁹² *Ancestral Voices*, 92 and 111.

³⁹³ *Conversations*, 163.

and systems – a set of rules or system of doctrine.³⁹⁴ It can also refer to pieces attached by joints.³⁹⁵ Accordingly, “inarticulate” refers to something disjointed, separated – and something outside systemic context. In Abel’s case, all these definitions apply. His inability to articulate himself unmoors him from the systems and contexts of both native and mainstream American culture. Inarticulateness is linked to affect here, similarly unbound by materiality and legible systems of power and expression. Loss affects Abel and the feelings associated with it are excluded from schematics of language and representation, and inarticulateness codes for that affective structure undergirding the whole novel. The spatialization of loss dissolves and circulates through the novel, only sensible through its absence, an absence forged by Abel’s inability to conjure it into linguistic representation. Instead, Abel’s affective experiences of loss dissolve and reformulate throughout the narrative. In these instances, Momaday demonstrates an awareness of grief as an intersubjective emotion whose articulation depends on ideological frames of reference, and his shaping of mourning lacks such representational frameworks.

While Momaday depicts reservation life and native communities, *House Made of Dawn* is also explicitly interested in white interpretations of Native American communities and the ways mainstream America perceives Indian customs and culture. Such emphasis explicitly highlights competing modes of perception and emotional mapping. Early in the novel, Momaday introduces Angela, a white woman visiting the area. Readers see the feast of Santiago through Angela’s eyes, giving the audience an outsider perspective of the ritual. Angela also objectifies Abel. She hires him to cut wood

³⁹⁴ “Articulate,” Oxford English Dictionary, II.4.

³⁹⁵ “Articulate,” Oxford English Dictionary, III.6.

and watches him, commenting “I see” aloud to herself, the narrator noting: “Now, now that she could see, she was aware of some useless agony that was spent upon the wood, some hurt she could not have imagined until now” (*House* 29). Watching Abel allows her to project “agony” and “hurt.” Angela’s focus on Abel’s body – noting particularly the color of his skin – links emotion to his flesh, his raced body. Momaday centers this passage not on Abel, but on Angela’s perception. The audience looks at Abel through her eyes, through a Western gaze, which sees hurt and agony. Such pain is indeed there, but Momaday’s construction of the scene makes it not about Abel’s subjectivity but about Angela’s interpretation of it and her projection of her own issues about pregnancy, mentioned briefly prior to this moment, onto him. In other words, she accesses her own pain by projecting it onto his body. Through Angela, Momaday emphasizes the gap between Abel’s self-expression and outside interpretation.

Another example of clashing interpretive modes happens early in the novel when we see “one sharp fragment of recall, recurrent and distinct” from Abel’s experience in war (although the setting of the memory is not initially clear) (*House* 21). Abel lies on the ground surrounded by dead bodies as “the machine concentrated calm, strange and terrific, and it was coming” (*House* 22). Before it is made entirely clear what is going on, the scene cuts to Abel hung over on the reservation. It is only much later in the novel that we get a clearer and fuller (if less poetic) explanation of what happened from a white soldier – a tank rolled by the dead to see if anyone was left, and Abel did a “war dance” in response. Abel is present when the man tells this story: “Abel was listening to him, self-conscious, growing angry and confused that this white man should talk about him, account for him, as if he were not there” (*House* 102). The modes of expression are vastly

different – one confusing but beautifully impressionistic and one straightforward but crude. Momaday uses such moments to illustrate the vast difference between modes of expression and the ways we cognize and feel them. And while we as readers do not necessarily understand Abel’s recollection of the events, we do not need to in order to sense the loss and devastation he feels. The soldier’s basic explanation dismisses and limits Abel’s reaction, pointing out that the dominant modes of expression indeed leave out affective registers of loss. Then Abel becomes “self-conscious” – literally aware of himself, as opposed to his usual sense of dislocation – but at the same time, everyone else treats him “as if he were not there.” In the same moment that Abel grounds himself and identifies clear emotions (“angry and confused”), his viewpoint is omitted from the official record, which would not allow for or want his type of expression.³⁹⁶ The networks of war have no place for Abel’s interpretation of events, but the novel allows Abel’s loss to infiltrate its emotional landscape.

A crucial context for the public framing of this novel is two connected U.S. policies related to American Indian spaces in the 1940s and 1950s (the time in which the novel is set): reservation termination and relocation of Native Americans from reservations to urban areas. After reports in the 1940s about poverty and the low quality of life on reservations, Congress made moves to disband reservation sovereignty and to eventually subsume native populations into the mainstream U.S. These termination policies, which had their heyday between 1945 and 1960, came after a legacy of government flip-flops on Indian policy, as in the 1934 Indian Reorganization Act that helped restore tribal governments and lands after the late 19th century Dawes Act

³⁹⁶ For more on Abel’s self-hood vis-à-vis Western tropes, see Jason W. Stevens, “Bear, Outlaw, and Storyteller: American Frontier Mythology and the Ethnic Subjectivity of N. Scott Momaday,” *American Literature* 73, no. 3 (September 2001): 599-631 (625).

portioned out land to individuals. Complementary relocation policies aimed to help American Indians, especially young ones, move into urban areas, facilitating the assimilation process. Outside American Indian communities, termination was largely seen as positive.³⁹⁷ The Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) news coverage highlighted how relocation brought Native Americans into modernity: a clipping of the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch* saved by the St. Louis BIA regional office features two pictures, one of a woman doing laundry with a washboard in a tub on the reservation and the second with the same woman using a washing machine.³⁹⁸ This framing of relocation denies Indian loss and turns adjustment into the small price to pay for modernity.

The greater American public generally had other concerns – the Korean War and other domestic issues took precedence over Native American issues with the BIA, and the participation of natives in the war gave people the false impression that they supported termination policies.³⁹⁹ However, in the spring of 1956, several mainstream periodicals profiled relocated families who had trouble adjusting, creating a negative public image that helped turn the tide of public opinion against termination.⁴⁰⁰ The publication of *House Made of Dawn* in 1968 then reaches a mainstream public that was receptive to the dislocated Indian, but it is set in a time with less public awareness about termination and relocation consequences.

Relocation was often a paternalistic and disciplinary process – the BIA encouraged families to move (and discouraged single women from relocating);

³⁹⁷ See Mary Ann Weston, *Native Americans in the News: Images of Indians in the Twentieth Century Press* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1996), particularly pages 100-122.

³⁹⁸ “St. Louis Office Cuttings,” “Bureau of Indian Affairs Indian relocation records: Series 2, Urban Field Offices (1955-1975),” *American Indian Histories and Cultures*.

³⁹⁹ Donald Lee Fixico, *Termination and Relocation: Federal Indian Policy, 1945-1960* (Albuquerque, NM: University of New Mexico Press, 1990), 73 and 57.

⁴⁰⁰ Fixico, *Termination and Relocation*, 140-2 and 161.

orientations emphasized maintenance of personal and home appearance and the importance of good work habits; and relocation officers would often check in with relocatees for progress reports.⁴⁰¹ Furthermore, relocatees were discouraged from visiting home: if they returned to their tribes, officials would frequently mark it as an infraction or expel them from the program, and Portland's program even mandated that funds from the program must not be used to visit family or friends.⁴⁰² Relocatees received packets of information about necessary steps to take once arriving.⁴⁰³ However, many people had issues that could not be solved by pamphlets or surveillance. For example, relocatees would often have to be taught how a clock worked, and they had to adjust to scheduling their time.⁴⁰⁴ One relocatee recalled how he could not exit his third floor residence – he could not find the stairs, and he had never ridden an elevator before.⁴⁰⁵ Spatial and temporary awareness changed drastically for many people, and Momaday's narrative structures both speak to the sense of loss and how it went largely unacknowledged.

Part II of the novel, the section about Abel's relocation in 1952, drops the reader into an unfamiliar world. The first paragraph discusses a type of fish in southern California before moving slightly inland to a "kind of church" in a Los Angeles storage facility basement with characters that we have not encountered yet (*House* 79). Only after an unconventional sermon by Priest of the Sun, Tosamah, do we return to Abel (and only then do we discover that the earlier paragraph about the fish was inside his head – "Why should Abel think of the fishes?") (*House* 87). While the novel up to this point was never

⁴⁰¹ Nicholas G. Rosenthal, *Reimagining Indian Country: Native American Migration and Identity in Twentieth-Century Los Angeles* (Durham, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2012), 55-6 and 59.

⁴⁰² Rosenthal, *Reimagining Indian Country*, 62.

⁴⁰³ "St. Louis Office of Bureau of Indian Affairs Handbook (September 30, 1956)," "Bureau of Indian Affairs Indian relocation records: Series 2, Urban Field Offices (1955-1975)," *American Indian Histories and Cultures*.

⁴⁰⁴ Fixico, *Termination and Relocation*, 135-6.

⁴⁰⁵ Rosenthal, *Reimagining Indian Country*, 63.

straightforward, the movement from internal thought process or memory and external description was often clear. This opening in Part II drops links, making narrative subjects unclear and temporal distinctions disrupted as readers remain in abeyance, waiting for the blanks to be filled in.

Seen in this section, the novel's predominant narrative voice speaks to Abel's inability to center himself and represent himself. Often a poetic, impressionist voice, it also accesses multiple registers in both Pueblo and dominant American cultural contexts. Rather than providing a framing logic for Abel's experience, it complements his dislocation in its diffuse way of articulating experience that simultaneously contains multiple and competing ideologies. Abel's interiority is not contained in his person but rather spreads throughout the text. Other narrative registers off-set this frustratingly opaque and hard to grasp voice, and the juxtaposition of various voices throughout the novel highlights both the competing discourses of representation *and* the diffusion of loss through these facets of expression. As such, grief struggles for expression against calcified and unaccommodating frames, often emerging in the unspoken and never becoming fully formulated.

A few pages later, Momaday juxtaposes Abel's thoughts with one form asking basic questions like age, sex, height, eye color, marital status, religious affiliation, and completed education and a second one that asks for an estimate of alcoholic beverages consumed and for a self-evaluation of intelligence.⁴⁰⁶ The forms appear without context, although we find out later that relocation social worker Milly provided them (*House* 127). Withholding this information defamiliarizes bureaucracy – without the context, the stark

⁴⁰⁶ For more on the specific questions asked in the forms, see Guillermo Bartelt, "Hegemonic Registers in Momaday's *House Made of Dawn*," *Style* 39, no. 4 (Winter 2005): 469-478.

questions seem brusque, even dehumanizing as they distill human experience into a series of one word responses, into data points. These forms represent an artificial and very narrow way of approaching the world and one's place in it. The juxtaposition of Momaday's poetic prose throughout this section and the stark terseness of bureaucratic language contrasts two radically different modes, signaling to the reader that while we can code ourselves into the strictures of society via certain factual articulations, that does not necessarily mean that we can emotionally map ourselves into society. Momaday uses the genre of governmental forms to show the disparity between what we *know* and what we *feel* and how they require different forms of articulation.

