

New Errands



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Welcome to New Errands!

The Eastern American Studies Association and the American Studies Program at Penn State Harrisburg are pleased to present this issue of *New Errands*, an online journal that publishes exemplary American Studies work by undergraduate students.

Seeking to develop the next generation of Americanists, *New Errands*' mission is both to provide a venue for the publication of important original scholarship by emerging young scholars and to provide a teaching resource for instructors of American Studies looking for exemplary work to use in the classroom.

New Errands will be published semi-annually, after the end of each academic semester. The goal of this timetable will be to collect and publish essays produced during the previous term, so that they can be made available as quickly as possible for use in the following term. We encourage both self-submission by undergraduate students and nominated submissions by instructional faculty. They must have an American focus, but can employ a variety of disciplinary methods. Submissions can be emailed as Word documents to newerrandsjournal@gmail.com.

Essays can be of any length, but they must have a research focus. Any visual images should be placed at the end of the manuscript, and tags should be placed in the text to indicate the intended placement of each image. Manuscripts should conform to MLA guidelines.

Papers found in this volume were submitted for the spring 2015 issue of the journal.

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For further information about the Eastern American Studies Association, including the annual undergraduate roundtable and the EASA undergraduate honors society, please visit:

<http://harrisburg.psu.edu/eastern-american-studies-association>.

A Message from the Editor—

We at *New Errands* are proud to present the outstanding papers for the spring issue of *New Errands*. These papers have been selected because they represent exemplary undergraduate research and demonstrate an appreciation for and critical understanding of American culture. Topics in this issue range from American suburbia, to genetically modified foods, to immigration, and demonstrate the diverse research interests of American Studies students.

Encouraging undergraduate study and research of American culture and society is our goal at *New Errands*. By recognizing and publishing the exceptional work of undergraduate students, we are able to meet this goal. Our hope is to inspire a new generation of American Studies scholars and provide a forum to share their work.

We look forward to continuing this tradition in the years to come.

Tiffany Weaver

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Rage Against the Machine in the Garden: Television, Voyeurism, and Hyperrealism in American Suburban Film

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Introduction

Following the Second World War, living in the suburbs has been connected to the American Dream. The suburbs appeared to be the perfect place to raise a family and enjoy the benefits of both urban and rural conveniences without the exposure to harmful influences of the city. Ebenezer Howard argues that the town and the countryside exert a magnetic pull that draws urban citizens in, eventually resulting in a balance between the two in a hybrid environment: the middle landscape, or the suburbs (166-69). Everyone strives to own a suburban home and everyone wants to fulfill their dream of a perfect life with a perfect family and perfect neighbors. However, once people have started to move, some realized that reality did not live up to the utopian expectations of the project. The magnet that has drawn them to the suburbs in the first place, began to tear them apart through conformity, social pressures, and paranoia. People started to scrutinize the suburb's universal claim of an ideal reality. It is no surprise that these doubts were most fervently raised by scholars, poets, authors, and movie makers who, often originating from an urban background, detested the values of the middle landscape.

In this article, I will explore the American suburban movie from the post WWII era until 9/11, which marked a turning point in the portrayal of suburban life. The purpose of my work is to analyze how screenwriters and directors grappled with the conflicting disparity of the utopian vision versus reality of the suburbs and how they produced a picture of the faulty design and constructed-ness of the middle landscape. This design not only subordinated nature, but also subverted and deconstructed human nature by the initial introduction of technology. That is, the introduction of artificial structures in a natural environment caused human nature became artificial and

mechanical itself. "Life in a garden is relaxed, quiet, and sweet, [...] but survival in a howling desert demands action, the unceasing manipulation and mastery of the forces of nature, including, of course, human nature" (Marx 43). What techniques do filmmakers use to convey their message? What are the similarities in their perception and, moreover, what are the differences? What solution do the artists propose to deal, cope, and overcome the ills of suburbia? Finally, why does Hollywood produce negative movies about the suburbs in the first place, considering the success of the suburban project and the film industry's main objective of making money would suggest that the ideology of the suburbs would work in tandem?

This article does not make general claims or statements. Given the large number of movies on this topic, this would not be feasible. Instead, I will provide one qualitative account on the larger trend of the suburban movie genre and how these movies are mirroring and exposing society by using them as cultural texts placed historically. The focus will be on three movies: *All That Heaven Allows* (1955), Douglas Sirk's prototype of post-WWII suburban criticism, *Blue Velvet* (1986), David Lynch's exploration of voyeurism and dirt in the final moments of the Cold War, and *The Truman Show* (1998), an existential portrayal of a man who lost grip on reality. My working angle for this critique of technology and the common denominator in the contextualization of these movies is the practice of *watching the suburbs* and the ironic doubling of perspectives and instances. It manifests in a growing TV culture, voyeurism, and the lack of privacy, substantiating deeper implications on how societal decline, loss of community, and the loss of coping mechanisms to differentiate the real from the fake; this can be linked to scientific progress and the introduction of technology into the middle landscape. Scholars such as Robert Putnam are firmly convinced that the suburbs are responsible for the decline in social capital, and TV seems to be an additional reason for this.¹

The Machine and the Mirror

At first sight, the negative depiction of the suburbs in movies seems counterintuitive. Over the past decades, the percentage of Americans living in the suburbs has increased from about 25% in the

¹ See Robert Putnam, *Bowling Alone*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 2000, especially chapter 12, Mobility and Sprawl, and chapter 13,

Technology and Mass Media for a detailed account on the decline of social capital from a sociological perspective.

1950s to more than 50% in the 1990s (Muzzio, Halper 544, 555). Hollywood – built on the virtues of profitability, sustainability, and growth – should think twice before producing films that shed a negative light on the homes of more than half of the population if they intend to make a profit. Yet the success of suburban movies suggests otherwise. The suburban project was supposed to combine the best of both city and country, enabling a timely approximation of the Jeffersonian pastoral ideal of happiness found on a “small family farm” without having to give up the perks of a steadily progressing society (554-555). Moviemakers and intellectuals believed that the opposite to be the case. Instead the suburbs combined “the worst, not the best, of city and country. Suburbia may have been conceived as a bourgeois utopia, but it was a snare and a delusion, born in greed and nurtured by materialism, that degraded all it touched” (556). Relating to some of the critiques, suburbanites were slowly beginning to question the suburb’s claim of perfection as they walked into the theaters. Unlike the ideal, the suburbs are not a safe haven from the ills of the city. Crime and poverty are just as apparent in the suburbs as in the cities. The failure to extend the “dramatiz[ation of] the human condition” (Wunsch 644) outside city limits, further contributes to the conflicted view on the supposed bourgeois utopia (656).

Concerns over the disparity between ideal and real in a technological world were not first voiced during this period of suburbanization, but rather began at the time of America’s industrialization. *The Machine in the Garden* (1964) by Leo Marx explores major works in American literature, delivering a blunt verdict of the introduction of technology into nature. Given its intention to not only be an account on the past, but also with implications of alienation and anxiety in the post-nuclear present, I will use this book as a template to apply it to my critical argument of technology in suburban cinema (380). Nostalgia for the return to the pastoral ideal, being closer to nature, is a way to “mask the real problems of an industrial civilization” (7) and, quoting Freud, a means to attain “freedom from the grip of the external world” to “maintain the old condition of things which has been regrettably sacrificed to necessity everywhere else” (qtd. in Marx 8).

The suburbs tried to approximate the utopian ideal; but in reality they have become a middle ground where “felicities and miseries can be

reconciled together” (Strachey qtd. in Marx 45). Michel Foucault calls these places that aspire to be the approximation of utopian places heterotopias, an important concept in our so-called “epoch of juxtaposition” (par. 1), for they “[are] in relation with all the other sites, but in such a way as to suspect, neutralize, or invert the set of relations that they happen to designate, mirror, or reflect” (par. 10); they are real places not only approximating utopian places, but also exposing and de-masking the contradictions behind these real realities and ideals. For Foucault the mirror is as an intersection between utopia and heterotopia, simultaneously sharing both characteristics (par. 12). In my essay, I will apply this metaphor of the mirror to the Suburban film and role of the TV/movie screen. Just as the suburbs relate to the pastoral ideal and reality as a heterotopia, movies juxtapose the physical unreality of the images with the reality of the audience. The screen serves as a literal and figurative mirror to expose, reflect and compensate for the illusions of “perfectibility and progress” (Foucault par. 26; Marx 88).

Suburbia in 20th Century American Film

All That Heaven Allows and the visuality of the frame

The critique of technology was largely limited to the realm of literature. Following the boom of the Second World War, the rise of the suburbs, and especially the nationwide success of television in the 1950s, critiques began to take shape in film. One could argue that the creative minds in Hollywood were just as concerned as Putnam about the decline in community by sitting alone in front of the television. Though, the more pragmatic approach would argue that a growing television culture would just undermine revenue opportunities of movie theaters (Muzzio, Halper 559). Nonetheless, the point of replacing a social with an often solitary activity still holds to be valid and is reiterated in many motion pictures. One of these movies is *All That Heaven Allows* (1955) by director Douglas Sirk.

All That Heaven Allows revolves around Cary, a recently widowed housewife who seeks self-fulfillment in the relationship with her much younger gardener Ron. However, she feels constricted by traditional family structures and expectations from society, which is following and observing her every move. She has to face many

challenges, before she can find peace in the arms of her “man in the red flannel shirt” (Biskind 323). One of the most interesting elements of Sirk’s cinematography is his expressionistic use of suburban architecture. For him, architecture is not just part of the setting; it is a tool (McNiven 38-39). Sirk argues that the suburban environment which surrounds Cary and her home of Stoningham is a mere construct of artificiality that corrupts everyone that comes close to it with inauthenticity, shallowness, and superficiality; it leaves you suffocated and unable to act freely. The only way to escape this confinement is to live the pastoral ideal to the fullest and refrain from society that attempts to recreate and isolate the advantages of the country by subordinating nature to humankind (51).

Sirk accomplished this by contrasting the artificiality of Cary’s home and neighborhood with the naturalness of the rest of the environment through stylistically juxtaposing them with the architecture and different cinematic techniques.² Many scenes are not filmed directly, but through reflective surfaces such as mirrors, as if he wanted to ontologically separate the artificial image in the mirror from the naturalness surrounding this image, like the branch that was handed to Cary by Ron in one of the first scenes and placed next to the mirror on her make-up table. Roger McNiven explains that through the framing by window frames, mirrors, doorways, the background distinguishes itself “from the more ‘real’ foreground space.” In the convention of 1950s movies, the framing of the background scene is supposed to represent the ideal of family harmony. Cary, on the other hand, trying to “escape into the foreground space”, feels entrapped by it (40). The suburban house, symbol for financial stability and a happy life, becomes a tomb for Cary, which after Egyptian custom is for “walling up the widow alive in the funeral chamber of her husband along with his other possessions” (*All That Heaven Allows*).

The solution to suburban claustrophobia and an “‘other-directed’ [life] in tedious conformity with suburban neighbors” (Wunsch 645) seems to be Ron’s independence from society, realized with his cabin in the woods. The movie is not very subtle about which philosophical tradition Sirk is referring to. When Cary and Ron visit two of his friends,

Cary finds and picks up the book Henry David Thoreau’s *Walden*, reading a few passages out loud:

The mass of men lead lives of quiet desperation. Why should we be in such desperate haste to succeed? If a man does not keep pace with his companions, perhaps it is because he hears a different drummer. Let him step to the music which he hears, however measured far away. (Thoreau qtd. in *All That Heaven Allows*)

The message is simple: “To thine own self be true” (Shakespeare qtd. in *All That Heaven Allows*). Hollywood expert Peter Biskind concurs that “Thoreau is right; Cary’s life is one of ‘quiet desperation’, and the utopian alternative represented by the people gathered around her can only be realized outside society” (328). Marx talks about the “cultural malady” of “pointless, dull, routinized existence” (247).

[They] perform the daily round without joy or anger or genuine exercise of will. As if their minds were mirrors, able only to reflect the external world, they are satisfied to cope with things as they are. In Emerson’s language, they live wholly on the plane of the Understanding. Rather than design houses to fulfill the purpose of their lives, they accommodate their lives to the standard design of houses. (247)

In short, “men have become the tools of their tools” (Thoreau qtd. in Marx 247). People are trapped. They fall victim to the machines that were supposed to serve them by subjugating them into a system that serves only itself; it only nurtures a dependency on man-machine relations, i.e. consumerism, rather than social relations (Marx 248). Instead of receiving support, the all-watching eyes of her neighbors only hold contempt for her deviation from their conservative conventions, enviously pressuring her for her individuality and self-realization in this hyper efficient environment.

Cary’s societal entrapment becomes final after she received a TV set as a Christmas present, the ultimate symbol of confinement and the center of Sirk’s criticism of the corrupting force of artificial structures in nature. This technological novelty, from the start dismissed by Cary as the “last refuge for lonely women,” now frames her

² For an exploration of an architect’s perspective of how ill-design contributed to the deterioration of human nature in the suburbs, see Kunstler, James Howard. *The Geography of Nowhere: The Rise and*

Decline of America’s Man-made Landscape. New York: Simon & Schuster, 1993, especially chapter 13 “Better Places.”

appalled face on the screen, trapping her in the reflection (see fig. 1). “All you have to do is turn that dial and you have all the company you want - right there on the screen” (*All That Heaven Allows*). The TV serves as Cary’s “consumer compensation in exchange for an active pursuit of her desire,” enclosing her “in a haze of consumerism, impotent spectatorship, and televisual hyperreality” (Joyrich 45-46). She leaves the house immediately for the woods.

Her return to Ron, culminating in the obligatory melodramatic ending, might be seen as a happy ending for Cary and Ron; in the end, the audience realizes, however, that even Ron was not safe from the intrusion of artificiality. Ron remodeled his home to make it more appealing to Cary, eventually trying to subordinate his nature as well. This is seen in the large window framing the exterior, degrading nature as merely a picture hanging on the wall, a post card scene, or a still film frame. The *frame within a frame* is essential to understand what Sirk is trying to convey about the ill-constructed middle landscape. The love between the two, their emotions, are the only natural things left, after artificiality has pervaded everything. Sirk’s scathing verdict makes it clear that he thinks that the suburbs are a corrupting, dehumanizing influence and their claim of providing the perfect middle ground is merely an illusion constructed and perpetrated by its advertisers (55).

Blue Velvet and the pleasures of the voyeur

The 1960s through early 1980s would produce further change to the perception of suburbia, continuing and intensifying Hollywood’s critique of inauthenticity and artificiality. The rise of the Beat Generation not only coincided with the emergence of protest movements, but Hollywood also restructured. ‘New Hollywood’ as an innovative platform for criticism was not reliant on happy endings, large budgets, or on achieving commercial success. *Bonnie & Clyde* (1967) and *Easy Rider* (1969) became movies for a whole generation revolting against the previous generations’ dated ideals and world views. *The Graduate* (1967), a suburban movie that deems the superficial and artificial old guard simply ‘plastics’ seems to be as much in line with the argument of dehumanization as *The Stepford Wives* (1975), which takes it another step further by having the idealized housewives be actual robots, for the lone purpose of subservience (Muzzio, Halper 562).

Noticeably, the spread of horror movies did not stop at the gates of suburbia. The bipolar battle between good and evil was not only fought in Cold War proxy fronts overseas, but also in the small suburban settlements. Paranoid surveillance and the Red Scare extended their influence to the movie theaters through films which emphasized on the evils behind the façade of the supposedly peaceful neighborhood. This era spawned movies such as *Amityville Horror* (1979), *Nightmares on Elm Street* (1984), and *Carrie* (1976), which have all had recent remakes. According to David Lynch, one tradition in the American gothic movies is “about things that are hidden — within a small city and within people” – exemplified Lynch’s own *Blue Velvet* (1986) (qtd. in *New York Times*).

Blue Velvet starts off with the familiar establishing shots of showing the idyllic peacefulness of red rose petals and white picket fences in supersaturated colors. However, when the camera takes closer look into the very ground of the suburbs, it reveals what lies behind the outside image of this perfect suburban scenery: a swarm of bugs crawling in the dirt – a recurring metaphor for the evils underneath the surface. Lynch said himself, “I discovered that if one looks a little closer at this beautiful world, there are *always* red ants underneath...I saw life in extreme close-ups” (qtd. in Bainbridge 3). Leo Marx helps to qualify:

Most literary works called pastorals [...] do not finally permit us to come away with anything like the simple, affirmative attitude we adopt toward pleasing rural scenery. [...] [T]hese works manage to qualify, or call into question, or bring irony to bear against the illusion of peace and harmony in a green pasture. And it is this fact that will enable us, finally, to get at the difference between the complex and sentimental kinds of pastoralism. (25)

Protagonist Jeffrey Beaumont, who found a severed ear on a walk following the introductory scene, sets himself to find the truth behind the mystery of the cut-off ear with the help of a detective’s daughter Sandy. Curious about Sandy’s story that a suspicious woman might be connected to the case, Jeffrey tries to gain access to her apartment disguised as a pest controller. What follows is a net of events ensnaring Jeffrey between the two worlds of superficial idealization on the outside and myths and symbols of violence on the inside, a story about

“kidnapping, murder and torture, all juxtaposed against an adolescent romance” (Bainbridge 4).

Besides the theme of figuratively looking through the façade, Lynch takes on the literal act by playing with Freudian voyeurism. Already in *All That Heaven Allows* we were able to make out this curiosity in the behavior of the disapproving townsfolk, leering at and condemning Cary’s efforts to achieve self-fulfillment. It is the desire to remain in control of one’s environment that is being commented on and which is further elaborated in sadomasochist power relations in Lynch’s film. However, this time the audience actively participates in it, blurring the lines between subject and object with camera shots through closet door slits following Jeffrey’s eyes and turning back on him, making him the observed (Bainbridge 7).

In this particular scene the camera alternates between close-up shots of Jeffrey in the closet, point-of-view shots through the closet and outside views of the closet. The audience is not only forced to participate in the sadistic act of voyeurism, but becomes victim of being watched themselves. According to Freud, the perversion of voyeurism manifests in two co-occurring features – the ‘active’ role of the observer and the ‘passive’ role of the observed (32-33). Usually, the audience of a movie theater does not face the danger of being seen by the object of their voyeurism; they remain impotent observers, since they cannot reveal themselves to the characters in the film. In the case of *Blue Velvet*, however, they not only watch Jeffrey on the screen and Dorothy through the eyes of Jeffrey, but Jeffrey repeatedly looks *into* the camera, exposing the audience, and contributing to the suspense of the scene and the *Schaulust* of the viewer (see fig. 2).

For Freud, voyeurism remains ultimately passive, since actual goal of acting is being delayed, suppressed, or replaced (23). The anxiety or reluctance to act is deeply rooted in the depictions of suburban culture; watching, so you do not have to do it yourself. It is easier to criticize and condemn someone for trying to realize one’s full potential than taking a leap of faith and trying to accomplish something themselves. They live proxy lives, trying to maintain control over their neighbors and their own feelings. This tendency of avoiding to assume responsibility cannot only be seen in *All*

That Heaven Allows; it actually traces back to the Middle Passage, and has already rooted deeply in the mind-set during the industrialization. Marx quotes D. H. Lawrence when he says that “the most idealist nations invent most machines. America simply teems with mechanical inventions, because nobody in America ever wants to *do* anything. They are idealists. Let a machine do the thing” (Lawrence qtd. in Marx 145).

The consequence of Jeffrey’s voyeurism is the corrupting influence of Frank, who serves as evil incarnate. Witnessing Frank engage in sadistic behavior (while yelling “Don’t look at me”) transforms Jeffrey throughout the movie. Once innocent, the protagonist himself transforms through interconnection between active and passive forms of perversion and gives into his urges to exercise force on others, hitting Dorothy and eventually killing Frank (60-61).

The plot concludes in an ironically melodramatic, happy ending. David Lynch would later perfect this technique in his TV drama series *Twin Peaks* (1990-1991).³ Marx comments with the stylistic device of “ironic juxtaposition” by giving a literary example which intends to restore “the sickly sweet, credulous tone of sentimental pastoralism” in fiction upon realizing that ideal does not match reality (275, 277). As Lynch sees life in close-ups, he urges his audience to do the same with his film. Not only are they participating in his play of voyeurism and sadomasochism, but they are also encouraged to question the logic of the story and look behind the façade. The robin on the window sill eating the bug in the final scene is a symbol for love prevailing over evil; Jeffrey, the “bug man,” fights Frank, who wears a bug-like gas mask during the closet scene. In a previous scene, Sandy recalls a dream of robins spreading love in a dark world full of evil. Jeffrey, the robin, acts out of love, eradicates the evil bug Frank. However, the dirt, the disruptive force in the suburbs remains. The lesson is it may be important to find the truth by digging through the dirt. What you find though does not lie in your control and may not be as rewarding as anticipated. “Dirt sticks. Jeffrey is forever changed and so is our perception of the suburbs” (Bainbridge 8).

³ *Twin Peaks* is a TV series about the rape and murder of a teenage girl in a small town in rural Washington. The connection between the invasion of technology into nature analogous to *The Machine in the*

Garden as represented by the lumber mill cutting trees in the intro sequence, and the social corruption of the persons behind the lumber mill might be even more striking than in *Blue Velvet*.

The Truman Show and the loss of reality

As the 80s waned, so did the Cold War with its defining East-West dialectic. It appeared that the Rambos and Rockies of the Reagan era who fought so bravely against the dangers of encroaching Communism were victorious and decided once and for all who the winner was in the ultimate battle between good and evil. However, the lack of an ideological antithesis plunged the US in an abyss of insecurity and self-doubt (Laist par. 2). What happens to bipolarity once the enemy is overcome and gone; the enemy who helped Americans maintain their sanity, their grip of reality; the enemy who fed into their feeling of superiority and confirmed their belief of being on the right side of history. Don DeLillo put the problem famously in his novel *Underworld*:

[We] need the leaders of both sides to keep the cold war going. It's the one constant thing. It's honest, it's dependable. Because when the tension and rivalry come to an end, that's when your worst nightmares begin. All the power and intimidation of the state will seep out of your bloodstream. You will no longer be the main point of reference. (qtd. in Laist par. 2)

There was no McCarthyism, no Red Scare, no communism left that could fill the void of the time between the fall of the Berlin Wall and the terror attacks of September 11. The 90s were the "modern interwar period", the "lost decade" (par. 2). This was also the time when the suburbs became the dominant form of housing in the US. Meanwhile, technological innovations, like cloning, the Internet, and computer effects challenged our thinking of what is real and what is illusory, authentic, and artificial. It became increasingly difficult to differentiate reality with its representations. The 'era' between 11/9 and 9/11 has therefore spawned a new type of suburban movies. The concept of hyperreality was not new in the 1990s but it is in this period it regained momentum – a time that made it so simple to edit and manipulate data to forge a new reality that is realer than real, because it does not possess any actual reference to reality anymore. The representation or the simulacrum replaces reality and therefore becomes hyperreal (Baudrillard 527-528). Jean Baudrillard talks about a "copy without an original" (qtd. in Laist par. 6).

Suburbia, as focal point of artificiality, is predestined to be a center stage for movies depicting the hyperreal anxiety of not being able to distinguish authentic from artificial. *True Lies* (1994), *Pleasantville* (1998), *The Virgin Suicides* (1999), and *Donnie Darko* (2001)⁴ represent the most notable movies analogous to this particular school of thought. The movie which gets closest to Baudrillard's original idea is *The Truman Show* from 1998.