Furthermore, the questions remain unanswered, the blanks never filled. Blank spaces were prevalent in relocation forms, as field relocation offices "provide[d] blanks where new arrivals could fill in the addresses for their local grocery store, bank, movie house, gas station, church, and friends."⁴⁰⁷ The blanks hold the promise of the future – but also reminders of what was left behind. Momaday's inclusion of, and nod toward other, government forms hints at the culpability at federal levels for the grief caused to Native Americans – and at the inexpressibility of such feelings. There is a lack of emotional language with which to discuss loss and grief. Even Native American publications of this time period, especially the National Congress of the American Indian (NCAI), often contained the kind of bureaucratic and legalistic language used by Momaday. The newsletter is filled with listings of court cases and legal jargon related to termination and relocation, helping native peoples keep abreast of the movements and

⁴⁰⁷ Rosenthal, *Reimagining Indian Country*, 59.

changes – and to help fight them.⁴⁰⁸ Grief and loss, then, are expressed here as a void, as a space needing to be filled.

But Momaday does not present these forms by themselves. Instead, they are directly adjacent to Abel's narration, creating broad swings in narrative tone. For example, the first form is preceded by this passage:

Now, here, the world was open at his back. He had lost his place. He had been long ago at the center, had known where he was, had lost his way, had wandered to the end of the earth, was even now reeling on the edge of the void. The sea reached and leaned, licked after him and withdrew, falling off forever in the abyss. And the fishes... (*House* 92)

The lyrical narrative voice provides a striking contrast to the stiff bureaucratic language of relocation forms. The first sentence opens with ostensibly fixed phrases (“now, here”) that are actually unfixed as these pronouns depend on knowledge of context and a larger map for them to make sense. Without such situation, they are void of meaning.

Ostensibly, the first paragraph refers to Abel living in Los Angeles, unencumbered by the parameters of the reservation. However, for Abel, the freedom of having an “open” world becomes treacherous, a threat to his identity. It, ironically, becomes its own confined space, through its unfamiliar rules, restrictions, and social codes. Although reservations exist on the margins of U.S. culture, for Abel, they represent the “center,” a place of stability. Now that he is in a major metropolis, he feels himself at the margin, a reversal of conventional conceptions of twentieth century U.S. space. But Abel is on to something – he is literally at the limit of U.S. borders, next to the oceanic “abyss” that marks the end

⁴⁰⁸ NCAI Newsletters, Tribal Archives Project Collection, 1851-1980 (Sokaogon Chippewa Community), reel 5, University of Wisconsin.

of one ruling national body and the beginning of a completely different type of space that defies human rule (it is left to the “fishes”). By concluding the first paragraph with ellipses, Momaday signals both Abel’s silence and the connections between Abel’s self-void and the questionnaires.

After the form, Abel jumps to remembering his time in jail:

The walls of his cell were white, or perhaps they were gray or green; he could not remember. After a while he could not imagine anything beyond the walls except the yard outside, the lavatory and the dining hall – or even the walls, really. They were abstractions beyond the reach of his understanding, not in themselves confinement but symbols of confinement. The essential character of the walls consisted not in their substance but in their appearance, the bare one-dimensional surface that was white, perhaps, or gray, or green. (*House* 92-3)

Abel’s lack of spatial context – the intimidating abyss looming in front of him – contrasts with his jail cell. The specifics of the cell escape Abel, as he loses mental facilities like memory and even imagination, unable to contemplate alternatives to his current condition. It is here that Abel’s dislocation becomes concrete, as he can no longer retain a cognitive map of the world. Instead, that which remains out of his immediate vision only exists as an “abstraction” that, even in its amorphous form, is spatialized (it remains “*beyond* the reach of his understanding”). This inability to map himself and his position in a larger sense of the world affects his memory, as he cannot remember what color the walls were since they are not right in front of him. For Abel, place no longer has “substance,” or a more concrete sense of how the pieces of the world fit together, but only “appearance,” or what is visibly in front of him. He can only access the world

affectively – through sensory interaction that remains unprocessed and uncategorized – not intellectually or emotionally.

In the previous paragraph, I have read “they” (in “they were abstractions...”) as referring to the world outside the prison. However, the antecedent is unclear – it may refer to “anything,” but it may also refer to the walls themselves. With this reading, the figurative and the literal blur, as the walls of the jail – literal objects of confinement – turn into a “symbol” of confinement. Abel’s inability to distinguish between material and metaphor comments on the function of confinement on American Indian populations. Since reservation borders are pervious, the sense of confinement is much different than prison or other such restricted spaces, as it often acts metaphorically by bracketing American Indian cultures. This whole passage, then, obliquely refers to the losses caused by reservation confinement and the ones portended by termination policy.

Abel is not the only urban Indian character in the novel, and the introduction of Tosamah and Benally to the narrative allows Momaday to present alternative viewpoints. One thing these distinctly separate voices have in common is loss, although they approach and voice grief quite differently. Momaday’s characters create a discoordination of perspective, and they articulate different models of mourning. This plurality of voices mourning shows individuation in Indian approaches to loss, in contrast with dominant cultural modes that would flatten Indian emotional expression.

Many relocatees went to Los Angeles, and “by 1970 [it] was second only to the Navajo reservation as the largest concentration of American Indians in the country.”⁴⁰⁹ The Los Angeles Indian Center, mentioned in the novel, was an important resource as it

⁴⁰⁹ Rosenthal, *Reimagining Indian Country*, 2.

helped form an urban Indian community.⁴¹⁰ Besides serving as a meeting place with various forms of recreation, the Center also published a newsletter called *Talking Leaves* – “the term used at times by Native people to refer to treaties and other written materials introduced by non-Indians” – a type of “society page” for Los Angeles Indians.⁴¹¹ So while many people had trouble adjusting, there were many (successful) efforts to forge an Indian community in Los Angeles. Benally is the voice of the well-adjusted, relocated, and assimilated Indian. His section, “The Night Chanter,” is the most easily digested, and it is the only one written in the first person. Ben’s ability to narrate in the first person is a sign of his centered identity that stands in stark opposition to the rest of the characters. He explains much of what happens to Abel in a more straightforward narrative form, as opposed to the preceding non-linear section, “The Priest of the Sun.” For example, Ben explains how communication problems further inhibits Abel’s progress:

And they can’t help you because you don’t know how to talk to them. They have a lot of *words*, and you know they mean something, but you don’t know what, and your own words are no good because they’re not the same; they’re different, and they’re the only words you’ve got. Everything is different, and you don’t know how to get used to it. (*House* 139)

Besides being the only character to narrate in the first person, Ben is also the only character to use the second person address, which he does throughout this section. Sometimes he uses it, as in this passage, to indicate a general, unspecific person, but in others, he uses it more as an address to the reader (“you know”) (*House* 141). This creates a colloquial, storytelling feel to Benally’s section. However, the shifts in

⁴¹⁰ Rosenthal, *Reimagining Indian Country*, 115.

⁴¹¹ Rosenthal, *Reimagining Indian Country*, 116.

addressee gesture toward the varied audiences for this novel. When Ben speaks about Abel's situation in the second person, white audiences occupy a dual position. They exist both as the outside "they," the other that imposes an alien framework onto Abel and other relocated Indians, but when "you" functions as an address, they also reside within the Indian subjectivity of this passage. By creating such hybridity via narrative address in Benally's section – one that acknowledges the assimilated Indian – Momaday creates opportunities for empathy and recognition in a moment about being lost in translation.

In a 1983 interview with Momaday, Kay Bonetti notes that *House Made of Dawn* contains a "recurring motif of the death of someone young and precious," and Momaday says that such losses "accumulate until they become an important force in the novel."⁴¹² Bonetti posits that these losses "reflect [Abel's] own preoccupation with a death of something in himself" and says that the "cumulative effect is that elegiac tone which seems to move through *House Made of Dawn*" before asking if Momaday positioned the novel this way.⁴¹³ Momaday responds,

Oh yes! Indeed, Benally really does put his finger on that at the end, when he reminisces and talks about going out at dawn. 'And for the last time, for the last time...'; he keeps repeating that; which I very much wanted to be a kind of threnody, an elegiac symbolism that is pronounced at the end of the novel.⁴¹⁴

Benally is the only character emotionally stable enough to mourn and express loss in traditional Western modes (threnody and elegy). His narrative voice offers the closest to conventional gestures of grief and acts as both an anchor – his section is the easiest to comprehend, offers the clearest plot exposition, and contains this moment that

⁴¹² *Conversations*, 140.

⁴¹³ *Ibid.*

⁴¹⁴ *Ibid.*

crystallizes loss in the book – and as a model of grief that, even in its relatively normative expression, remains unresolved and lingering.

Another model of relocation coping comes from Tosamah, the Reverend and Priest of the Sun, who runs a “Holiness Pan-Indian Rescue Mission” (*House* 79). Tosamah’s church actually has roots in relocation contexts as officers often worked with religious organizations to promote appropriate behavior, and some “church groups in Los Angeles formed specifically to work with this growing population, including the San Creek Mission Indian Church, Indian Revival Center, American Indian Mission Church, First Indian Baptist Church, and Indian Church of the Nazarene.”⁴¹⁵ A somewhat tangential character, he conducts services with Christian and Indian elements, using both gospel and peyote. The character provokes varied reactions: Alan R. Velie calls him a “lout” and a “villain,” but Momaday himself calls Tosamah his favorite character in the novel, perhaps because this difficult character serves as the author’s proxy.⁴¹⁶ The most explicit transposition of Momaday into Tosamah is when Tosamah tells Momaday’s story of visiting his grandmother’s grave in the novel, a tale Momaday also relates in the autobiographical *The Way to Rainy Mountain* (1969). Through Tosamah, Momaday splices non-fiction and fiction, reminding us of the veracity of the characters’ experiences and of the role fiction plays in memory and in imagination.⁴¹⁷

Somewhat ironically, this episodic and often opaque novel offers more verisimilitude than *Rainy Mountain* as the overtly experimental *Rainy Mountain* juxtaposes poetry, autobiographical vignettes, and images drawn by Momaday’s brother,

⁴¹⁵ Rosenthal, *Reimagining Indian Country*, 60.

⁴¹⁶ Alan R. Velie, “N. Scott Momaday’s *House Made of Dawn* and Myths of the Victim, *The Native American Renaissance: Literary Imagination and Achievement*, Ed. Alan R. Velie and A. Robert Lee (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 2013), 58-73 (62). For Momaday, see *Conversations*, 186.