Truman Burbank lives a seemingly content life in a small, quiet suburb Seahaven. He is popular, everybody likes him, and the whole world appears to revolve around him. Little does he know that it actually does. Everything and everybody he knows, his perceived reality is just a construct, from the dome arching over him like an artificial sky to his friends and family who are all paid actors. A whole life orchestrated solely for the entertainment of a world-wide audience; a life in absolute control of the producer Christof, who deliberately misleads and manipulates Truman through fake stories in the Orwellian sense, forged news reports, and TV shows to prevent him from trying to leave the confines of the studio. Truman's *life of quiet desperation* is ridden by restlessness and boredom, for he hears a *different drummer*. Despite all efforts, Truman eventually comes to realize of his existence and the 'real' reality, as he touches the inauthentic sky. With him recognizing his artificially constructed boundaries and *transcending* them by leaving the studio, he "reaffirm[s] [...] the truth of reality and the escapability of artificial social structures" and "the shackles of Plato's cave" (Laist par. 10).

The critique of this movie is clear, it condemns the manipulative power of the media which is able to distort and produce reality to its liking, becoming indistinguishable from fiction. The exploitative relation between Truman, his in-film television audience, and the actual movie audience leads to Lynchian style voyeurism ad absurdum: Truman watches a television show, who is also being watched by a fictitious TV audience that is again being watched by the real movie audience. In a critical scene, Truman looks at his reflection in the bathroom mirror, not knowing that the semi-permeable mirror is also equipped with a camera (see fig. 3). The setup of multiple screens and

⁴ Donnie Darko, released on October 26, 2001, technically belongs to the post 9/11 era, but it was obviously filmed and produced before

the incident of the New York terrorist attacks and therefore still resembles the style of the 1990s

mirrors is reminiscent of Jacques Lacan's discovery of the mirror stage, which describes a stage in early childhood where the child is beginning to recognize that its mirror image is a reflection of the Self (502). From Truman's naïve point of view, he finds himself in a self-aware position in a play of "jubilant activity" (502); the omniscient audience looking at the TV screen dismisses this false awareness through laughter. On a meta level, however, the scene is more about the fake TV audience and, by proxy, the real movie audience itself. If we assume that the semi-permeable surface is not only a window, but *actually* a mirror, the TV screen or movie screen become the other half to reflect our own image. Laughter enables the audience in the mirror stage to overcome personal deficiencies through pleasure; in essence, the look in the mirror is a critical engagement with the self (Reichert chapter 6). For Lacan, the process of identification goes through a stage where the *I* projects its own reflection onto the mirror as an "Ideal-I" before becoming aware of the self (503). The image in the mirror, the Ideal-I, or in this case Truman, is the defining aspect to reach self-awareness and the transformation from a "specular *I*" to a "social *I*" (507). "Narcissistic scopophilia" in film is therefore the desire to find oneself in the sublime image of the other approximate it in the imaginary (Reichert chapter 7). The audience becomes aware as a result of first identifying with the other and then alienating oneself from it again through *reflection*.

Interestingly, the movie stops after Truman leaves the set. The producer in the movie explains to Truman, "There's no more truth out there than there is in the world I created for you. Same lies. Same deceits." (*Truman Show*) It is as if the film wanted to say that the outside world as well is just a construct of "more layers of domes;" 'deterrence' is the term used by Baudrillard to explain the phenomenon of the audience getting distracted by the artificiality of its reality by watching a fake world on television (Laist par. 10). Truman disappears, because he has got a grip on the meaning of his existence, a sense of self-awareness, and knowledge about the true nature of his surroundings. He is filled with both curiosity and anxiety when he exits the stage. Leo Marx relates Nathaniel Hawthorne's short story *Ethan Brand* about the protagonist's search for the "Unpardonable Sin," which is "the great sin of the Enlightenment – the idea of knowledge as an end in

itself" (266, 273). The result is Brand's demise as he realizes that his "cold philosophical curiosity" has made him cold and mechanical inside (266-267). He becomes insane and disappears by throwing himself into the fire. Truman Burbank, our modern-day Ethan Brand, has found the truth around him. He has left the mirror stage at the price of what Lacan calls "paranoic knowledge" (502, 505). He does not kill himself, but by leaving the set knowing, he equally withdraws both physically and mentally from our scope of perception, "where the real journey begins" (507, 509).

The audience in the Truman show, however, oblivious of its situation simply changes the channel and asks, "What else is on?" (Laist par. 10). They are stuck in the mirror stage and the real audience is to believe that they have seen through the scheme, that they overcame the mirror stage when, in fact, knowledge of our situation does not mean deliverance from it. This raises the question whether this hyperreality is really less real than reality. Christof makes a valid point about Truman's world and our society when he says, "We accept the reality of the world with which we are presented" (*Truman Show*). The two quotes from the producer of the show are perfectly in accord with Baudrillard's concept of hyperreality, which makes this movie exemplary for this time of American uncertainty, because "the simulacrum is never that which conceals the truth – it is the truth which conceals that there is none. The simulacrum is true" (Ecclesiastes qtd. in Baudrillard 524).

Conclusion

While most suburban movies share a stock of tropes and motifs to criticize America's favorite middle landscape, through its superficiality, inauthenticity, or conformity, some do reveal a more elaborate argument of the failures of this 'imagined community.' One underlying trend in the discussed movies is the concept of truth, of exposing the social constructs behind the physical construct that is suburbia. This truth may take many forms and names such as the 'Unpardonable Sin' or 'Enlightenment', but they are all concerned with looking behind the artificial façade of the inauthentic bubble they call home. The movies discussed in this paper have dealt with the quest for the transcendentalist truth and a return to the countryside, the inconvenient truth about the nature of humanity leading to homicide, or the hyperreal truth of living in a staged reality confined in a dome

within domes. The project to create a 'perfect middle ground,' a realized pastoral ideal in 'perfectibility and progress,' a heterotopian approximation of a utopia has failed and with it all hope of salvation.

It discloses that our inherited symbols of order and beauty have been divested of meaning. It compels us to recognize that the aspirations once represented by the symbol of an ideal landscape have not, and probably cannot, be embodied in our traditional institutions. It means that an inspiring vision of a humane community has been reduced to a token of individual survival [...] [I]n the end the American hero is either dead or totally alienated from society, alone and powerless. [...] And if, at the same time, he pays a tribute to the image of a green landscape, it is likely to be ironic and bitter. (Marx 364)

All movies discussed in this article conclude with 'happy' endings. They seem to be happy on the outside; they try to restore the idyll at least ironically in fiction. A look behind the curtain of illusion, however, will reveal the truth. There is no "real" happy ending without the distortions of reality. There is no perfect middle landscape. Many directors attempt to trace the vices of civilized society back to their origin and find them in technological progress itself; it is the *Machine in the Garden*, which transformed modern society to a superefficient apparatus filled with plastic consumers unable to engage in genuine human relationships. This hyper-efficiency and the urge to make everything look perfect from the outside while subjugating humanity (*Menschlichkeit*) made suburbanites keep social interactions to a minimum; they try to maintain the façade out of fear that anybody could *see* what lies inside them, the fear of being scrutinized for pursuing this aspect of realizing the self. If you need your grass to be cut, you are not asking your neighbor for their lawn mower, but you get one yourself. If you are depressed, you do not talk it over with a friend but seek help from a professional (Goudreau 24). Essayist Thomas Carlyle interjects on the effects of industrialization:

Our old modes of exertion are all discredited, and thrown aside. On every hand, the living artisan is driven from his workshop, to make room for a speedier, inanimate one. The shuttle drops from the

fingers of the weaver, and falls into iron fingers that ply it faster. Men have crossed oceans by steam [...]. There is no end to machinery. [...] For all earthly, and for some unearthly purposes, we have machines and mechanic furtherances; for mincing our cabbages; for casting us into magnetic sleep. We remove mountains, and make seas our smooth highway; nothing can resist us. We war with rude Nature; and, by our resistless engines, come off always victorious, and loaded with spoils. (Carlyle qtd. in Marx 170-1)

They have in turn become "mechanical in head and heart," reducing themselves to the calculable aspects of life at the expense of the imaginative facet of the psyche (175). Movies help to readjust our perception of ourselves and surroundings; they recalibrate our reference position; they serve as Foucauldian mirrors to expose the faults of society and the self, aiming to overcome our "organic insufficiency in [our] natural reality" (Lacan 505). The nature of television makes it a perfect point to discuss and mediate the divergence of ideal reality, real reality, and fabricated representations.

Watching television and movies keeps the viewers sane; they try to overcome their state of "Hegelian 'self-estrangement,' a dichotomy of 'social' and 'natural' self" (Marx 177). They may even want to watch a reality show to get a grip of their own 'real' reality that got lost in the process of the information age. Christof from *The Truman Show* comments on this as follows:

We've become bored with watching actors give us phony emotions. We are tired of pyrotechnics and special effects. While the world he inhabits is, in some respects, counterfeit, there's nothing fake about Truman himself. No scripts, no cue cards. It isn't always Shakespeare, but it's genuine. It's a life. (The Truman Show)

Perhaps it is watching these movies that enables suburbanites to live *happily ever after* in their conformity centers, even if the scopophilic voyeur ultimately remains impotent by only suppressing and replacing the desires, instead of acting out on them. The voyeur is forced to watch without recognizing the self in the mirror. This is also part of the irony of this story. Movies which are criticizing suburban dwellers for resorting to professional help instead of socializing or preferring passive pleasure gain through television are a

product of technological progress themselves; they are part of the machine they criticize. They have gone full circle and become a cogwheel in a self-perpetuating industry that is both problem of and solution to the decline of social capital.

Since my analyses focused on the period between the post WWII era and the end of the 90s, I did not consider movies produced after 9/11. This is due to the change in the conversation about hyperreality after the *real* event of 9/11, the conversation about hyperreality took another turn and was dismissed as trivial, while the suburban movie has been slowly disappearing from the big screen ever since. Suburbia had to clear the way for the reemergence of the American hero. The long yearned-for bipolarity returned and with it the superhero movie, as well as the biographical blockbuster of era defining historical films focused on real heroes such as Abraham Lincoln. The increasing role of surveillance for safety at the expense of personal freedoms and privacy has contributed to the discussion about claustrophobia, paranoia, and voyeurism. Being under constant supervision is not new to suburbanites. In the past years the reach of surveillance programs has extended to camera monitoring throughout metropolitan areas and most recently to warrantless Internet and phone surveillance by the NSA. The suburbs have not completely disappeared after 9/11, but they have taken over another primary medium. They have reclaimed their target of choice to introduce to us a new breed of suburban anti-heroes on television; they are unrestrained by fear, outside pressures, or the law; they act out on their urges and fantasies without the suburban audience having to face the consequences itself. Television series like *The Sopranos*, *Weeds*, *Breaking Bad*, and *Mad Men* all exhibit characteristics of this new type of suburbanite. Even ‘fake’ reality shows, like *The Osborne’s* or *The Real Housewives* share some of these aspects, diluting again our sense of what is real and counterfeit. From an ideational perspective, the suburban project has failed. If we look at their presence in our minds, the suburbs are now more successful than ever. On this occasion, I would like to refer to the research studies of the Research Unit “Popular Seriality—Aesthetics and Practice” at Freie Universität, sponsored by the German Research Fund (DFG), which is currently examining the dynamics and functions of serial structures in American culture. The seriality of the suburbs in television, as well as in its literal,

physical manifestation found in suburban sprawl, has shown that they remain a lasting concept in American popular culture.

Appendix



Fig. 1. Cary looking at her reflection on a television screen: a TV frame within the movie theater frame. *All That Heaven Allows*. Dir. Douglas Sirk. Universal International, 1955. DVD.



Fig. 2. Jeffrey breaks the Fourth Wall and makes the audience victim of his voyeurism by looking through the key hole of the camera lens. *Blue Velvet*. Dir. David Lynch. De Laurentiis Entertainment Group, 1986. DVD.



Fig. 3. The semi-permeable mirror shows how the audience tries to assume the ideal image of Truman Burbank in a return to a Lacanian mirror stage. *The Truman Show*. Dir. Peter Weir. Paramount Pictures, 1998. DVD.