⁴¹⁷ For discussion about realism in the novel, see Teuton, *Red Land, Red Power*, 52

creating a highly fragmented and impressionistic text. With his inclusion of this story of loss – not only of his grandmother but also of customs, as his grandmother witnessed one of the last Sun Dances – in both texts, Momaday centers the importance of loss in American Indian writing.⁴¹⁸ While some critics say that Tosamah’s sermon is tangential, Sarah Eden Schiff argues that it is integral to the book, as it helps explain the end of the book and how Francisco’s memories are passed to Abel via blood memory, and it works toward using native mythology “for psychic and communal recuperation.”⁴¹⁹ But why give this story to Tosamah? Tosamah is our grounding figure in “The Priest of the Sun,” as his (admittedly still complex) sections offer more solid footing than Abel’s disoriented thoughts and experiences. These two men have more in common than on the surface: in an interview, Momaday notes that Tosamah is “lost” like Abel is – he just handles it better.⁴²⁰ So Tosamah offers readers another model for dealing with loss, one of simultaneous adaptation to Western ways and continuation of native customs.

However, his mourning is not uncomplicated. Arnold Krupat references Momaday’s story in his study of Native American elegiac writing, emphasizing the lack of grief expressed in *Rainy Mountain* (and, naturally, in its reoccurrence in *House Made of Dawn*), noting that Momaday’s grandmother died in 1965, not long before the composition of the books.⁴²¹ Indeed, the sermon – or eulogy – contains memories of his grandmother, but perhaps more importantly, details about the places she inhabited and the place she was buried. Momaday maps out his mourning pilgrimage, but offers no emotions, instead letting the surrounding atmosphere and landscape perform the affective

⁴¹⁸ For the publication history of this story, see Alan R. Velie, “Myths of the Victim,” 62.

⁴¹⁹ Sarah Eden Schiff, “Power Literature and the Myth of Racial Memory,” *Modern Fiction Studies* 57, no. 1 (Spring 2011): 96-122 (104, 106, 110).

⁴²⁰ *Conversations*, 172.

⁴²¹ Krupat, “*That the People Might Live*,” 136.

labor; for example, “a warm wind rose up and purred like the longing within me” (*House* 119). Wind is related to the narrative voice here, and it is linked to the transposition of grief via the form of the novel, as loss blows through the novel, caught between epistemological frames that would facilitate representation. By the time he reaches the grave, he acknowledges it, and then “looking back once, I saw the mountain and came away” (*House* 120). Again, loss remains crackling in the landscape but never quite manifests linguistically.

At the end of the novel, Abel loses a grandparent as well.⁴²² As Francisco lies ill, Abel’s inarticulateness impedes his ability to communicate with his dying grandfather. However, the reader (and Abel) receive Francisco’s stories, transmitted through perhaps Momaday’s most controversial notion: racial memory in which stories, history, and culture flow through the blood. Some scholars like Arnold Krupat and John J. Su find it problematic and limiting, but others like Chadwick Allen find it productive. For Allen, Momaday’s “blood memory” allows for an unmediated relationship to land, memory, and ancestry as it “tropes the conflating of storytelling, imagination, memory, and genealogy into the representation of a single multifaceted moment in a particular landscape.”⁴²³ In other words, blood memory functions metaphorically via narrative. Sarah Eden Schiff builds off Allen’s claim, arguing that this kind of memory “uniquely manages the discursive project of subnational formation” via its mythic function, allowing it special meaning in native communities but also carrying universal appeal.⁴²⁴ While I find this figurative interpretation productive, as it avoids racial essentialism, I want to retain the

⁴²² Indeed, this is why Schiff argues in “Power Literature” that Tosamah’s sermon is not tangential, as some critics claim, but integral for the reader’s understand of racial memory (106).

⁴²³ Chadwick Allen, *Blood Narrative: Indigenous Identity in American Indian and Maori Literary and Activist Texts* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2002), 178 and 181.

⁴²⁴ Schiff, “Power Literature,” 100.

bodily materiality inherent to blood memory. Blood memory exists not in the conscious mind but in the unconscious functions of the body. As such, it circumvents the problems of language and of transmission and thus recenters networks of information and, especially, of emotion. Residing within the automatic motions of the body, blood memory exists in an affective space. Blood memory is what can be felt but not said in the dominant discourses that govern representation. This reframing of history via blood memory adds to the affective landscape of the novel, one in which our notions of visible history are estranged and supplanted by methods that need no epistemological framework – they are just felt.

When Abel wakes up, he finds that Francisco has died. Instead of contacting anyone, Abel delays, as it “made no difference, and he knew what had to be done” (*House* 183). Refusing communal help with the ceremonies, Abel remains alone in his performance of preparative mourning rituals. The care he takes with his grandfather’s body – washing and arranging his hair, dressing him, placing sacred and important objects around him, wrapping him in a blanket – demonstrates an intimacy with the dead that contrasts significantly with modern funerary practices that often outsource this type of work.⁴²⁵ Abel connects to his grandfather and grieves him through this type of labor as the affective work of mourning becomes literal and physical through the preparations of the body.

Furthermore, the ritual connects Abel to the past. Early in the novel, Father Olguin reads a journal from 1874. One of the entries describes a burial ritual which

⁴²⁵ Kenneth Roemer reads this scene as Abel using surrounding materials for “impromptu funeral rites” and as an example of “making do” with ceremonies, finding ways to see the sacred in the everyday. “Making Do: Momaday’s Survivance Ceremonies,” *Studies in American Indian Literatures* 24, no. 4 (Winter 2012): 77-98 (81).

mirrors Abel's performance of the customs. The entry makes clear the conflicts of converting natives, which was of interest in this period.⁴²⁶ When it came to death, the journal notes that the natives preferred their own mourning rituals (which the priest refers to as their "dark custom"): when a woman dies, he remarks that "again I was not called," implying this is a regular occurrence (*House* 42). However, in this instance, a family member comes to him later and "gave [him] leave to make the burial" (*House* 42). So when Abel does the same thing about eighty years later, it connects him to a longer tradition of mourning – and one that exists outside of Western influence as the white men are only brought in for the burial, when the main work of mourning has already been done.

Mirroring the events described in the journal, Abel tells Father Olguin about Francisco's death only after caring for Francisco's body. The priest is unhappy at being awoken, saying "Do you know what *time* it is? I can understand how you must feel, but –" as Abel leaves (*House* 184). Father Olguin then calls after him: "I can understand," he said. 'I understand do you hear?' And he began to shout. 'I understand! *Oh God! I understand – I understand!*'" (*House* 184). Momaday refuses a moment for empathy and understanding between Abel and Father Olguin here, as the latter's calls ring hollow and are unanswered. Indeed, the point seems to be that the priest cannot understand Abel's plight, a stand-in for how the larger Western world cannot comprehend his losses.⁴²⁷ And it goes beyond understanding in a cognitive sense; in this context, "understand" has deeply emotional and empathetic undertones. He cannot *feel* as

⁴²⁶ For more on imperialism and Christianity in the novel, see Christopher Douglas, "The Flawed Design: American Imperialism in N. Scott Momaday's *House Made of Dawn* and Cormac McCarthy's *Blood Meridian*," *Critique* 45, no. 1 (Fall 2003): 3-24.

⁴²⁷ Ladino similarly reads Olguin as a pathetic figure whose call of understanding is ironic since he will never understand. *Under the Sign of Nature*, 149.

Abel does. Although scholars have often looked at this moment's dissonance, the reason why we return to Father Olguin at this moment is under-examined. That we return to this white priest in a moment of grief – one that mirrors events almost a century prior – demonstrates how colonial ideology, here in the form of Christianity, permeates not only American Indian loss but also mourning. The platitudes (“I can understand how you must feel”) stand in stark contrast to the unfathomable losses that Abel and other indigenous peoples have experienced, and Olguin's presence reminds us of dominant Western cultural frames that position American Indians as already always lost, a framing that complicates mourning. So not only does he not understand, but his insistence that he does works to silence native perspectives on loss and representations of grief.

Indeed, Abel does not express any sentiment when he announces Francisco's death to the priest. “My grandfather is dead,” Abel repeated. His voice was low and even. There was no emotion, nothing” (*House* 184). Momaday goes beyond denying a specific emotion like sadness, grief, or numbness, but instead negates all feelings (“nothing”). In doing so, he creates a void where the emotions of grief reside. This vacuity speaks to the divestment of meaning regarding native grief, the stereotype that creates cliché and impedes representation. But in creating empty spaces like this one in moments of loss, Momaday signals the gaps between the frames of representational possibility that create deeper chasms of unacknowledged grief.

Abel's tribute to his dead grandfather takes the form of movement. Leaving the town, he stops to rub ashes on his body before joining the dawn runners of the Jemez Pueblo, a tradition his grandfather participated in as a young man. As Abel stands with the other runners, waiting for first light, the sky appears as a “clear pool of eternity,” and

eventually “the void began to deepen and to change: pumice, and pearl, and mother-of-pearl, and the pale and brilliant blush of orange and of rose” (*House* 185). The imagery here has the same qualities as the previously discussed passage about Abel’s displacement – the same sense of endlessness void and blankness. Note that the void does not disappear; it actually “deepens.” But its qualities change and take on new sensory qualities. This shifting sense of voids in the novel demonstrate movement and plurality in the way grief is understood and represented.

When sun rises and the runners take off, Abel joins them: “He was running, and his body cracked open with pain, and he was running on. He was running and there was no reason to run but the running itself and the land and the dawn appearing” (*House* 185). There may be no “reason” to run, but there is an emotional impetus, and the bodily action releases Abel’s feeling. Grief manifests itself affectively as the explicitly physical pain is also an implicit reaction to his loss. And as Abel’s “body crack[s] open with pain,” his grief escapes the constraints of his body, the limitations of his affective experience, making it overtly sensible to the audience as opposed to grief’s residence in the voids and gaps of the novel. During his run, Abel stumbles and falls, but continues:

He was alone and running on. All of his being was concentrated in the sheer motion of running on, and he was past caring about the pain. Pure exhaustion laid hold of his mind, and he could see at last without having to think. He could see the canyon and the mountains and the sky. He could see the rain and the river and the fields beyond. He could see the dark hills at dawn. He was running, and under his breath he began to sing. There was no sound, and he had no voice; he had only the words of a song. And he went running on the rise of the song. *House made of*

pollen, house made of dawn. Qtsedaba. (House 185)

While in motion, Abel is released from his pain (“past caring” about it), and his exertions open up new modes of perceptions: “He could see at last without having to think.” Abel accepts this sensory perception, visually taking in surroundings without the pressure to cognize them. In other words, Abel embraces affective modes of engaging with the world. The world reduces to the landscape, to immediate surroundings, and in this moment, Abel is grounded. But Abel’s movement exists in a complex temporal-spatial context. Looping around (or turning back?) to the Prologue, Momaday’s depiction of Abel matches this image: “Against the winter sky and the long, light landscape of the valley at dawn, he seemed almost to be standing still, very little and alone” (*House 2*). So from one faraway perspective, Abel appears “still,” framed “against” the land, not integrated into it. This vision of Abel offered at the beginning of the text, “very little and alone” in his loss both sets up Abel’s disjointedness for the narrative and remains pessimistic about how he will overcome feelings of loss.