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Frankenfoods: Conceptualizing the Anti-GMO Argument in the Anthropocene

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Seventy-five percent of processed food consumed in the United States contains one of the eight commercially available genetically modified organisms (GMOs); corn, soybeans, alfalfa, sugar beets, canola, cotton, papaya or squash. GMOs are organisms that have been developed by taking the DNA of a desired trait from a particular organism and inserting it into another.⁵ This accepted reality of food production has gradually begun to be challenged as an anti-GMO movement has formed, the conceptualization of which can be understood through the word Frankenfood. This term emerged from a simple letter to the editor in the New York Times on June 6, 1992. Paul Lewis, a professor of English from Boston College, wrote a three sentence response to an article that had been published about the newly created Flavr Savr Tomato, one of the first major GMO's to hit the market. He commented:

Ever since Mary Shelley's baron rolled his improved human out of the lab, scientists have been bringing just such good things to life. If they want to sell us Frankenfood, perhaps it's time to gather the villagers, light some torches and head to the castle.⁶

Since then, the term Frankenfood has emerged to shape the anti-GMO debate, evoking emotional responses rooted in the ideas of the romantic literature icon Frankenstein. The evolution of this metaphor emerges from the atmosphere of uncertainty that surrounds the GMO debate. The use of this metaphor outside of the scientific sphere reflects people's fear of science and technology overstepping human boundaries as the public works to conceptualize the problem of GMOs. Through the use of the Frankenfoods metaphor, the public is able to provide a framework to conceptualize an

issue of the Anthropocene that falls outside the realm of current paradigms.

The Image of Frankenstein

To understand the framing of the anti-GMO movement created through the term Frankenfood, one must understand the romantic image from which the term comes. The image of Frankenstein has its roots in the early 19th century novel by Mary Shelley, *Frankenstein; or the Modern Prometheus*. The idea of Dr. Frankenstein and the monster express the major theme that when people overstep the boundaries of human kind by allowing science to play God, destruction ensues. Dr. Frankenstein's story is a tale of caution about the limit on the power that humans may have, as alluded to with the subtitle "the Modern Prometheus." The subtitle reiterates the main theme through the Greek tragedy of Prometheus in which the power given to humankind through fire was overstepping the roles appropriate for human nature. For Shelley's story, the limit for human nature is surpassed when humans become creators of life. It is science, the new modern invention of electricity to be exact, which brings Dr. Frankenstein's creation to life, asserting the idea that "the creator of life was for the first time recognized as a scientist."⁷ Dr. Frankenstein has overstepped the limits of human power and aligned himself with divine power. This occurrence frames science as the mode through which to create life, a role that is not meant for human kind to play.

The Romantic ideals imbedded in this theme come from the moment of scientific inquiry and revolution during which Mary Shelley wrote. During this time, science was taking on the role that it plays in modern society. The French Revolution was taking place, spurring the ideas of the Enlightenment and value for rational thinking. The Industrial Revolution also began, altering the landscape of Shelley's native London to one of factory smokestacks in the name of progress.⁸ The depiction of the doctor and monster in the book reflects the societal shift "away from alchemy and the past towards science and the future,"⁹ symbolizing the change in the popular perception of

⁵ K. Silk, J. Weiner, & R. Parrott, "Gene Cuisine or Frankenfood? The Theory of Reasoned Action as an Audience Segmentation Strategy for Messages About Genetically Modified Foods." *Journal of Health Communication*, 10 (2005): 751
⁶ Paul Lewis, "Mutant Foods Create Risks We Can't Yet Guess; Since Mary Shelley," *The New York Times*, June 16, 1992.

⁷ Jon Turney, *Frankenstein's Footsteps: Science, Genetics, and Popular Culture* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998), 16.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 39.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 20.

the natural world as a mystical experience to the modern notion of the rational representation of nature. This shift came with uncertainty of what could come from this innovation that was happening at such a rapid rate. Romanticism itself was an intellectual revolt that encompassed this fear of innovation at the time of scientific discovery and rational thought, evoking emotion and passion as the movement's core values in stark contrast to the logic and reason of the scientific movement. This moment of stark change in the role of science in society that creates an atmosphere of uncertainty parallels the current atmosphere of uncertainty surrounding the public perception of science.

The Frankenstein image has evolved since Mary Shelley's version of the doctor and the monster through recreations in different media, changing its meaning and connotation to a monster of the horror genre.¹⁰ The image itself is similar to a meme, having a distinct image attached and cultural perceptions that create a subconscious understanding of the term that cannot be avoided when the image is presented.¹¹ The modern meme is largely shaped by the 1931 film version of the story and its many sequels produced by Universal Pictures, the key medium that took the image from an image of literary high culture to an image of pervasive popular culture. The film integrated the image into a mass medium that universalized key traits of the Frankenstein monster and its link to science. It is this version that gave the iconic image of Frankenstein as the monster, not the doctor, with the flattened face and bolted neck and made it synonymous with the horror genre of movies. The image of Frankenstein is integrally tied to the idea of the perfect monster—a freak of science—in a story that is meant to terrify people. The media links the idea of horror and fear to the original connotations of Frankenstein and science that are central to the novel. With this change of media, the image of Frankenstein has been linked to many scientific issues, especially those surrounding bioengineering, in-vitro fertilization and other ethical concerns about the human body.¹² Frankenstein stands for the argument that there is

danger in combining aspects of living creatures, like an individual organism's DNA, because it can threaten human life in overstepping the boundaries of the human species.

The History of GMOs

Aside from understanding the history of the Frankenstein image, it is important to understand the scientific principles of genetics and the history of how they came to be discovered to give context to the GMO debate. The basic molecule within genetic studies is Deoxyribose Nucleic Acid, or DNA. In eukaryotes, DNA gets copied each time a new cell is made through cell division. The DNA in a single cell is copied by unwinding the DNA from the double helix shape into what looks like a ladder. Each rung of the ladder is a base pair, base A pairing with base T and base G pairing with base C. During the copying process, mutations in the DNA structure can occur where base pairs can be paired up incorrectly or even deleted. In some circumstances, this mutation can effect the outcome of what the DNA codes for.¹³ Of all of the DNA material in the body, only about 3% of it codes for traits of an organism, which are called genes.¹⁴ These genes get coded into RNA molecules, which are then translated into proteins. Mutations in the DNA of a gene can cause the protein coded by that gene to function incorrectly, leading to fundamental changes in an organism.¹⁵ These kinds of genetic mutations have provided the basis for the artificial selection of preferred traits in agricultural production for thousands of years even before the scientific community developed the ability to directly manipulate the genetic material of an organism.

Nina Feldorff gives an example of the manipulation of crop outcomes through the utilization of genetic mutations. She explains the history of domestication of the wheat plant, a process that happened over 10,000 years ago, in her book *Mendel in the Kitchen*.¹⁶ Feldorff discusses the three major changes that occurred in the wheat plant that allowed for its domestication: a mutation that altered how the seed was attached to the crop, a

¹⁰ The image was integrated in film for the first time in 1910 and has been remade countless times since with one estimate at 400 different films in 1992. Ibid., 28.

¹¹ Turney, *Frankenstein's Footsteps*, 30-34.

¹² Susan Blackmore, "Imitation and the Definition of a Meme." *Journal of Memetics-Evolutionary Models of Information Transmission*, 2.2 (1998) 1-13.

¹³ Nina Fedoroff and Nancy Marie Brown, *Mendel in the Kitchen: A Scientist's View of Genetically Modified Foods*. (Washington D.C.: Joseph Henry Press, 2004), 36.

¹⁴ Colin J Sanderson, *Understanding Genes and GMOs* (Hackensack, New Jersey: World Scientific Publishing Co., Pte. Ltd, 2007), 79.

¹⁵ Ibid., 87.

¹⁶ Fedoroff and Burns, *Mendel in the Kitchen*, 26

mutation that altered the timing of when the seed sprouted, and changes in farming practices that altered the size, shape and make-up of the grains.¹⁷ Because of these changes, wheat transformed from a wild growing crop to a domesticated agricultural staple.¹⁸ As Jared Diamond discussed in his book *Guns, Germs, and Steel*, “human farmers reversed the direction of natural selection by 180 degrees: the formerly successful gene suddenly became lethal and the lethal mutant became successful” as the circumstances around which the production of wheat changed.¹⁹ This single example is an illustration of the historical basis of genetic modification in agriculture; humans have been altering the genetic makeup of plants for centuries through the process of artificial selection practiced with the domestication of agriculture. However, before the 19th century, humans altered genes by perpetuating the existence of mutations and genetic traits that were most beneficial for human and allowed domestic agriculture to flourish instead of directly manipulating the actual DNA of the organism. At this point in the history of genetic manipulation, humans were not personally inserting new genetic material; they were simply choosing plants that already had the preferred genes and selectively breeding for those genes.

The shift to using what is seen as modern science to alter crop outcomes started to take form in the 1840’s when Justus von Liebig published *Organic Chemistry and Its Application in Agriculture*. In this book, Liebig discussed soil fertility and how the advances in plant science could affect farming, beginning the studies of agricultural science. In the same decade, the first application of this agricultural science was put into practice with the invention of fertilizer, marking the conception of using chemicals to alter the output of crops.²⁰ By the 1860’s, scientists were attempting to grow plants in water instead of soil, leading to the claim by 1887 that scientists could “rear plants artificially,” a moment that John Tourney, a Harvard biologist, labels as the beginning of plant biotechnology.²¹ The field of genetics was also born at this time with Mendel recording his pea plant

experiments in 1857, and the discovery of this work in 1886.²² Meanwhile, in 1873, Luther Burbank created his own potato by grafting potato plants and using natural selection to alter the outcome of the crop, furthering the basic practices of genetic manipulation. With the Mendel contributions and the Burbank plant breeding work, the field of genetics emerged in 1900, establishing the scientific framework used to humanly manipulate crops so that food production could be done in the most efficient manner.²³ By the 1930s, scientists were exposing plants to chemicals like colchicine to induce mutations in order to change the phenotypes and to allow hybridization of organisms that would not naturally breed.²⁴ These scientific discoveries and early manipulations of genetic phenotypes set the foundation for the creation of GMOs. The discovery of DNA and its structure pushed the foundation set in the early 20th century into the next chapter of genetic manipulation that directly targets specific genes within the DNA.

Genetic material was discovered in 1944 and confirmed as DNA in 1952.²⁵ Building upon the work of Maurice Williams and Rosalind Franklin, Watson and Crick were able to model the structure of this newfound basis of genetics in 1953.²⁶ In 1955 DNA polymerase, the enzyme that synthesizes DNA was discovered, while ligase, the enzyme that glues the ends of the DNA molecule together, was discovered in 1966. The discovery that propelled the ability for the creation of GMOs forward was in 1970 when scientists discovered the restriction endonuclease, the enzyme that cuts DNA at a specific base pair.²⁷ With this information about the DNA molecule, Lucien Ludoux, a scientist in Mol, Belgium, claimed that foreign DNA could be inserted and replicated in barley plants.²⁸ This claim was widely refuted by scientists and brushed off as lacking a strong basis as negative evidence was collated against the claim.²⁹ However, in 1976 an agrobacterium *tumefaciens* naturally transferred a portion of its DNA to recipient plant cells, adding legitimacy back to Ludoux’s argument.³⁰ With this new evidence and the structural understanding of the DNA molecule, the field of genetics expanded

¹⁷ Ibid., 26-28.

¹⁸ Ibid., 26

¹⁹ qt. Ibid, 27

²⁰ Ibid, 49

²¹ Ibid., 10

²² Nigel G. Halford, *Genetically Modified Crops* (London: Imperial College Press, 2003), 3

²³ Fedoroff and Burns, *Mendel in the Kitchen*, 51

²⁴ Ibid., 16

²⁵ Paul F. Lurquin, *The Green Phoenix*, 1

²⁶ Nigel G. Halford, *Genetically Modified Crops*, 3

²⁷ Ibid., 17

²⁸ Paul F. Lurquin, *The Green Phoenix*, 6

²⁹ Ibid., 14

³⁰ Ibid., 17

its reach by directly manipulating the genetic material through cutting the DNA of one organism and inserting it into another. Instead of just selectively breeding the most beneficial traits as was done previously in agriculture, scientists were directly manipulating the makeup of an individual organism's DNA. By the 1990's, Pam Dumshuir at the American DNA Plant Technology Corporation inserted fish genes into a tomato to make the tomato stay harder longer.³¹

It is with this tomato that the Frankenstein image entered the GMO debate as a metaphor to conceptualize the arguments against GMOs. The image of Frankenfoods was created with Paul Lewis's letter to the editor in response to the opinion editorial "Tomatoes May be Dangerous to Your Health" about the Flavr Savr tomato.³² The Flavr Savr, Pam Dumshuir's tomato, was the first major GMO food to be developed and discussed in the media. The product was engineered by creating an anti-gene to shut down the process of softening in the tomatoes so that they would not be crushed in transit, mitigating the loss in product from shipping the produce across the country. The tomatoes were submitted to the FDA for testing in 1992 and went to the market in 1994, but the product failed in commercial sales due to a production price that was too high to be supported, an ironic thing compared to cheap pricing of GMOs today.³³ Most of the public accepted the GMO, but there was a vocal percentage of the community that questioned this genetic modification of the plant. They feared the implications of the new innovation, spurring the argument against GMO crops that became centered on Louis's term. Even with the failure of this first genetically modified crop in 1994, over 50 million hectares of land area across the globe were planted with genetically modified organisms by 2001,³⁴ marking the use of GMOs as a normal reality of agricultural production.

The creation and implementation of genetic modification of crops can be seen as a breakthrough from a purely scientific point of view. It was a new and empowering discovery to realize that DNA is universal; it has a small amount of difference from organism to organism which allows it to be easily mixed. This universality means that it makes sense

to insert DNA from one organism to another. Because this made sense in the scientific world, it created a prime opportunity for seed companies to emerge as dominant business entities, capitalizing on the promise of progress and a better future through technological development. The promises these seed companies offer are especially enticing within the current context of increased population growth in the Anthropocene. Seed companies, scientists, and the public see GMOs as providing a solution for the dominant problem of population growth because they offer an improvement on the solution of monocultures that came about from the Green Revolution. GMOs promise a more efficient system and a greater harvest, which seed companies utilize to propel their work forward.³⁵

Seed companies also argue that GMOs are more environmentally friendly because they reduce environmental impact by decreasing the amount of fertilizer that has to be used through the use of "Roundup Ready" or Bt resistant crops. These crops allow farmers to spray pesticides on all of their crops, killing the weeds that surround the harvest but not affecting the actual crops themselves.³⁶ All these factors that arise from scientific institutions and corporate structures have allowed GMOs to take off as a dominant reality in American agricultural production. However, there is still a public disconnect from this scientific and corporate breakthrough. The public is not greatly informed about the science and fears the uncertainty that surrounds it. The technology is so new, what if there are unforeseen problems? Even with this history of scientific development, there is a divide and uneasiness within some public spheres. This uneasiness is not powerful enough to become dominant over the influence of the corporations and science. Because of this reality, the anti-GMO sentiments have not changed the emergence of GMOs as a prominent part of the food market, but they are dominant enough to create a coalition that has emerged around the issue. This anti-GMO movement needs a conceptual framework in order to mobilize the urgency of their side; this framework is found in the term Frankenfoods.

The Meme Within the GMO Debate

³¹ Fedoroff and Burns, *Mendel in the Kitchen*, 91

³² Paul Lewis, "Mutant Foods"

³³ G. Bruening and J.M. Lyons, "The Case of the FLAVR SAVR Tomato." *California Agriculture* 54 (2000):6-7.

³⁴ Nigel G. Halford, *Genetically Modified Crops*, 61

³⁵ Drake Bennett, "What Are They Doing at Monsanto?" *Bloomberg Businessweek*. July 7, 2014. Accessed March 7, 2015.

³⁶ Ken Stier, "How Frankenfood Prevailed," *Time Magazine*, June 28, 2010, Accessed March 7, 2015.

Since the original conception of the term Frankenfoods in 1992 around the Flavr Savr tomato, it has been increasingly used in popular discussion. Google Trends tracks the amount of times the term has been searched on the Internet, showing a steady increase from the start of the data in 2005 until today. This buzzword increasingly appears in the articles in this graph with peaks in each year, but the word Frankenfood shows up almost exclusively in the titles of articles and rarely in the bodies of the articles. If it is within the body, it serves mostly just to incorporate the title into the rest of the article. The appearance of the word in the title and nowhere else reflects the use of the term as a framing device; the term creates an image in the brain of the reader before he or she has begun to read the article. Before the reader sees the substance in the article the image of Frankenstein, the monster of the horror genre that is related to the negative aspects of scientific technology is in one's mind shaping the conceptions of genetically modified organisms and giving the reader a clear way of conceptualizing the topic before delving into it. In the United States, when the term is used to bolster the pro-GMO argument, the term Frankenfood shows up to be pushed off as an erratic emotional response to something that is logically sound. The term encompasses the emotional responses in order to become a clear signal for the issues surrounding human's relationship to food (see FIG. 1.).

United States as individual states start to enter the discussion about whether or not food labels should be regulated to state if they contain GMOs.¹

In the current human food relationship, it is not normal to give much thought as to where food comes from. The dominant cultural idea around food is that we get our food from the grocery store and do not necessarily know or mind that GMOs are a dominant part of the food supply. Living in urban centers, we no longer have a connection to where our food comes from because we are not farming it ourselves. The scientific community and agricultural seed companies that create GMOs support their implementation and use, and so the dominant public opinion supports them as well. Because of this, people do not necessarily see a reason to worry about where their food comes from or what is in it, whether that be its own genes or genes from other organisms. Though the Frankenfoods term has been increasingly used to fight against this idea, it is still not the dominant thought. Instead, it is the afterthought to the normalized idea that our food is safe and there is no issue with it. The minority that views GMOs as a bad thing employs the word Frankenfoods in order to give weight to something that they see as a large problem that many people just do not take the time to think about. By juxtaposing the issue of GMOs with the idea of a monster, the anti-GMO coalition is working to get the attention of those who never even considered this potential problem. The use of the term Frankenfoods is an attempt at engaging in the process of changing the preconceived notions about food that are built around the public disconnect from food production.

It is also necessary to note that though the term was born in the United States, the discussions in the beginning that use "Frankenfood" were originally most prevalent in Europe and did not infiltrate American media until later. Europe had started the debates about requiring labeling on all products that contain GMOs when the first laws were passed regulating GMO labels in 1997. These laws were expanded with a bill in 2003 to continue regulation that limits GMOs.³⁷ Recently, the Frankenfood term has been used in debates about labeling in the United States that have just become

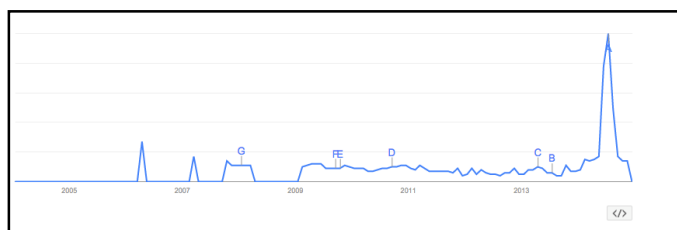


FIG. 1. The beginning spikes from 2006 through 2009 are mostly surrounding discussions in Europe about regulations on GMOs. Other articles at this time in the U.S. use the term Frankenfood to dispel fears around the issue of GMOs by dismissing the argument as an irrational and emotionally charged. Starting in around 2010, there are more discussions about Frankenfoods helping the food supply of underdeveloped countries during the peaks in conversation surrounding the topic. In 2013 the discussion shifts over to the debate on labeling Frankenfoods and concern over the uncertainty that surrounds the topic due to the lack of hard evidence that has been compiled against GMOs. The peaks in 2014 corresponding with debates about labeling in the

³⁷Matha Abell Shrader. "Timeline of Genetics Milestones 1990-2008." *MLO: Medical Laboratory Observer*. 40.3 (2008): 19-45.

prevalent in the last two years. Though not an argument that the majority of the states are choosing to engage, the 2014 election did lead to a spike in the use of the Frankenfood term with discussions in Oregon and Colorado surrounding attempts to pass bills mandating the labeling of foods containing GMOs.³⁸ Regardless of their failed outcome, the recent political debate marks the shift toward a push for policy in the United States shaped around the Frankenfood term. The proponents of the bills put this word at the forefront of their arguments to evoke emotional response, as can be seen with the spike in conversations using the term around this past election cycle. There is an increasing outcry against GMOs in the political realm and policy changes (albeit failed) to address this social issue.

The difference in attitudes in relation to the political context of GMOs in Europe and the United States can be explained when looking at the context of perceptions about food. Fear over Mad Cow disease coincided with the time in which the anti-GMO movement started to emerge, becoming the catalyst for the Frankenfood discussion. Mad Cow disease first emerged in Europe in 1986 and the first human casualties were in 1992. However, the disease was not linked to meat products until 1996; this led to a public panic in Europe and many bans on cattle production.³⁹ The overall public opinion shifted to putting concern over food safety at the forefront. However, this problem did not affect America at this time. Americans saw it as a problem for Europe, not for their own soil because the U.S. produces most of its own beef. The disease didn't appear in the U.S. until 2003 inciting public concern seven years after the European panic.⁴⁰ It is then that Americans had a major media story that created fear over food safety in the United States. This explains some of the lag in time that it took for the term Frankenfood to catch on in America as opposed to Europe. Food safety was not as big of a concern for the U.S. until later therefore giving Europe an earlier start in questioning the potential harmful effects of GMOs. This longer time to grow the movement is one element that shaped the

difference in the European perception about Frankenfoods from the American perception.

There also is a stark difference in agricultural economics for Europe and the United States that explains the European adoption of the term far before the United States. The United States supplies most of its own food while Europe imports a larger portion of its food supply. Europe, however, has pushed for regulatory legislation in the twentieth century in order to protect the agricultural practices of agricultural producers within Europe. The EU spends over fifty billion euros a year subsidizing their farmers in order to increase production within their own territory. They also have established import tariffs to protect the farmers from an influx of goods from other countries.⁴¹ A large percentage of the food that is imported into Europe is from America; America is the major leader of GMO crop production and the major cash crops of American, soybeans and corn, are almost all genetically modified. By placing bans on GMOs, Europe is in essence decreasing competition for European farmers from other countries' exports by drastically decreasing the amount of food that can be imported from America.

The effects of this economic atmosphere can be seen today with a negative overall perception of GMOs in Europe while Americans are mostly just uncertain about how they feel about GMOs. Europe has created legislation against genetically modified organisms while the United States has normalized GMOs as a major part of both the agricultural economy and the corporate economy with the "big four" companies in the United States seed industry, Monsanto Company, DuPont Pioneer, Dow AgroSciences, and Syngenta.⁴² These companies run an oligopoly on the seeds, with the Monsanto Company controlling the majority of the seed industry. Monsanto has been able to patent the technology they have created, leading to an increase in revenue from seed production. They receive royalties on all new technologies other seed companies create that use any Monsanto patents,⁴³ allowing Monsanto to go from a company worth \$6

³⁸While there are twenty-eight states that have talked about bills over labeling, Vermont is the only state that has mandatory labeling that will go into effect in 2016. Tennille Tracy. "States Weigh GMO Labeling." *The Wall Street Journal*. November 3, 2014.

³⁹O'Neill, Kate. "How Two Cows Made a Crisis: U.S.-Canada Trade Relations and Mad Cow Disease" *The American Review of Canadian Studies* (Summer 2005): 295-319 Accessed November 18, 2014.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Johan F.M Swinnen, "The Growth of Agricultural Protection in Europe in the 19th and 20th Centuries." *The World Economy* (2009): 1499 Accessed December 4, 2014. doi:10.1111/j.1467-9701.2009.01247.x,

⁴² Sara Schaffer, "Inside the Seed Industry," *AG Web, Powered by Farm Journal*, July 25, 2013, Accessed March 8, 2015.