In the final passage, the perspective changes, as the reader is placed closer to Abel. Momaday uses the past progressive tense (“was running”) to freeze Abel in an instant of movement. As such, Momaday creates an icon of motion, again mixing senses together. Such synesthesia fits into native frameworks as Kathleen Donovan points out that “emblems of motion and journey are fundamental in expressing Navajo and Kiowa ontology.”⁴²⁸ Catherine Rainwater places this “icon” of Abel as a Dawn Runner in a larger context of Momaday’s interest in visuality. She notes that “each icon contains a story or fragment of a story (from or based on Kiowa, Pueblo, and Navajo culture) that

⁴²⁸ Kathleen Donovan, “‘A Menace Among the Words’: Women in the Novels of N. Scott Momaday,” *Studies in American Indian Literatures* 6, no. 4 (Winter 1994): 51-76 (59).

the potential reader interpolates into the ongoing story of Abel”: the use of icons is non-linear, so they do not depend on the forward motion of the narrative to create meaning.⁴²⁹ This paradox distills movement into one shard of an image that encapsulates and maintains the intensity and kinetic qualities of affect. Again, Momaday uses the mixing of sensory perception to open up different ways of conceptualizing loss – or at least demonstrating how representing mourning subjects can require going outside the bounds of conventional portrayals.

Scholars disagree on the tone of the novel’s ending, but mostly, the run is consistently seen as a positive and integrating use of ritual as Abel finally finds language, although he remains unable to speak (“he had no voice”). It is also telling that the language he finds is not speech/prose, but native song. His existence and his loss still do not fit into mainstream modes of expression, and fittingly, the words never actually leave his body – they exist “under his breath.” Grief over his grandfather – over his own losses, his community’s losses – is processed through the body, an alternative mode of mourning that is incorporated into the affective space of the novel. The novel ends with a Jemez word, one unfamiliar to most Western readers, one that indicates that some things cannot transverse cultural spaces. It also begins this way, starting where it ends:

“Dypaloh. *There was a house made of dawn. It was made of pollen and of rain, and the land was very old and everlasting*” (*House 1*). “Dypaloh” and “Qtsedaba” are part of the Jemez storytelling tradition, and they signal, respectively, the beginning and ending of a

⁴²⁹ Catherine Rainwater, “Planes, Lines, Shapes, and Shadows: N. Scott Momaday’s Iconological Imagination,” *Texas Studies in Literature and Language* 37, no. 4 (Winter 1995): 276-393 (382).

story.⁴³⁰ With these words, Momaday marries the cultural contexts that his work straddles: the oral storytelling traditions of the Pueblo peoples and the Western novel. By opening and closing with the same moment, Momaday creates a cyclical structure. The repeated, but inverted, words of the song form a chiasmus, making the story self-enclosed. The losses in this novel cannot be resolved, consoled by this one moment. Instead, the novel ends as a reinstatement of the problems and questions of loss that start it. It ends with a suspended contemplation of still-moving, dynamic mourning, refusing closure.

Resisting Grief and Addressing Grievance in Leslie Marmon Silko's *Almanac of the Dead*

In 1987, performance artist James Luna, a member of the Luiseño tribe, debuted “The Artifact Piece” in San Diego’s Museum of Man. For several days, Luna “donned a loincloth and lay motionless in a bed of sand in a glass museum exhibition case,” surrounded by his “personal documents and ceremonial items from the Luiseño reservation.”⁴³¹ Luna’s website describes the intentions behind the piece, which called attention to a tendency in Western museum displays to present Native American cultures as extinct cultural forms. Viewers who happened upon Luna’s exhibition expecting a museum presentation of native American cultures as ‘dead,’ were shocked by the living, breathing, ‘undead’ presence of the Luiseño artist in the display. Luna in *Artifact Piece* places his body as the object of display in order to disrupt the modes of representation in museum exhibitions of native

⁴³⁰ From N. Scott Momaday, “Glossary,” *The Names: A Memoir* (Tucson, AZ: University of Arizona Press, 1976): 168-169 as cited by Christa Smith Anderson, “Power Prose of Native Americans,” accessed September 2015, <http://www.pbs.org/speak/seatosea/powerprose/native/#6>.

⁴³¹ James Luna, “The Artifact Piece, 1987,” accessed September 2015, <http://www.jamesluna.com/oldsite/>.

others and to claim subjectivity for the silenced voices eclipsed in these displays.⁴³²

Luna's resistance to this framing of native cultures relied on an uncanny blurring of the boundaries between life and death as his living body intruded on the assumed dead and past space of the exhibit. Beyond calling into question how museums and other such cultural institutions frame American Indian experience, Luna's project also raises questions about spaces for death and how they frame, anticipate, and even steer emotional reaction. Regarding the dead in museums has a much different context than a cemetery. Museum exhibits often create a reverent space, one for engagement and contemplation, but also distance. They become objects on display, disconnected from the people who used them (and in the case of bodies, distanced from subjectivity). Cemeteries, on the other hand, are reverent spaces precisely because of remembered subjectivity, of the emotional connections that remain between the deceased and the living. Luna's piece not only makes viewers consider the overall treatment of native cultures but also the living people who are now the dead bodies on display. This performance came at a time of increasing awareness of how museums, anthropologists, and even laymen treated Native American objects and especially bodies that culminates with the passage of the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA) in 1990, a law that ordered federally-funded institutions to return cultural artifacts, including bodily remains, to relatives and/or tribes.

Just one year after NAGPRA was passed, Simon and Schuster released Leslie Marmon Silko's much-anticipated follow up to 1977's *Ceremony, Almanac of the Dead*. While *Ceremony*'s meditative rumination wove Laguna legend into the story of World

⁴³² Ibid.

War II vet Tayo's post-war recovery, *Almanac of the Dead* is a bloody, bacchanalian tour of vice through the Southwest borderlands. *Almanac* leaves behind the rich poeticism of *Ceremony*, as this second novel frequently relates shocking corruption with matter-of-fact apathy. Encyclopedic in scope, *Almanac* transverses borders of nation, genre, and time: it travels through the Americas; draws from various native myths, postmodern novels, and, as indicated in the title, from the almanac genre; and links present political problems to the origins of European colonialism. This nearly 800 page opus contains so many characters and locales that Silko includes a map at the opening that links people to place (even though almost every character is highly mobile). The departure from *Ceremony*'s style and content often puzzled reviewers, as the novel – the product of Silko's MacArthur "genius" grant – received mixed reception. Undoubtedly *Ceremony* is the more inviting novel to mainstream readers. In fact, Kenneth M. Roemer discusses how Silko uses the novel form, particularly the familiar frame of the war novel, to appeal to white literary audiences.⁴³³ *Almanac of the Dead*, on the other hand, resists readerly ease and invites suspicion, and Silko herself seemed to court this response, famously stating that she wanted *Almanac* to "horrify the people at the MLA."⁴³⁴

Despite their many differences, *Ceremony* and *Almanac of the Dead* have something in common: both are shot through with loss. In their own ways, they grapple with how to deal with loss, from individual grief to collective grievance. However, the novels' approaches to mourning differ dramatically. In many ways, *Ceremony* rewrites the central concerns of *A House Made of Dawn*, from the psychologically-wounded

⁴³³ Kenneth M. Roemer, "Silko's Arroyos as Mainstreams: Processes and Implications of Canonical Identity," *Modern Fiction Studies* 45, no. 1 (1999): 10-37.

⁴³⁴ Kim Barnes, "A Leslie Marmon Silko Interview," *Conversations with Leslie Marmon Silko*, Ed. Ellen L. Arnold (Jackson, MS: University Press of Mississippi, 2000), 69-83 (69). Originally printed in *Journal of Ethnic Studies* 13, no. 4 (1986): 83-105.

warrior who strives to integrate himself into society to the use of native ritual in healing, and it is actually more optimistic about the process of healing and overcoming loss. It comfortably fits within the structures of the Native American Renaissance, and as previously mentioned, *Almanac of the Dead* does not. In this section of the chapter, I will examine how Silko's experimentation with genre highlights vast networks of grief in the Americas. Rather than focusing solely on native perspectives, Silko expands her scope, portraying a crumbling Western world with her extensive characters and plot lines, connecting this empiric fall back to the devastation and loss wrought on indigenous populations centuries earlier. Yet, like in *House Made of Dawn*, grief never quite breaks the surface of the text; instead, it pushes and prods against the narrative, always there and almost never made explicit, lingering in the affective. Silko's prose differs from Momaday, however, as it does not facilitate our perception of this register; rather, it resists grief. The flattened tone of the novel emotionally detaches the reader from the overwhelming losses in the narrative. Similar to George Jackson's tactical mourning, *Almanac* does not want to be distracted by grief but wants to redeploy feelings associated with loss toward political recognition of indigenous claims to land. I argue that such representations of grief counter contemporaneous discourse surrounding native loss like NAGPRA.

To further elucidate this text's affective atmosphere, I explore Silko's simultaneous use of two genres – the almanac genre and encyclopedic narrative – to first investigate how Native American and borderlands perspectives add to and reshape our understanding of these genres and, second, to consider how Silko uses these forms to depict loss and grief. I will demonstrate how these factors are connected at the root and

how these genres help Silko form her political critiques and representations of loss. Two qualities these genres share are the tendency to make prophetic claims and the surfeit of information that readers have to build into a cohesive understanding of the world. However, they also have vastly different genealogies, both of which inform Silko's evocation of them.

Edward Mendelson named the genre of encyclopedic narrative in 1976 in two essays, one on Thomas Pynchon's *Gravity's Rainbow* and the second expounding further on the generic category. He argues that such narratives "attempt to render the full range of knowledge and beliefs of a national culture, while identifying the ideological perspectives from which that culture shapes and interprets its knowledge."⁴³⁵ Mendelson names only seven works in this genre – "Dante's *Commedia*, Rabelais' five books of *Gargantua and Pantagruel*, Cervantes' *Don Quixote*, Goethe's *Faust*, Melville's *Moby Dick*, Joyce's *Ulysses*, and...Pynchon's *Gravity's Rainbow*" – although others have since been added to the category, like David Foster Wallace's *Infinite Jest*.⁴³⁶ Since Mendelson's coining of the term, other scholars have expanded and tweaked this definition. Perhaps most notably, critics like Hilary Clark, Jed Rasula, and Petrus Van Ewijk have pointed out the instability of encyclopedic narrative claims to totality. Clark, for example, notes that projects attempting to "totalize and eternalize knowledge" are "shadowed by incompleteness and obsolescence."⁴³⁷ In other words, this juggernaut genre, in its endeavors to capture and render knowledge, always functions at the limitations of

⁴³⁵ Edward Mendelson, "Encyclopedic Narrative: From Dante to Pynchon," *Comparative Literature* 91, no. 6 (December 1976): 1267-75 (1269).

⁴³⁶ Mendelson, "Encyclopedic Narrative," 1267.