⁴³ Ken Stier, "How Frankenfood Prevailed."

billion in 2000 to a company worth \$66 billion in 2014.⁴⁴ On top of the revenue from patents, Monsanto has been able to increase revenue by vertically integrating their company through the production and sales of the Round Up that is applied to the genetically modified Round Up Ready Seeds that they also produce and sell.⁴⁵ Through these means, Monsanto and the other dominant seed companies have become successful by capitalizing on positive ideas associated with science, technology and progress.

Even with the success of Monsanto and other seed companies, there are still many people who view them in a negative light. Monsanto was rated as the third lowest company on the Harris Poll reputation quotient of major companies in 2014 and is seen as a corporate bully that picks on innocent farmers through patent laws.⁴⁶ But even with this negative reputation, Monsanto and other seed companies have integrated themselves as a normalized force in American food production because of the success they were able to have in the free market system. People may still be uncertain or uneducated about the topic of GMOs, but they believe that GMOs are suitable on some level because they are such a dominant part of food culture in the US. They are the cheapest and most readily available food options at the grocery store because of these companies. These corporate entities control food interactions on a global scale. Because of this global scale, nations lose the ability to regulate the power of corporations or do not want to all together because it gives the countries a hand in global economic success. Europe worked to put up regulations on the GMOs that were entering the country to protect their own economic interests surrounding agriculture and to mitigate their loss of control in the global scale system. On the other hand, the United States normalized the seed companies' economic success in order to gain control within the globalized food economy. These differing attitudes of countries in reaction to the global distribution of agriculture are a major driving force behind the uncertainty that arises within the public around the GMO debate.

With the current globalized state, consumers do not know where the commodities they purchase come from, exacerbating the disconnect consumers have from the production of food and the reliance they put on government regulation of food products. Consumer studies have been done asking people about GMOs and Frankenfood, dividing people into different categories of knowledge and emotional perception of GMOs. In a particular study of a group of 858 people published by the *Journal of Health Communications*, the biggest group of respondents, 357 people, reported to be neutral in the amount of knowledge they had about GMOs and the emotional response they had toward them. The predominant response is that most people do not know much about genetically modified foods; they were still waiting to form their opinions about them because of the uncertainty that surrounds the topic.⁴⁷ Other respondents in this study believed that GMOs are bad because of the nature of the word but eat them on a regular basis. Some of the respondents did not even realize they were eating GMOs on a regular basis, a reality that the majority of the public embodies as many people have little knowledge about what GMOs actually entail.⁴⁸ Because of this uncertainty about food that arises from the disconnection from the production and source of food, there is a reliance on the government and institutions like science and corporations to protect the public on issues surrounding this topic. However, the trust in these institutions is convoluted due to the transgression of paradigms and so the atmosphere of uncertainty arises as people question how they are supposed to feel and what they are to believe.

This public debate is not only taking place in political and scientific circles, but also in the larger popular culture. Jimmy Kimmel played with this idea of a lack of understanding of GMOs in his popular late night show. The camera crew went to a local farmers' market and asked people if they ate GMOs, to which almost all of them quickly responded with a prominent no. He then asked them what the letters "GMO" stand for and the majority of the participants could not answer correctly. They gave answers like "General modified ingredient,"

⁴⁴ Drake Bennett, "What Are They Doing at Monsanto?" *Bloomberg Businessweek*. July 7, 2014. Accessed March 7, 2015.

⁴⁵ Donald L. Barlett and James B. Steele, "Monsanto's Harvest of Fear." *Vanity Fair*, May 2008, Accessed March 7, 2015.

⁴⁶ Drake Bennett, "What Are They Doing at Monsanto?"

⁴⁷ K. Silk, J. Weiner, & R. Parrott, "Gene Cuisine or Frankenfood?" *Journal of Health Communication*, 10 (2005): 762

⁴⁸Ibid.,

“some corn bad stuff,” and many just replied with a short, “I don’t know.”⁴⁹ Though used as a comedy stunt, this video is an illustration of the feelings of uncertainty that exist in popular culture surrounding GMOs and science in general. Many people fervently believe that they should be against GMOs because of their perception of the concept but do not have a solid scientific reason why they believe this or even a general understanding of what GMOs are. This state of confusion is perpetuated by the lack of hard scientific evidence backing up the harm or safety of GMOs. However, many people believe that not enough time has passed to test the long-term repercussions of GMOs. Consequently, the scientific community is not a resource for the public to uncover the truth behind GMOs, if there even is one to be uncovered. This atmosphere of uncertainty is the prime place for a term such as Frankenstein to enter in order to conceptualize the problem.

Frankenfood Visual Representations

The Frankenfood term itself has few accompanying visuals. Most associated depictions are just visual conceptions in the minds of individual readers or those engaged in the conversation; these visuals have an idea tied to them while not actually having a physical image themselves. However, there is one major representation of the image of Frankenfoods that Greenpeace created in 1999. It was utilized on posters and protests that were directly targeting Kellogg’s in their production of cereal with GMOs.⁵⁰ The image is modeled off of the Frosted Flakes cereal box with the label “Frosted Fakes.” Tony the Tiger is depicted with a Frankenstein face with the recognizable flat forehead, green flesh, and bolts on each side of his face. Corn is put in quotes, questioning the validity of food containing GMOs as real food. There is a beaker in “Frankentony’s” hand, explicitly representing science and tying it to the horror genre. The cereal is shown on the box as dark green flakes, a very unnatural looking cereal compared to the normal Frosted Flakes. The box also says “Untested! Unlabeled!” suggesting that there have been no measures taken to insure the consumer that everything within the box is safe (see FIG. 2.)



FIG. 2. Poster created Greenpeace to attack Kellogg’s use of foods containing GMOs.

The image uses the Frankenstein meme while also playing up public fear of uncertainty. Kellogg’s is a trusted brand from childhood; the box itself and its advertising is meant for children. By using the Frankenfood representation in relation to products that are sold to children, Greenpeace works to solidify the legitimacy in the fearful response over GMOs. They put Frankenfoods in a conceptual framework that shows the unknowing consumer making bad choices due to their being fooled by science and those they are supposed to trust. The consumers are so detached from food production that they must depend on producers and trustworthy brands, like Kellogg’s. If the public cannot trust such a staple brand, then who is the public to trust? Who has the “right” information and how come they are not sharing it? The corporations that stand for the public good are brought into

⁴⁹ ABC. “What’s a GMO? Jimmy Kimmel Live Videos.” Accessed October 20, 2014. http://abc.go.com/shows/jimmy-kimmel-live/video/vdka0_atb4aowq

⁵⁰ Golden, Fredric, “Who’s Afraid of Frankenfood?” *Time Magazine*, November 21, 1999.

question if they are really considering what's best for the public. Therefore, the fear of not knowing what is going into the foods is exacerbated and adds to the strength of how the image resonates with fear and mistrust through the use of the Frankenstein representation.

Besides this depiction by Greenpeace, the word itself is utilized most often to create images in the mind. This is demonstrated in the marketing analysis put together in the *Journal of Food Products Marketing*. In the case study of thirty-two people of middle class background from the west coast of the United States, participants were asked to create their own food by mixing anything they wanted. The participants made emotional choices of what they thought was "cool" or "interesting" combinations of their favorite foods like a mango and an apple or creating pink strawberries. They were not told to create Frankenfoods, but rather to mix and match whatever they wanted after being asked about GMOs. Within the study, the examiners remark how the "functional" attributes of these imagined foods did not hold much value with the interviewees; "Making vegetables last longer in the refrigerator is claimed to be a desirable attribute but at the same time scary and abnormal."⁵¹ These emotionally produced creations give insight to how people conceptualize a picture of GMOs and Frankenfoods. They are afraid of them when it comes to scientific terms like gene splicing or functional attributes for the food industry, but when it comes to combining their favorite foods it is cool and fun. This shows the emotional backing to the conceptualization of the Frankenfoods image surrounding GMOs that adds to the air of uncertainty and confusion.

The same concept is illustrated by the Spike TV show *Frankenfoods*. This TV show is a competition setting where chefs from all over the country are brought in to create unique food dishes with unorthodox mixes of ingredients. The best tasting and most outlandish foods are judged as the winners by a panel of four judges. These winners are given 10,000 dollars for making it through the rounds.⁵² Again, Frankenfoods are not scary but

rather cool or interesting, but are still thought of as weird or unfamiliar because of the title. Yet the connotation of this word through this colloquial use has nothing to do with GMO's as they never refer to GMOs in this show. Here the conceptualization of the image of Frankenfoods is done in a different context, further convoluting the actual use of the word, but still illustrating the emotional response of unfamiliarity and strangeness that the term envelops. Whether presented as an image for Greenpeace, in marketing and behavioral studies, or in popular TV show culture, the term Frankenfoods incites an emotional response that is utilized in order to conceptualize the problems surrounding the GMO debate.

What Does This Say?

Within the context of the scientific debate, the meme of Frankenfoods serves as a metaphor to discuss the issues of genetically modified foods. Max Black coined the interaction theory of metaphors as tools that "join together and bring into cognitive and emotional relation with each other two different things or systems of things that are not naturally joined," a definition that is easily applied to the role of metaphor in science.⁵³ Brendon Larson further explains the role of metaphor in science as a framework to "help us interpret the novel and the unknown by invoking our shared cultural context."⁵⁴ In the case of Frankenfoods, the use of the term brings together genetically modified organisms with a narrative from the Romantic Movement and conceptions of the modern horror genre. This metaphor allows people to think of "abstractions in terms of something more concrete and every day." These abstract ideas are those of GMOs that come from the institution of the scientific community.⁵⁵ The concrete and everyday things are the monster image; it already has a public conception and understanding so the juxtaposition of it with the unfamiliar science concept of GMOs gives a context of what GMOs must be about. In essence, this term allows for the public to take an issue from inside institutional science and outside of the dominant cultural framework and place it into a

⁵¹ Maria Kniazeva "Marketing Frankenfood," *Journal of Food Products Marketing*, 11 (2006): 33, accessed October 23, 2014. doi: 10.1300/J038v11n04_03

⁵² Justin Rocket Silverman and Gina Pace. "New Show 'Frankenfood' on Spike TV Will Celebrate Strange Food Combinations." *New York Daily News* (New York, NY), June 22, 2014.

⁵³ Qtd. Nancy Leys Stepan, "Race and Gender: The Role of Analogy in Science." *Isis* 77 (1986): 267, accessed February 20, 2015.

⁵⁴ Brendon Larson. *Metaphors for Environmental Sustainability*. (New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 2011), 6.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 6.

cultural system with already shared understandings and connections. Metaphor frequently plays this role in science to conceptualize a wide range of issues just like GMOs.

The scientific community originally denied the importance of metaphor within the communication of science because it was associated with literature, emotion, and pseudoscience during the scientific revolution of the 17th century. However, it is now being increasingly acknowledged as a main way to circulate scientific information.⁵⁶ Scientists impose metaphor upon their given subjects with examples ranging from words like food web to global warming. Scientists then promote the metaphor through research and the eventual integration into public conversation through textbooks, news releases, and the integration of these metaphors as normal words in the daily vocabulary used to discuss science.⁵⁷ However, the metaphor within this particular example of Frankenfoods was not integrated in the GMO debate by the scientific community but was rather put there by the public. The metaphor serves the same purpose as when metaphor is applied by the scientific community, but reflects different implications about the way scientific issues are viewed in the Anthropocene because it is a term coming from the public sphere. The Frankenfood term reflects a moment where the conversation of the scientific community spills over into the public, reflecting three major issues that society deals with when understanding environmental issues of the Anthropocene; the public fear of science overstepping human boundaries, the fear of uncertainty in science due to the public perception of what role science is supposed to play, and the inability for current societal systems to conceptualize slow violence issues or issues that manifest themselves on longer time and space scales. Each of these issues is integrally tied to the others as they are all problems stemming from the inability to navigate between the scientific and public realms of discussion.