⁴³⁷ Hilary A. Clark, "Encyclopedic Discourse," *SubStance* 21.1, no. 67 (1992): 95-100 (97); Jed Rasula "Textual Indigence in the Archive," *Postmodern Culture* 9, no. 3 (May 1999); Petrus Van Ewijk, "Encyclopedia, Network, Hypertext, Database: The Continuing Relevance of Encyclopedic Narrative and Encyclopedic Novel as Generic Designations," *Genre* 44, no. 2 (2011): 205-22.

human ability to process, understand, and collate information.

Silko's *Almanac of the Dead* has the same grandiose reach, but it is not generally discussed as an encyclopedic novel.⁴³⁸ Perhaps one of the reasons is that *Almanac* does not quite amalgamate different genres as other encyclopedic novels do, and indeed, the title prescribes a different genre, one that has received much more critical attention. However, *Almanac* does operate in a totalizing and encyclopedic way, especially over the types of spaces and peoples it covers. Silko's book seeks not to explain the totality of U.S. ideology but rather the history of indigenous groups across the Americas and a pan-Indian ideology centered on reclamation of land.⁴³⁹ As such, the book folds critiques of capitalism and culture often found in postmodern texts into an indictment of colonialism and the losses that it has wrought, especially for native peoples – and the way that such systems also inhibit mourning. The totalizing effect of the encyclopedic novel helps create the sense of immense loss that ricochets through the novel. Silko uses the encyclopedic novel's complex network of forms to explore loss through different spatial and generic contexts for grief like hospitals, cemeteries, museums, art galleries, and television entertainment.

An almanac, on the other hand, is “an annual table, or (more usually) a book of tables, containing a calendar of months and days, with astronomical data and calculations, ecclesiastical and other anniversaries, and other information, including astrological and meteorological forecasts”; alternatively, it is “a handbook, typically published annually, frequently presenting a chronological account of recent events, and

⁴³⁸ Lee Konstantinou presented on this topic at MLA's annual conference in 2012, and I thank him for sharing his insights about Silko's use of this genre and for helping me refine my ideas.

⁴³⁹ For more on the transnational focus of the book, see Miriam Schacht, “‘Movement Must Be Emulated by the People’: Rootedness, Migration, and Indigenous Internationalism in Leslie Marmon Silko's *Almanac of the Dead*,” *Studies in American Indian Literatures* 21, no. 4 (Winter 2009): 53-70.

containing information and statistics of general interest or on a particular subject, especially a sport or pastime.”⁴⁴⁰ The emphasis on facts and statistics in almanacs contextualizes Silko’s framing of loss and grief – they become factual and empiricized rather than personal and emotive. The fragmentary nature of the almanac requires Lecha, who inherited the series of notebooks from her grandmother, to piece them together again. Both Rebecca Tillet and Mishuana Goeman note the importance of this reassemblage, as the latter links almanacs to other periodicals and to mainstream knowledge production and the former emphasizes the materiality of the almanac and its parts.⁴⁴¹ Furthermore, almanacs were important to both early American cultural identity and to ancient native cultures, as seen with the Popol Vuh, a written Mayan collection of myths. Indeed, the almanac represents a continuation of native cultures – as Kimberly Roppolo argues, the novel presents a story that is “the ongoing story we are living, the story that is living itself and not a dead thing on a shelf.”⁴⁴² While the almanac has this dual importance in Western and indigenous culture, the encyclopedic novel is most associated with Western culture and ideology (and a postmodern American literary framework that Silko directly engages). Silko’s evocation of these genres in tandem ostensibly crafts an indictment of mainstream Western ideology, and by deploying the encyclopedic narrative with the almanac genre in a book deeply critical of Western colonialism, Silko allows both genres to function dually – that is, as foils of Western and indigenous history and culture.

⁴⁴⁰ “Almanac,” Oxford English Dictionary, 1 and 2.

⁴⁴¹ Mishuana Goeman, *Mark My Words: Native Women Mapping Our Nations* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2013), 180-2 and Rebecca Tillet, “‘The Indian Wars Have Never Ended in the Americas’: The Politics of Memory and History in Leslie Marmon Silko’s *Almanac of the Dead*,” *Feminist Review* 85 (2007): 21-39 (29).

⁴⁴² Kimberly Roppolo, “Vision, Voice, and Intertribal Metanarrative: The American Indian Visual-Rhetorical Tradition and Leslie Marmon Silko’s *Almanac of the Dead*,” *American Indian Quarterly* 31, no. 4 (Fall 2007): 534-558 (545).

Not only do these genres shed light on the interaction of two different cultural situations, they both add to the detached sensation of the narrative structure. The excess of information and contexts presented are overwhelming as the reader tries to process and cohere mountains of knowledge. Loss is not confined to indigenous domains in this narrative; to the contrary, it is inescapable. The detached tone allows the reader to recognize the losses and not become emotionally engulfed. Additionally, the almanac's use of facts and figures contrasts with appeals to emotion, making a case for grievance through concrete details over potentially murky emotional displays. Silko's subversion of emotion and sentimentality challenges the conventional portrayals of native loss. Instead, she points readers toward the ongoing violent legacy of colonialism and the grief it brought.

The dead and lost are littered throughout *Almanac* as loss accompanies almost all the characters in their journeys. They are visible parts of the narrative, as Lecha's psychic abilities allow her to find the dead, as exploited homeless organ donors find a voice in Clinton, and as Seese is haunted by her missing son. Before the novel even starts, Silko signals the intense losses that undergird the text in the previously mentioned self-drawn map at the beginning of the text that includes lists of connected characters in specific places. However, the characters are not static, and Goeman argues that the inherent movement across boundaries disrupts Western ideologies of geography (particularly those having to do with naming and claiming principles) and thus allows for recovery of Native American memory and history.⁴⁴³ Certainly this resistance exists on the map, but it also codes in the losses that make such resistance necessary. The map includes text boxes about colonialism, about the almanac's prophecies of European disappearance, and

⁴⁴³ Goeman, *Mark My Words*, 168-9.

about Tucson, Arizona. The box entitled “The Indian Connection” notes that “sixty million Native Americans died between 1500 and 1600. The defiance and resistance to things European continue unabated. The Indian Wars have never ended in the Americas. Native Americans acknowledge no borders; they seek nothing less than the return of all tribal lands” (*Almanac* map page). History is not in the past; it is palimpsestically mapped onto the present.⁴⁴⁴ Silko overlays this map with loss, its borders affectively charged, and this statement denies a statute of limitations on grief and/or grievance. It also immediately sets the novel up as one of competing epistemologies of history – both factual and emotional. In refusing to acknowledge borders – of land and of time (“the Indian Wars have never ended”) – Silko keeps both resistance and loss fresh. These are not old griefs dug up; they are wounds that never scabbed over. Like in *House Made of Dawn*, these are losses that linger, that remain unresolved. But Silko takes it further, prescribing a radical political project of taking back what was lost rather than letting it lie – or burying it and moving on.

The politics of burial are a major context for the novel that remains unexplored. As previously mentioned, Silko’s novel was released almost simultaneously with the passage of NAGPRA. The discourse surrounding NAGPRA and the time leading up to it in both mainstream culture and native communities provides important context for Silko’s portrayal of loss in *Almanac*. Framing American Indians as a relic of past culture and taking remains starts in the late nineteenth century. Kathleen Fine-Dare notes that the 1890 end of the “Indian wars” increased interest in native artifacts, including human

⁴⁴⁴ Eve Sorum’s work on geographies of loss influences me here, especially her discussion of maps’ palimpsestic temporal function (in other words, how past and present merge in shared place) as related to Thomas Hardy’s metrical forms. See “‘The Place on the Map’: Geography and Meter in Hardy’s Elegies,” *Modernism/Modernity* 16, no. 3 (September 2009): 543-64.

remains; this interest can be seen especially in 1893's World's Fair which popularized "native villages" displays (and which also featured objects taken from the deceased at Wounded Knee).⁴⁴⁵ Since the 1970s, American Indian publications like the *Akwesasne Notes* wrote about the desecration of burial grounds and anthropologists hoarding remains. This nationally circulated Mohawk periodical started in 1969 and as former editor Doug George-Kanentiio notes, "within months of its inception, *Akwesasne Notes* exploded across the nation and was soon found in every aboriginal community"; "within a few years...*Notes* was the most anticipated journal among aboriginals."⁴⁴⁶ In eight years, circulation reached 150,000.⁴⁴⁷ At first, the publication went straight to reservations, circulating through White Roots of Peace, "a mobile teaching group composed of musicians, dancers, speakers, artists, and writers from dozens of Native nations across North America operating under the wing of the Mohawk Nation."⁴⁴⁸ Later it was sold at college campuses, alternative bookstores, and powwows.⁴⁴⁹ *Akwesasne Notes* published news for and about many native tribes throughout the Americas, and it also included artwork and poetry written by readers. This important publication sheds light onto American Indian perspectives and issues that often did not reach the mainstream until much later (if at all).

One such example was the aforementioned grave desecrations, an important issue to tribes across the country and one that the *Akwesasne* reported on and included in

⁴⁴⁵ Kathleen Fine-Dare, *Grave Injustices: The American Indian Repatriation Movement and NAGPRA* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 2002), 22 (World's Fair), 31 (post-Indian wars interest), 48 (objects taken from Wounded Knee).

⁴⁴⁶ Doug George-Kanentiio, "Akwesasne Notes: How the Mohawk Nation Created a Newspaper and Shaped Contemporary Native America," *Insider History of the Vietnam Era Underground Press, Part 1* Ed. Ken Wachsberger (East Lansing, MI: Michigan State University Press, 2011): 109-137 (127-8).

⁴⁴⁷ Doug George-Kanentiio, "Akwesasne Notes," 127.

⁴⁴⁸ George-Kanentiio, "Akwesasne Notes," 126.

⁴⁴⁹ George-Kanentiio, "Akwesasne Notes," 127.

discussions of Indian grievances since its inception. For example, the front page of the July/August 1971 issue called for reburial of remains, stating that if scientists wanted to know more about Indians “there are still plenty of alive ones around to talk” and that “if Indians molested white men’s graves they would be thrown in jail.”⁴⁵⁰ Indeed, native remains often were treated differently than other graves by the law. For example, the Federal Antiquities Act of 1906 prevented amateur looting of American Indian graves, protecting corpses and other funerary objects as archaeological material, but this designation also “reinforced the idea that the Native American past belonged not to Indians but to scientists.”⁴⁵¹ The Historic Sites Act of 1935 bolstered the Federal Antiquities Act and appointed the National Parks Service to oversee excavations.⁴⁵² Furthermore, no federal laws governed reburial issues until the end of the 1980s; up until then, it was under state jurisdiction. The legal murkiness of these issues often leads to the uncovering (literally) of past griefs and future grievance.

While the government often framed American Indian grave and funerary excavation in terms of scientific inquiry, Native American outlets instead emphasized the personal and emotional aspects. For example, in 1975, *Akwesasne Notes* reported on the Ohlone Nation’s fight to protect a California cemetery that had been uncovered during construction, examined by University of California, Santa Cruz scholars who wanted to take bones and artifacts, and then was looted after official excavation was stopped. The American Indian Movement got involved and tension between builders, scholars, and the tribe escalated until the Ohlone people paid a “ransom” halting further damage and

⁴⁵⁰ “Don’t Exploit our Dead or our Ceremonies,” *Akwesasne Notes*, July/August 1971, 1.

⁴⁵¹ Fine-Dare, *Grave Injustices*, 62.

⁴⁵² Fine-Dare, *Grave Injustices*, 66.

allowing for reburial.⁴⁵³ These articles highlighted the personal aspects of grave-digging, going beyond the ancestral to a closer family connection, as the earlier article called the deceased “Grandfathers and Grandmothers” and the latter one included mentions of a young woman reburying her grandmother. By tying the burial grounds – so often associated with a long ago past with no tangible links to today – directly (even if sometimes metaphorically) to close family relationships, the *Akwesasne Notes* restored emotional space of the burial grounds and confirms the emotional disruption at their disturbance. Emphasizing the emotional resonances of grave repatriation was a major part of the *Akwesasne News* – and indeed the larger native community’s – advocacy for the passage of related laws, one that I argue Silko responds to in *Almanac*.

Mainstream periodicals picked up on rising interest in repatriation of American Indian remains and grave objects in the mid-1980s. (Perhaps 1982’s *Poltergeist*, which features ghostly disruptions due to a home built over a cemetery, factored into the awareness of grave disrespect). In 1987, the *New York Times* covered a controversy over a Delaware burial ground that became a “showcase” for artifacts and bones; the article notes that the site had become a “popular spot for school field trips.”⁴⁵⁴ The Nanticoke tribe wanted the bones reburied, and it took them several tries to find a legal compromise with the archaeologists. Later that same year, the *Times* also reported on the National Congress of American Indians’ call for the Smithsonian to rebury their large collection of human remains.⁴⁵⁵

In 1989, Douglas J. Preston, a former employee of the American Museum of Natural History, published a longer examination of this issue in “Skeletons in Our

⁴⁵³ “They Took Our Land, and Now They Want Our Bones,” *Akwesasne Notes*, Late Summer 1975, 21.

⁴⁵⁴ “Indian Cemetery: Peace in Delaware,” *New York Times*, July 12, 1987, 26.

⁴⁵⁵ “Indians Seek Burial of Smithsonian Skeletons,” *New York Times*, December 8, 1987, C13.

Museums' Closets," published by *Harper's*.⁴⁵⁶ With the nation's most prestigious museums called out for their hoarding of native skeletons – Preston wrote that the Smithsonian's National Museum of Natural History alone held 18,500 skeletal remains – the mainstream public saw the complex issues of scientific interest, cultural sensitivity, and, although sublimated, grief inherent to the process of repatriation.⁴⁵⁷ The rising awareness of these issues came with the passage of certain state laws regarding repatriation and a national law in late 1989: the National Museum of the American Indian Act "require[d] the return of Native American human remains and funerary objects from the Smithsonian and the creation of a national advisory committee."⁴⁵⁸

In 1990, the United States government passed NAGPRA. As previously mentioned, this law dictated that all institutions receiving government funding must return cultural items, including bodily remains, to relatives and/or affiliated native peoples. While NAGPRA marked a legislative victory, the application and execution of the law remains complicated. Museums must inventory their collections and try to determine which tribes may be affiliated with their holdings, but often the onus is on the tribes. For example, tribes, not review committees, must travel to where remains may be held.⁴⁵⁹ One of the larger problems is that even when remains are returned, NAGPRA does not provide land near where corpses were recovered to rebury remains.⁴⁶⁰ As such, tribes have to negotiate with whomever holds that land in order to rebury their dead. NAGPRA and the issues leading to its passing provide crucial context for the issues surrounding mourning and American Indian communities in this time period.

⁴⁵⁶ Douglas J. Preston, "Skeletons in Our Museums' Closets," *Harper's*, February 1, 1989, 66-76.

⁴⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

⁴⁵⁸ Fine-Dare, *Grave Injustices*, 107.

⁴⁵⁹ Fine-Dare, *Grave Injustices*, 121.

⁴⁶⁰ Fine-Dare, *Grave Injustices*, 129.

The most explicit evocation of NAGPRA happens early in *Almanac* when Silko deals directly with the issues of anthropological grave robbing and theft of native goods through Sterling, a Laguna man banished from the reservation because of his supposed role in helping a Hollywood film crew steal a sacred stone snake, which he did not do. Before explaining his personal story, Sterling contextualizes the theft by bringing up past violations of native culture and history. He remembers a previous theft, decades earlier, of small stone figures called “Little Grandmother” and “Little Grandfather,” “dark gray basalt the size and shape of an ear of corn...given to the people by the kachina spirits at the beginning of the Fifth World, present time” (*Almanac* 31). These stone figures are of extreme importance to the tribe, treated not as objects but as people – the elder clanswoman in charge of their care “lifts them tenderly as she once lifted her own babies, but she calls them ‘esteemed and beloved ancestors’” (*Almanac* 31). Silko’s emphasis on the humanity of these objects not only stresses the importance of these objects but also highlights controversies over how to designate appropriated native objects. Kathleen Fine-Dare writes about the murky definitions of certain objects for repatriation, especially human remains, which complicate categories like “cultural,” “spiritual,” and “property.”⁴⁶¹ The Laguna people see these figures as ancestor spirits, their importance shown through their designation as “little grandparents.”

The “little grandparents” remain missing for decades until they are located in a Santa Fe museum:

The delegation from the tribe explains to the curator that the figures were stolen and, as such, the museum of the Laboratory of Anthropology had received and was in the possession of stolen property. The white man’s own laws said this. Not

⁴⁶¹ Fine-Dare, *Grave Injustices*, 146 and 157-9.

even an innocent buyer got title of ownership to stolen property. The Lagunas could produce witnesses who would testify with a detailed description of the 'little grandparents' as the people preferred to call them. For these were not merely carved stones, these were *beings* formed by the hands of the kachina spirits. The assistant curator stood his ground. The 'lithic' objects had been donated to the Laboratory by distinguished patron whose reputation was beyond reproach. . . . The Indians should contact the Indian Bureau or hire a lawyer.

(*Almanac* 33)

By emphasizing the designation "little grandparents," Silko links the loss of the idols to the loss of ancestors and to the loss of the native cultures. It also gestures to the objectification of native culture and the relegation of it to the past, as seen in the curator's insistence on a vocabulary removed from humanity and from the present day. Competing epistemologies clash through nomenclature as the tribe insists on the "being"-ness of the stones, as opposed to the curator's scientific terminology ("lithic"), demonstrating the incompatibility of worldviews. The incident also shows the emotions surrounding these losses and the way that the cultural barriers between the curator and the delegation do not allow for a translation of grief. The curator's language revolves around institutions that often create emotional distance between displayed object and viewing subject; the delegation's response is personal and emotional as that same distance creates loss and emotional blockage.

Although the narrative voice in this scene is the same flat tone as the rest of the novel, it also contains explicit moments of feeling – rare occasions in the book. As the delegation goes through the museum "slowly and in silence," noting "pottery and baskets

so ancient they could only have come from the graves of ancient ancestors” and “the poor shriveled skin and bones of some ancestor taken from her grave,” they finally come upon the “little grandparents.”

When they reached the glass case in the center of the vast hall, the old cacique began to weep, his whole body quivering from old age and the cold. He seemed to forget the barrier glass forms and tried to reach onto the small stone figures lying dreadfully unwrapped. The old man kept bumping his fingers against the glass case until the assistant curator became alarmed. (*Almanac* 33)

The “little grandparents” exist in this space of sacred objects luridly bare and on display. The “dreadfully unwrapped” state of the “little grandparents” (the idols were kept in buckskin) in the context of the grave goods that were also unearthed both emphasizes the desecration of the idols and places them in context of loss, of mistreatment of the dead. The cacique has an intense affective response to seeing the “little grandparents” in this state, as his body shakes in grief and second-hand violation, and he almost-automatically tries to reach them. Again, grief itself is not mentioned; it exists affectively within the bodily reactions of the cacique. Museum and scientific practice, together with law, all function to deny grief – these are not spaces for mourning, and the idols remain confined by the glass, this form of “protection” preventing reclamation and creating grief. The nexus of these institutions both create grief as they facilitate and often even directly initiate loss *and* prevent mourning as they disrupt, disturb, and upend traditional mourning practices like burying the dead. Thus, the desecration of the dead and funerary objects problematizes mourning and recreates loss. As such, museum practices continue the losses and grievances of native peoples rendered by colonization, keeping the wounds

of the past literally exposed.

When the tribe attempts to use U.S. authority (federal law) to make their case, the curator rebuffs it. Here, Silko reminds us of the Indians' antagonistic relationship to law by mentioning the Bureau of Indian Affairs. Indeed, the legal designation of certain bodies as artifacts for display rather than desecrated remains indicates how law shapes and codes grief through these distinctions.⁴⁶² After the curator thwarts all attempts at reclaiming the "little grandparents," "the war captain lingered behind, not to whisper to the stone figures as the others in the delegation had, expressing their grief, but to memorize all the other stolen objects he could see around the room" (*Almanac* 33-4). The grief over the lost objects merges with grievance over the fact that they are taken, as the word "stolen" gives us a cause for loss and a legal grievance. Furthermore, "there were hundreds of years of blame that needed to be taken by somebody, blame for other similar losses" (*Almanac* 34). In other words, the loss of the idols stands in for much larger losses.

But when the snake goes missing, the tribe holds Sterling accountable instead of looking to colonial practices of divestment and blaming them. This assignment of culpability – looking inward to the community as beholden to protect itself instead of directing opprobrium to the thieves of Indian property – indicates a focus on locality over globality. In other words, it focuses on the immediate grief and immediate responsibility within the tribe versus large-scale losses and pan-Indian grievances. Silko's indictment of the institutions of loss reorients our perspective to the global causes of loss, a project that continues throughout the novel, facilitated by her generic and tonal choices.

⁴⁶² For more on legislation and Native American bodies in this text, see Valerie Karno, "Legal Hunger: Law, Narrative, and Orality in Leslie Marmon Silko's *Storyteller* and *Almanac of the Dead*," *College English* 28, no. 1 (Winter 2001): 29-45.

Sentimentality and immediate emotional response (grief) can mask the causes of loss and hinder political work. But a detached view resists distracting maudlin expressions, acting as an affective anesthetic, one that allows readers to see the larger picture of indigenous loss in the Americas and the problems it has wrought for the hemisphere.