The first reality manifested in this application of the Frankenfoods metaphor is the fear of science overstepping human boundaries by playing a higher power. While the most obvious way that the metaphor is integrated in the anti-GMO

movement is the framing of GMOs within the horror story image of a monster, it more deeply reflects the theme of the fear of overstepping boundaries of what humans are capable of doing. Though this is a less conscious connotation with the Frankenstein image, it is the essence of this Romantic symbol. Science is arguably one of institutionalized allowances of the pushing of boundaries of current society for the pure sake of accumulating more knowledge. Society rejoices when science unfolds a new cure for a disease, new innovations that make our current lifestyle possible like fossil fuels, or new technology like computers that rid us of the confinements of time and space, yet there is also a small fear that still lingers due to the position of science standing on the precipice of the unknown. In being on this precipice, science has the power to prolong life and make lifestyles better, but it also has immense power to control elements on a scale larger than what some people believe to be morally acceptable, such as the creation of the atomic bomb. Do GMOs fall into this category? Are they overstepping the boundaries of human manipulation of food sources that could lead to implications beyond what is imagined? The use of the term Frankenfoods reflects the prevalence of these fears and questions within a large population that needs a way to communicate this struggle with science and power. With the public imposing this term, they are illustrating that there is still a dominant fear of science in public opinion that controls the way scientific advancement is viewed.

The second major reality that the use of Frankenfoods reflects is the fear that stems from the public perception of uncertainty in science. Uncertainty within the scientific vocabulary is necessary; there will never be one hundred percent certainty because science is recreating what it has accepted as truth in order to move forward. Yet when the public sees uncertainty in science, it is viewed negatively because science plays the role as the ultimate unbiased truth, an ideology established in current culture from Enlightenment thinking.⁵⁸ If science, the beacon of truth, is not even sure of the answer then how is the public to be sure? Because modern society exists within a moment where information is abundant due to the Internet, anyone can pick and choose sources that validate their own

⁵⁶ Nancy Leys Stepan, "Race and Gender," 261-62.

⁵⁷ Brendon Larson, *Metaphors*, 131

⁵⁸ Joel Archenbach. "Why Do Many Reasonable People Doubt Science?" *National Geographic*, March 2015, Accessed February 10, 2015.

view. Because of this, both the public and the scientific community act with confirmation bias, looking to the scientific studies that confirm their already formulated views.⁵⁹ In this example of GMOs, one can find scientific writings for both sides of the argument to use to deflect the other side. People predisposed to be against GMOs can point out that some pro-GMO scientific findings are funded by people with interests in the economics of GMOs or that these studies are invalid because not enough time has passed to truly be able to see the implications. On the opposite side, those that are pro-GMO can dismiss the anti-GMO movement as an emotionally charged minority voice that does not have the scientific evidence to back up these claims. The public perception of uncertainty leaves room for this confirmation bias because the public does not feel as if they have a single truth to believe. The public fears this idea, fueling the need for the use of metaphor within the GMO debate to communicate this concern.

The third reality that is manifested in the use of the term Frankenfoods is the public's inability to deal with issues of slow violence. Rob Nixon discusses this transcendence of paradigm structures when he coins the term "slow violence." He claims that current hegemonic society is propelled by instant gratification and looks for immediate cause and effect relationships for which a solution can be found. In contrast to these hegemonic ideas, areas of slow violence are problems that manifest their ultimate implications on a larger time scale. Because the timeline of the manifestation is so far out of the current paradigms, mainstream society struggles to conceptualize these issues.⁶⁰ Nixon describes environmental problems in this sense and concludes that it is difficult for modern society to see the immediacy in these issues due to the overstepping of current frameworks.⁶¹ Therefore a familiar way of thinking within the current paradigm, a metaphor, must be used to facilitate the sense of urgency and understanding of slow violence issues. If the term Frankenfoods was not used, the public perception of this issue of GMOs, the way it is conceived, and the way it is talked

about, if it would be talked about at all, would be in a completely different context due to the lack of this framing structure. But because environmental issues within the context of the Anthropocene fall into this category of slow violence issues, the metaphor must be used in order to conceptualize the problems that the modern moment is facing.

In keeping these three manifestations in mind, should the public actually be worried about GMOs or is this panic just another misunderstanding of science? While a valid question, this is a question that the term Frankenfood does not answer. The metaphor merely illustrates how the public handles issues that go beyond the established languages and systems that have been set up to frame the most pressing problems of the planet. The issues of the Anthropocene, particularly of GMOs, envelope such a wide range of specialized topics like science, public policy, economics, the strength of corporate entities, and public perception in a global society where these issues are all integrally linked. In this case, the public conceptualizes this idea by using an image that is already known and understood which subconsciously communicates beliefs, emotions, and systems. This conceptualization gives depth and validity to an argument that without such a framework would not be so easily understood. The topic is still complicated and nuanced and so the framework of the Frankenfoods metaphor does not necessarily make it easier to decide on a stance on the issue. However, it does make the topic of GMO crops easier to introduce and to engage more people in the conversation because the general public can relate to the topic through this charged metaphor.

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⁵⁹ Ibid, np

⁶⁰ Rob Nixon. "Introduction." In *Slow Violence and the Environmentalism of the Poor*, (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2011), 6-10.

⁶¹ Ibid., 8-9

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Political Failure, Ideological Victory: Ida Wells and Her Early Work

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The long Gilded Age, beginning at the end of the Civil War and the emancipation of the black slaves, ended with a nadir in American race relations and the height of white supremacist activity. This period also saw the beginning of empowerment for American women, who by the end of the age had earned the right to vote and had expanded the amount of wage-earning women in the workforce more than two-fold. One of the figures cutting across both trends is Ida B. Wells, a prominent yet often-forgotten African-American female writer. Beginning with her journalism and anti-lynching crusades into her work with feminism, Wells was an intellectual radical whose ideas on race, gender, and acceptable behavior would not enter the political norm until decades after her death. As a consequence, Wells's work was subject to widespread condemnation or avoidance and one of the foremost minds on race relations died with her work suppressed – often deliberately – by not only the white community but other black leaders. Her early work is focused on as illustrative of two historical trends: first, the tendency for “radical” thought to become more mainstream over time, especially on issues of race and gender, and second, the difficulty faced by non-whites and non-males to gain any attention for their work.

Ida B. Wells began her political career in Memphis, an urban center for the black community. Wells had travelled extensively by rail as a young adult, preferring to sit in the “Ladies' Car” to avoid unwanted male attention. For two years Wells sat without incident, but in 1883 a white conductor demanded Wells move to a lower quality smoker's car. Her protestations were met with hostility and the conductor, after a struggle and getting aid from other workers, forcibly moved Wells out of the ladies' car. Despite her claims that, as a lady, she had every right to ride in the ladies' car, “the color line had become the preeminent social divide in the South” and black women were “increasingly unwelcome” (Bay 2009, 47). Wells would recount that other passengers “stood in the seats so that they could get a good view and continued applauding the

conductor for his brave stand” in her unfinished autobiography (Wells 1991, 19). She stood in a tradition of blacks attempting to seek legal redress for wrongs, as would be famously successful in the 1950s and 60s for black activists, and had some initial success. However, Wells benefited from an often overlooked status, as judges within the South – and America in general – had argued that segregation by race was necessary and proper using the analogy of separation by gender that was widely accepted in all of society. Wells and her lawyer originally won the suit by noting that her removal from the ladies' car violated not her rights to the same accommodation as whites but rather her right to have separate accommodation from men, a luxury not afforded outside the ladies' car.

This event was the first of many that shaped Wells's attitude and perceptions. Wells “was shaped by a righteous rage,” wrote one biographer (Schechter 2001, 14). Her autobiography's title, *Crusade for Justice*, highlights Wells's perception of racial inequality as an injustice to be met with a burning passion or anger, as well as her strong sense of spirituality. Audre Lorde claimed “[a]nger is the grief of distortions between peers, and its object is change,” a sentiment that Wells would have agreed with fully (Lorde 1997, 6). Her anger rose when the railroads had resorted to attacking Wells's character in court, and swelled further when the Tennessee Supreme Court ruled against Wells and claimed her suit “was not in good faith” but rather meant to “harass” the railroad (Bay 2009, 54). Wells wrote in her diary shortly after the decision “O God there is no redress, on peace, no justice in this land for us” (Bay 2009, 55). Faced with indifference or hostility to her struggles, Wells noted with a bitterness and anger that even fellow blacks, especially those who were relatively affluent, paid little attention: “none of my people had ever seemed to feel it was a race matter and that they should help me in the fight” (Wells 1991, 20). Her frustrations and anger eventually drove her to journalism, where she was a frequent critic of the black elites who she claimed harmed blacks by not “exerting their talents and wealth for the benefit or amelioration of the condition of the masses” (Bay 2009, 72). This led to her job as editor at the *Free Speech* starting in 1889, a rarity for women but doubly so for black women. She continued penning fiery attacks on racial inequalities, including those in the segregated school systems that she contended had “few and utterly inadequate buildings” (Bay 2009, 76). Such

attacks were controversial within the black community and many black leaders found it difficult to support the growing militancy and radicalism of Wells. Wells, for her part, responded to such critiques with angry denunciations of “[n]egroes who persecute and betray their race” (Bay 2009, 79). Yet, owing to her status as a black female, many both within the black community and the larger South found it easy to dismiss her writing as irrelevant.

Anger drove Wells to national prominence. In 1892, following the lynching of three black males in Memphis, Wells published an editorial in the *Free Speech* stating “[n]obody in this section of the country believes the old thread bare lie that Negro men rape white women,” sparking a fierce retaliation by Southern whites (Wells-Barnett 1969, 4). Wells, having already fled north, received death threats and was warned to not return to Memphis. The *Free Speech* was abandoned and liquidated, with many investors having also received death threats and having fled Memphis, prompting Wells to write and publish a series of articles that would later become the first of her pamphlets on lynchings, *Southern Horrors*. Wells had engaged in activism before with her journalism, but her articles were largely read by a solely black audience and ignored by the larger society. Frederick Douglass, still at this time the most prominent of the black leaders, claimed in 1892 that “I have thus far seen no book of importance written by a negro woman and I know of no one [woman] among us who can appropriately be called famous” (Schechter 2001, 38). This is far from a reflection of personal bias by Douglass but rather shows the extent to which black women in the post-Reconstruction South lacked any determined identity and faced a double discrimination for their status as black and female.

Southern Horrors changed that landscape for Wells. Patricia Schechter called it “a point of origin in American critical thought on lynching and racism. The pamphlet’s refutation of the idea that lynching punished rape – Wells’s finding that less than 30 percent of lynchings involved even the *charge* of rape – became the cornerstone of all subsequent arguments against mob rule” (Schechter 2001, 85). Part of the great appeal and strength of *Southern Horrors* was Wells’s deliberate use of solely white sources, particularly white newspapers and magazines, to avoid charges of bias or inaccuracy that would have followed and argument made based on black sources. *Southern Horrors*

also contained Wells’s signature “righteous rage” as well as her increasingly sophisticated views on the role of gender in race discussions. Wells considered lynching to be a crime perpetuated against three victims: the lynched, who were unjustly deprived of life; black women, who the attacks marginalized and who received no “justice” when raped by white men as mobs alleged the blacks did; and the supposed victims of rape, who had to deny a mutually-beneficial, consensual relationship with black men to defend their reputation. Wells recounts the tale of a minister’s wife who claimed to be raped by a black man, only to later admit that she “had hoped to save my reputation by telling you [her husband] a deliberate lie” (Wells 1969, 7). “[T]here are white women in the South who love the Afro-American’s company,” Wells writes, “even as there are white men notorious for their preference for Afro-American women” (Wells 1969, 11). She continued with a fierce denunciation of the double standards in lynching:

“In the same city, last May, a white man outraged an Afro-American girl in a drug store. He was arrested, and released on bail at the trial. It was rumored that five hundred Afro-Americans had organized to lynch him. Two hundred and fifty white citizens armed themselves with Winchesters and guarded him. A cannon was placed in front of his home, and the Buchanan Rifles (State Militia) ordered to the scene for his protection. The Afro-American mob did not materialize. Only two weeks before Eph. Grizzard, who had only been *charged* with rape upon a white woman, had been taken from the jail, with Governor Buchanan and the police and militia standing by, dragged through the streets in broad daylight, knives plunged into him at every step, and with every fiendish cruelty a frenzied mob could devise, he was at last swung out on the bridge with hands cut to pieces as he tried to climb up the stanchions. A naked, bloody example of the blood-thirstiness of the nineteenth century civilization of the Athens of the South! No cannon or military was called out in his defense. He dared to visit a white woman.