By bringing these wide-reaching problems to the surface, Silko's text interestingly has the opposite effect of NAGPRA. Tillit is one of the only critics who even hints at NAGPRA as a context for *Almanac*. She writes that Silko's characters remember the past, physically piecing together individual

recollections to produce a more rounded and complete 'history' that recognizes all those who have been denied and excluded. In the context of the dead, especially of the Native dead who have often been dismembered through genocidal national acts and whose body parts have been appropriated for display in national museums, the very physicality of this process of re-membering is particularly pertinent.⁴⁶³

Tillit mentions the contemporaneous discourse of grave repatriation but writes about Silko's text as *simpatico* with NAGPRA. However, Silko's textual version of re-membering brings a building of history, not a burying (or reburying). The encyclopedic genre amplifies this impulse to re-member and to (re)build a history. But NAGPRA aims for closure, the burial of bodies and mourning that lays to rest centuries of genocide. Silko, on the other hand, denies this possibility of peace upon mourning.

This incident in the museum demonstrates Silko's awareness of contemporaneous discourses of grave protection and repatriation, but later incidents diverge from the (uncharacteristic) sentiment of this early scene. For example, much later in the novel, a

⁴⁶³ Tillit, "The Indian Wars Have Never Ended," 29.

transnational Native American resistance group emerges, aiming to reclaim native lands and overthrow colonial rule. One of the leaders, El Feo, creates a test that would differentiate true leaders for their cause from deceivers:

The test was easy: true leaders of the people made return of the land the first priority. No excuses, no postponements, not even for one day, must be tolerated by the people. Even before the burial of the dead, who did not mind waiting because they had died fighting for the return of the lands. (*Almanac* 524)

The mention of burying the dead (or reburying) is almost certainly meant to reference both losses that revolution would bring but also the emphasis on repatriation that was an important issue in American Indian activism during this time. El Feo thus critiques this mode of addressing grievance that resolves one set of losses and wrongs, but in doing so, sublimates the larger issues and losses. In other words, El Feo voices a harsher political method – reclamation of land and throwing off of colonial oppression – that gets to the heart of grief and grievance in Native American communities. In moments like this one, Silko resists the seductive emotional resonances of NAGPRA, ones that often serve to obscure the larger losses wrought by Western rule.

The right to refuse mourning and reverence for the dead is certainly at play when Silko stages another scene of grave disruption. Near the end of the novel, Lecha goes to Mexico to dig up her family cemetery, which is filled with the remains of hated relatives who were not good people. She bribes local boys to help her unearth the graves, taunts the deceased, and then throws the bones away in the dump. This stunning sacrilegious display happens abruptly and with little cause, and read in conjunction with NAGPRA, it flies in the face of protection and repatriation efforts. This scene overtly rejects

conventional practices (and feelings) regarding death and spaces of mourning and reverence. With this moment, Silko frees us from the obligations surrounding mourning practices, offering alternative affective work in the face of loss. Untethered to sentimental ritualism, we can recognize the long legacies of these losses.

As previously mentioned, the novel's tone is often distinctly flat, and scenes like the "little grandparents" one are few and far between. Indeed, Silko resists emotional resonances throughout *Almanac*. Most critics take the novel's lack of overt emotional engagement – the antithesis of *Ceremony* – at face value, see it as a casualty of colonialism, capitalism and the corruption wrought by both. But such readings discount the strategic tone of the book. While the novel's plot points are deeply affecting, provoking disgust, fear, anger, and sadness, the constitutive narrative mood is detachment.⁴⁶⁴ This disinterested mode contrasts deeply with the events (and losses) in the novel. Rather than blunt the cascade of horrible events, the tone instead demonstrates how, in both trying to avoid negative affect and in trying to work reparatively toward a new mode of being, we lose sight of sites of grievance.⁴⁶⁵ In other words, detachment allows us to escape distracting sentiments, thus helping us become more politically productive. Lingering in a lack of feeling, Silko resists sentimentality and even resists mourning. By rejecting the project of grieving, *Almanac* forces the reader to consider the causes of loss and how certain losses – like the loss of Indian land – cannot be "worked through" or "gotten over" but must be reclaimed and restored.

Seese, perhaps the closest character to a protagonist, is a study in not just

⁴⁶⁴ Many critics focus on the over-the-top events rather than the tone. See, for example, Sharon Holland's reading of the novel which focuses on grotesqueness. *Raising the Dead: Readings of Death and (Black) Subjectivity* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2000), 68-99.

⁴⁶⁵ I use word as Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick uses it in *Touching Feeling: Affect, Pedagogy, Performativity* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2003).

detachment but also numbness. Seese is a white woman who works for Lecha and helps her compile the titular almanac. Prior to working for Lecha, she lived with drug dealer (and snuff film purveyor) Beaufrey and his lovers, Eric and photographer David. Seese had a child with David, which caused tension in the group. Eventually, David's callousness drives Eric to commit suicide, shooting himself in the head. The next day, Seese goes into David's darkroom and stumbles upon his latest work – photographs of Eric's dead body, immediately after he killed himself. Seese looks at the photographs “without flinching” and wonders why she does not feel anything (*Almanac* 107). Can it be attributed to the lingering effects of drugs and alcohol, to David's “clinical detachment” in photographing the scene, or Seese speculates, “did she feel no horror because she had already been filled with it, and no photographs of brains, bone, and blood would ever add up to Eric? Eric who loved her and whom she loved was not the corpse in the photographs?” (*Almanac* 107). Here the surfeit of “horror” ends up negating itself. In other words, numbness comes not from a lack of feeling but from too much feeling, an attempt to curb overwhelming emotion. This resistance also allows Seese to understand the photographs' (lack of) representational power. Silko uses this moment to highlight the limits of representation to transmit emotion, to take the bodily pieces of a person (“brains, bone, and blood”) and render them into emotionally resonant objects.

Certainly some of this critique is levied at the exploitation inherent to the image as the photograph desecrates Eric's death. David's lack of respect for Eric's death and proper ritual is clear: it is speculated that Eric called David right before, allowing him to arrive in time to take the photos. He did not contact “authorities for three or four hours to be sure both the color and black-and-white film had turned out,” and he moved the

lighting around to get the best shots (*Almanac* 106-8). The photographs then become part of a controversial show in an art gallery. Although it is met with “outrage,” the exhibit also “assured” David’s success due to comments from “influential international critics” (*Almanac* 108). This section includes quoted portions of reviews for the show, part of Silko’s prevailing interest in media and how it influences reception and public opinion of such works. The photographs are not considered grotesque: because of their setting in a gallery and the attention paid by influential people, they are “art” (also the title of this section). T.V. Reed sees these photographs as proof that “the death logic of objectification and commoditization infects” artistic production in the novel.⁴⁶⁶ Silko seems also to be winking at the designations of art, raising classic questions of the line between art and obscenity, but this particular subject matter also brings grief into the equation. Death displayed in this space reorients emotional reaction. Similar to Luna’s performance piece, the spatial context thwarts mournful reactions, instead creating a distance that allows viewers to objectify and detach. However, Seese says, ventriloquizing Eric himself, that “the photograph was just a photograph. The photograph was only itself. No photograph would ever be him, be Eric” (*Almanac* 107). This detachment of the object from the subject it depicts highlights its simulacrum, and by explicitly pointing this out, Silko denies its representational power. But this can only happen after Seese stops feeling. Her detachment allows her to keep her own memories of Eric and to deny the forces that would exploit it.

Much later in the book, David, now in South America, dies in a riding accident. Beaufrey immediately calls for a camera from ranch hands, repositions the corpse, and

⁴⁶⁶ T.V. Reed, “Toxic Colonialism, Environmental Justice, and Native Resistance in Silko’s *Almanac of the Dead*,” *MELUS* 34, no. 2 (Summer 2009): 25-42 (32-3).

photographs him because

David was worth more dead than he had been alive. The Eric series would appreciate in value, and even pictures of David's corpse would bring good prices. Beaufrey knew Serlo [his companion] disapproved of selling these photographs; but here was what gave free-world trade the edge over all other systems: no sentimentality. Every ounce of value, everything worth anything, was stripped away for sale, regardless: no mercy. (*Almanac* 565)

Words like “worth,” “value,” and even “appreciate” are all complicated here. They all function in relation to capitalism, so within a fixed economic system. But other, more universal, senses of those words haunt the passage, showing the way that capitalism evacuates a notion of base human value. Death has a capitalist value function now, creating scarcity and thus raising demand (and prices) rather than demonstrating the fragility and non-economic worth of human life. Divorcing emotion from exchange reorients conceptions of humanity as it does not allow for relations between subjects (as shown here in steadfast denials of grief); instead, everyone turns into *everything*, as people are objectified. Note the all-encompassing words used in the last sentences – “*every ounce of value, everything worth anything*” (human life included). Everything and everyone is reduced to market value, to a fixed point of appreciable value in a set capitalist system. Grief and other such emotions have no place in this system as they rely on relative systems of value judgment: relatives and loved ones value the deceased more than others, making the set “value” of a human life variable.

That Beaufrey's finds competitive edge in “no sentimentality” cuts two ways. First, it illustrates very clearly how the novel's detached tone and dismissal of emotions

is useful. This moment crystallizes the advantages of denied feelings and their link to capital gains. But Beaufrey is perhaps the most perfidious character in a novel filled with contenders for the title, and the passage is so over the top in its ruthlessness that it is clearly intended to critique this overly rational system. Moments like this one illustrate the dangers of rejecting sentiment wholesale, in giving in totally to numbness. In other words, Silko recognizes the limits and dangers of this political project.

Seese later has her own realization about grief. She went to work for Lecha after her son, Monte, was taken. Hoping that Lecha, a television psychic who can locate missing (dead) people, can help her, Seese takes a job as Lecha's assistant. Numbing herself with cocaine, vodka, sex, and even overwhelming emotion (at one point saying that experiencing so much grief and anger made her feel "no more alive than Eric"), Seese is a character of dulled emotional processing and expression (*Almanac* 58). But after returning from the unearthed and desecrated cemetery with a newly inspired Lecha, Seese goes back to transcribing the almanac, leading her to a revelation about her son. She dreams about her son, which she blames on the almanac notebooks, and after "waking in tears," the "effect of the dream had not subsided" hours later. So Seese goes to the computer and types a short description of the dream:

In the photographs you are smiling
taller than I have ever seen you
older than you were when I lost you.

The colors of the lawn and house behind are indistinct
milked to faded greens and browns.

I know I will never hold you again. (*Almanac* 595)

Virginia Bell uses this moment to connect the almanac to loss, arguing that Seese's "poetic remembering" "transforms the almanac from a multi-tribal Indian historiographic compilation into a lyrical recording of her own grief and loss."⁴⁶⁷ But this document was already a recording of loss in the sense that it represents a way of life and ideology that is largely missing from contemporary culture. So Seese's recording of personal loss, one ultimately wrought by the same forces of corruption, colonialism, and capitalism already fits into the re-remembering instinct of this genre.

But Seese's composition does not lead to normative mourning behavior. The language surrounding this passage stays with Seese's physical reactions: she "let the tears stream down her face"; when she realizes that "she had not felt the enormity of Monte's loss until the dream," she "shoved the chair" and "lay facedown on the unmade bed" and "the pain in her chest took her breath away and she hoped she would die"; she "wept until her eyes and throat were dry" (*Almanac* 595). The only emotion mentioned is anger, as Seese is "furious" that Lecha did not tell her Monte was dead (*Almanac* 595). The rest is all affect, the bodily reactions upon comprehending her loss, explained in the flat tone of the novel. In other words, representing her loss via writing does not lead to a healthy or productive understanding of feeling. Instead, it leads to a purge of emotions that remain unrepresentable except through bodily motion. Furthermore, the lack of feeling in the writing mirrors the numbness that flanks this passage, for Seese describes the transcriptions as having a "narcotic effect on her," and immediately after she weeps for Monte, she takes "burning gulps" of vodka and snorts "line after line [of cocaine] as if she were starving" (*Almanac* 593, 595). The emptiness of grief turns into a bodily pang

⁴⁶⁷ Virginia E. Bell, "Counter-Chronicling and Alternative Mapping in *Memoria del fuego* and *Almanac of the Dead*," *MELUS* 25, no. 3 (2000): 5-30 (25).

(“starving”) and to a desire to numb the pain. This is not a novel of healthy mourning habits, and this passage demonstrates the self-destructive tendencies of mourners and shows that creative outlets are not necessarily the answer. Seese ultimately wants to move forward, but by reclaiming her loss – she wants to sell the cocaine to hire a detective to find Monte’s body (*Almanac* 615). Once again, Silko’s approach to loss is not to find closure or to work through it but to insist on an unearthing of loss and grief, to lay them bare.

In the last section of the novel, the burgeoning indigenous movement led by twin brothers gains momentum, and a large convention of “International Holistic Healers” convenes in Tucson. There, Wilson Weasel Tail expounds upon loss, land, and indigenous identity, presenting the most straight-forward claims about these issues found in the novel. Silko introduces Weasel Tail not through his current speech but through Lecha’s memory of him seizing the microphone on a talk show appearance and reciting his verse. A member of the Lakota tribe, Weasel Tail dropped out of UCLA’s law school in his third year, trading jurisprudence for jeremiad when he became a poet because “the people didn’t need more lawyers, the lawyers were the disease not the cure. . . . poetry would set the people free” (*Almanac* 713). Channette Romero uses Weasel Tail’s proclamations to posit poetry as “offer[ing] a realm of resistance more removed from the institutionalized injustice of the U.S. legal system and government.”⁴⁶⁸ Indeed, Weasel Tail’s verse is not freeing only in an imaginative sense – his poetic practice is rooted in activism. His literary invective on television weaves legal cases and contract breaches into what ultimately becomes a declaration of war against the usurping American

⁴⁶⁸ Channette Romero, “Envisioning a ‘Network of Tribal Coalitions’: Leslie Marmon Silko’s *Almanac of the Dead*,” *American Indian Quarterly* 26, no. 4 (Fall 2002): 623-40.

government. This literary genre allows him to critique strictures of law that hurt Indians while circumventing the legal system that does not acknowledge such injustices. Lecha notes that “Weasel Tail had said to the U.S. government, ‘Give back what you have stolen or else as a people you will continue your self-destruction’” (*Almanac* 725). In this moment, Silko links postmodern critiques of capitalism and flattened culture to past histories of global oppression that started with the colonization of the Americas.

Weasel Tail’s speech at the conference is one of the most generically diverse sections of the novel as it integrates poetry, native song, statistics from computer analyses, and spiritual evocations. If Silko’s novel does not always fit the encyclopedic genre in its heterogeneous use of genres, it does in this moment. So why have this character incorporate distinct genres at this point in the novel? Weasel Tail signals a culmination of the novel’s tension, of rapidly disintegrating political stability. These different genres, varied modes of perception and ways of thinking, come together in their call for an uprising. They spur on the coming upheaval, bolstered by the “sixty million dead souls [who] howl for justice in the Americas!” (*Almanac* 723). Weasel Tail mentions the Ghost Dance throughout this section, saying that it never died out. Arnold Krupat discusses the elegiac function of this ritual, but for Silko, it becomes a mode not only of resistance but one of reclamation as it joins the living with deceased ancestors in calling for justice.⁴⁶⁹

While Weasel Tail calls himself a “healer,” Lecha disagrees: “Weasel Tail had sworn to take back stolen tribal land; he was a political animal, not a healer” (*Almanac* 716). This designation synthesizes this novel’s response to loss – one that rejects healing and closure in favor of reclamation. Ultimately, this novel is not about mourning; instead,

⁴⁶⁹ Krupat, *Loss and Renewal*, 47.

it advocates taking back loss, no matter the cost. Accordingly, it ends apocalyptically, as the (presumed) stolen stone snake reappears, facing the direction of the marching insurgents – revolution is inevitable. Loss on this scale cannot be worked through; rather, the instigators of loss (Western ideologies) must be destroyed. So while the novel ends apocalyptically, it heads into the abyss with a sense of renewal and reclamation of land. Losses are not mourned but negated as the end of history looms.

Both *House Made of Dawn* and *Almanac of the Dead* do not mourn the losses leveled upon native peoples; instead, the novels aim to make those losses present. Deeply engaging the epistemologies of representation that authorize depictions of grief, Momaday and Silko refuse the easy but empty cultural codes of American Indian mourning. Rather, they use affective registers to convey grief without explicitly articulating emotion to create new modes of perceiving loss. As representations of Native Americans in mainstream culture continue to be contested, as in recent debates over professional sports mascots, finding alternative modes of resisting appropriation and expressing emotion remain sadly relevant.

Coda – The Work of Grief in the Age of Digital Reproduction

The scope of this dissertation ends with the publication of Leslie Marmon Silko's *Almanac of the Dead* in 1991, right before an innovation that radically shifts the way loss and mourning are made public: the internet. While computer networks existed earlier, it was not until the 1990s that the internet had mainstream, wide-spread usage. With these developments, the options for self-representation blew open, as people could circumvent traditional publishing networks and exchange information globally at unprecedented speeds. Subsequent crises of copyrights brought new challenges as the law struggled to keep up with technology. The mid-2000s and beyond saw social media further alter the landscapes of grief, forming new possibilities for communities of grief and for changing the norms of grievability. Facebook profiles become memorial pages for the deceased; crowd-sourcing fundraising sites like GoFundMe can be used to support the bereaved, helping to pay for funeral costs and other necessities; and Twitter is perhaps the most visible outlet for politicized grief and activism in response to loss.

In 2012, Alicia Garza, Patrisse Cullors, and Opal Tometi created #BlackLivesMatter. Responding to the acquittal of George Zimmerman in the murder of black teenager Trayvon Martin, the three women took to Twitter with this hashtagged phrase that soon went viral. Black Lives Matter soon spread beyond social media and into a grassroots campaign seeking to end systemic violence against black people and to radically change dominant political and cultural structures built on foundations of racism. Their activist movement defies the dehumanization of black lives and calls for “a world

where Black lives are no longer systematically and intentionally targeted for demise.”⁴⁷⁰

A political movement that springs from loss, Black Lives Matter aims to curb the catalysts of loss for the black community. Their website prominently features three numbers: 28 (“...hours. Every 28 hours a black man, woman, or child is murdered by police or vigilante law enforcement”), 25.1 (“...percent. An estimated 25.1 percent of black American women live in poverty. This is higher than any other ethnic group”), and 35 (“...years. The average life expectancy for a black transgender woman is 35 years”).⁴⁷¹ Here, the vulnerability of a population is encapsulated in numbers – grief in statistic form. But the campaign makes other appeals, prominently featuring the names of those unjustly killed. It often operates in conjunction with other social media appeals, like when Eric Garner’s dying words spread through Twitter (#ICan’tBreathe) and when #SayHerName urged people to nominalize victimized black women.⁴⁷² Such efforts humanize the deceased, working toward making them grievable via rapid and wide circulation on the internet.

Indeed, the inherent imperative to Black Lives Matter is grievability – to make these lives largely understood as vulnerable and as worth mourning. In a January 2015 interview with George Yancy published in the *New York Times*, Judith Butler commented on these ongoing protests:

What we are also seeing in the recent and continuing assemblies, rallies and vigils is an open mourning for those whose lives were cut short and without cause, brutally extinguished. The practices of public mourning and political

⁴⁷⁰ “Black Lives Matter (About),” accessed August 2015, <http://blacklivesmatter.com/about/>

⁴⁷¹ Ibid.

⁴⁷² The Eric Garner hashtag is actually rendered #ICantBreathe on twitter because the platform does not include apostrophes in hashtags.

demonstration converge: when lives are considered ungrievable, to grieve them openly is protest.⁴⁷³

As George Jackson did forty years prior, Black Lives Matter mines the inherent political nature of grief, and like the critical responses to mourners of Jackson, these protests received mixed reception, with some decrying them as “inappropriate.” The movement has certainly instigated political controversy. Alternative hashtags popped up, like #BlueLivesMatter, referring to police officers, and perhaps most notably, #AllLivesMatter. But such messages fundamentally miss the point of Black Lives Matter, as many have noted, including Butler. In fact, her and Yancy’s *New York Times* interview was entitled “What’s Wrong with ‘All Lives Matter’?” The title is perhaps a red herring as the interview mostly covers issues of vulnerable populations and racial histories in the United States. But Butler does respond to the premise of All Lives Matter by saying that “if we jump too quickly to the universal formulation, ‘all lives matter,’ then we miss the fact that black people have not yet been included in the idea of ‘all lives.’”⁴⁷⁴ This parsing demands our attention to the ways that the universal is not, in fact, universal. Of course all lives matter, Butler says, but that does not mean that all lives are recognized as mattering. Such a recognition requires us to perceive the potential for loss. As Butler remarks, “the lives taken in this way...belong to the increasing number of those who are understood as ungrievable, whose lives are thought not to be worth preserving.”⁴⁷⁵ So to say Black Lives Matter is to deny the dominant frameworks that sanction violence against black communities.

⁴⁷³ Ibid.

⁴⁷⁴ George Yancy and Judith Butler, “What’s Wrong with ‘All Lives Matter’?,” *New York Times*, January 12, 2015, http://opinionator.blogs.nytimes.com/2015/01/12/whats-wrong-with-all-lives-matter/?_r=0

⁴⁷⁵ Ibid.

Social media becomes a crucial way of breaking dominant framings of life, death, and grief. From cell phone cameras to real-time updates on Twitter or Facebook, these technologies reframe the way such violence and loss are portrayed. Protests in Ferguson and Baltimore travelled beyond those cities not just via mainstream news but through social media internet channels. Hashtags marked death and loss, disseminating grief and outrage simultaneously and reaching huge audiences. While the constant turnover of content due to the mechanics of such media might seem to relegate it to the realm of immediate ephemera, Black Lives Matter is determined to harness its power. Their slogan is “This is not a Moment, but a Movement.” This framing turns an instance of loss (and an ephemeral social media form – the hashtag) into a profound engagement with loss, an extended grieving that is intertwined with political activism – the type of work Butler prescribed in *Precarious Life*. Perhaps it is through the new genres that develop from technological innovation that we can further break representational confinement and make more lives grievable.

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