At the very moment these civilized whites were announcing their determination “to protect their wives and daughters,” by murdering Grizzard, a white man was in the same jail for raping eight-year-old Maggie Reese, an Afro-American girl. He was not harmed. The “honor” of grown women who were glad enough to be supported by the Grizzard boys and Ed Coy, as long as the liaison [sic] was

not known, needed protection; they were white. The outrage upon helpless childhood needed no protection in this case; she was black.” (Wells 1969, 11-12)

Such double-standards led to Wells's conclusion that lynching was entirely unrelated to the honor of white women, but rather “the whole matter is explained by the well-known opposition growing out of slavery to the progress of the race” (Wells 1969, 13). She further borrowed from what would become a hallmark of feminist discourse by describing both the viciously public lynchings of black men and the insidiously private rapes of black women as stemming from the same source. Schechter concluded that “Wells broke down the distinction between public and private crimes against African Americans” and that *Southern Horrors* showed “lynching and rape formed a web of racist sexual politics designed to subjugate all African Americans” (Schechter 2001, 85-86). The previously quoted passage from *Southern Horrors* illustrates this well; the private crime of raping a black child is defended publicly by the white community while the alleged private crime of raping a white woman is avenged publicly by the white community. Public actions are used to reinforce the hierarchy implied by the private actions. Wells had experienced this hierarchy firsthand as her work continued to be dismissed largely on account of race and gender.

Wells also began a discussion on the extent to which economic concerns dictated the lynchings. Wells noted that the lynchings that prompted her articles and later *Southern Horrors* were committed largely on the urging of a white grocery owner against his business rivals. “They owned a flourishing grocery business in a thickly populated suburb of Memphis,” Wells wrote of the victims, “and a white man named Barrett had one on the opposite corner” (Wells 1969, 18). Modern research has largely supported Wells's hypothesis that economic competition led to violence. “When low cotton prices frustrated southern whites in their quest for economic security, they lashed out violently at the subordinate black population... southern whites responded to economic stress by resorting to racial violence,” concluded researchers E. M. Beck and Stewart Tolnay (Beck and Tolnay 1990, 527). They further noted that “For poor whites, violence was a response to fear of black competition for economic and social position. For the white elite, violence prevented a coalition

between black and white laborers.” (Beck and Tolnay 1990, 528) This is highly reflective of a major difficulty within discussing the politics of the Gilded Age, as many poor whites disposed to populist or progressive movements were active in the repression of the black community and the apparent contradiction between progressive economic reforms and reactionary racial politics instead, as Wells contended, should be viewed as two methods of dealing with economic concerns and insecurity.

Southern Horrors went further in making open prescriptions of black self-reliance, calling for blacks to leave the South and boycott the business that supported the racist institutions claiming “[t]he white man's dollar is his god, and to stop this will be to stop outrages in many localities... the appeal to the white man's pocket has ever been more effectual than all the appeals ever made to his conscience” (Wells 1969, 22-23). “When Wells counseled blacks that wealth and social advancement were not agents of change in themselves,” writes Paula Giddings, “she was laying the groundwork for protest movements in a post-Victorian world where conflict had its place, where progress was not inevitable without political protest and action, and where language, not natural law, defined the meaning of race” (Giddings 2008, 228).

As with many of Wells's actions, *Southern Horrors* was met at first with great apprehension and condemnation. Whites predictably charged Wells with radicalism and fomenting unrest, but black leaders were not fully supportive either. One charged her with “stirring up, from week to week, this community” and blamed her for a “spirit of strife” (Giddings 2008, 230-231). Yet Wells remained undaunted and asked various editors for funds to launch a national anti-lynching campaign, in the spirit of her calls that the black community follow up their denunciation of racist practices with actual action against them. Wells secured the funds and became treasurer of one of the first organized campaigns against lynching (Giddings 2008, 231). These actions set off a flurry of activity for black women; “it was not until the 1892 antilynching campaign, initiated by religious activists and journalist Ida B. Wells-Barnett, that a rudimentary nationwide interactional network arose among local clubs to coordinate a national clubwomen’s movement to pursue multiple social reforms...” Johnny Williams writes, and “[t]hree years after creating these networks, church clubs in twelve

states merged to form the National Federation of Afro-American Women (NFAAW)” (Williams 2003, 165). While these did little to change the immediate status of blacks or black women, as with most of Wells's work, the lack of political success did not deter Wells from having intellectual influence on the black community.

An important aspect of these black women's clubs were a strong religious backing. This religious nature was deliberate by Wells, who had a strong sense of spirituality instilled by her parents during her childhood. For the black community, religion was one of the few shared cultural institutions that remained during slavery and emancipation. Further, as Williams notes, “women’s church work fostered the creation of interpersonal bonds of cooperation, meaning, confidence, and obligation that engendered in them political efficacy” (Williams 2003, 167). Wells noted this herself and wrote that her pamphlet and subsequent speech at Lyric Hall, New York, over its contents were “the real beginning of the club movement” and caused “the proliferation of clubs that led to the first national organization of African American women” (Giddings 2008, 238). Wells's religious nature stood in stark contrast to many black leaders, who expressed skepticism over the role of the black church and saw it as another tool of repressing black activism. “The Negro church of to-day is the social center of Negro life in the United States,” W. E. B. Du Bois concedes, but contends that the church is at least in part responsible for the lower status of the black community (Du Bois 1994, 119). “The Home was ruined under the very shadow of the Church, white and black; here habits of shiftlessness took root, and sullen hopelessness replaced hopeful strife,” claimed Du Bois, further stating that “religion, instead of a worship, is a complaint and a curse, a wail rather than a hope, a sneer rather than a faith” (Du Bois 1994, 123-4). This stands in stark contrast to Wells, who used religion as an organizing tool, a motif in her writings and speeches, and deliberately would speak at churches and religious events to reach a larger community.

Wells's rise to national prominence was helped along by Frederick Douglass, who reversed from his previous position that he had “thus far seen no book of importance written by a negro woman,” (Schechter 2001, 38) and now claimed of *Southern Horrors* that “[t]here has been no word equal to in its convincing powers,” a statement that he would

repeat in a letter used as a foreword to publications of *Southern Horrors* (Wells 1969, 3). Douglass's support did not immediately help Wells reach a larger audience, as when he arranged for her to speak at his home church, few outside of Douglass's family attended. One explanation for the low attendance came from the timing: “her appearance was scheduled just before what promised to be a tough election for the Republicans, and the seasonal jockeying of black politicians in the capital did not augur well for their presence at an engagement where Ida, who habitually pounded on the 'Party of Lincoln,' was speaking” (Giddings 2008, 243). However, as Paula Giddings noted, a more apt explanation was simply Wells's comparative radicalism. “Though Wells's courageous defense of the race was widely admired, there was less enthusiasm in many quarters about her rhetoric and strategies that challenged traditional notions of women's activism and behavior... [d]ignity, for the disputatious Wells, came through the authentic voice of militant protest” (Giddings 2008, 244). Wells was a politically active black woman at a time where both blacks and women were largely expected to be docile and unconcerned about a system dominated by white men, and this in large part explains her lack of political victories despite strong intellectual influence on later black writers and activists.

Eventually, Wells's growing activism brought her to England to speak and organize an English anti-lynching league. Here, Wells's racial activity first brought her in contact with the issues of gender and the feminist activism. White suffragette leaders had condemned the gender bias within the 15th Amendment, which expanded the vote to black men as women – both black and white – still had no rights to suffrage. Frances Willard was especially critical as she saw black male suffrage as being contrary not only to the goals of the suffragette movement but also her work in the temperance movement. “Better whiskey and more of it' is the rallying cry of great, dark-faced mobs,” Willard once claimed, further stating that “safety of [white] women, of childhood, of the home, is menaced in a thousand localities” (Fields-White 2011). Willard even claimed “the colored race multiplies like the locusts of Egypt” and that alcohol and the tavern “is the Negro's center of power” (Fields-White 2011). Wells, when campaigning in England on the issue of anti-lynching, quoted Willard's statements as evidence

of how great the hostility to the black community had grown in America. Willard, for her part, did little to defend herself against such accusations and inveighed against the 15th Amendment as a defense. Willard claimed suffrage should not be extended to “the plantation Negro who can neither read nor write, whose ideas are bounded by the fence of his own field” (Bay 2009, 188). Wells charged Willard, and her frequent supporter Lady Somerset, with placing their own status above the lives of the black community: “after some preliminary remarks on the terrible subject of lynching, Miss Willard laughingly replies by cracking a joke. And the concluding sentence of the interview shows the object is not to determine how best they may help the negro who is being hanged, shot, and burned, but 'to guard Miss Willard's reputation'” (Bay 2009, 188). British leaders rallied around Wells, and the Duke of Argyll, along with Liberal members of Parliament and the Arch-Bishop of Canterbury, created the British Anti-Lynching Committee, which ultimately had greater impact on the political success of the anti-lynching campaign than Wells ever managed. This was not entirely by accident, as Wells had assumed that a British league, with heading by Anglican men, would be vastly more effective at pressuring white males across America than any number of black activists.

The visit to England highlights two of the great yet unfortunate trends in Wells's life. The first is that Wells, for the strength of her writing and the cohesiveness and clarity of her thought, was always more effective as an intellectual than as an activist and could accomplish intellectual respect but not political victories. Despite helping to organize the NAACP in 1909, Wells's name was at first left off the list of founders – a decision Wells claimed Du Bois was responsible for and had deliberately made (Wells 1991, 322). Even her works, particularly *Southern Horrors* and *A Red Record*, were important in the anti-lynching campaign, it was not until Charles Aked – a white Englishman – began publishing his own anti-lynching works using Wells's statistics that a larger audience was exposed to her work. “Aked lent his name, reputation, and white British male identity to give credibility to Wells's ideas,” claims Sarah Silkey, “thus defusing controversy and bringing her arguments before an audience that would not have heard them otherwise” (Silkey 2006, 105). Silkey concludes “without Aked's efforts to disguise Wells's antilynching rhetoric as his own work, neither the

editor of the *Economist* nor that of the *Spectator* would have been inspired to condemn lynching” (Silkey 2006, 106). Wells, for the great contributions she made to the racial discussion, had little ability to be taken seriously by those outside of the black community and even those in the black community that were comparatively moderate.

This in great part was due to the second issue of Wells's life, that as both a black and female author Wells was cast out of most spheres – especially as Wells cast her work as looking for both racial and gender empowerment and equality. Wells “insisted that woman [sic] suffrage was vital” and her work was radical in “[l]inking disenfranchisement to rape and lynching of African Americans” (Feimster 2009, 214). Wells was hardly alone in this view, as many black female writers of the time made similar statements, as Hazel Carby noted. “Though the Afro-American cultural and literary history commonly regards the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries in terms of great men, as the Age of Washington and Du Bois, marginalizing the political contributions of black women, these were the years of the first flowering of black women's autonomous organizations and a period of intense intellectual activity and productivity” (Carby 1987, 6-7). Carby does make a concession that, while black women in general were marginalized during this period, Wells represented a special case because “she was a woman who refused to adopt the 'ladylike' attitudes of compromise and silence... an 'uppity' black woman with an analysis of the relationship among political terrorism, economic oppression, and conventional codes of sexuality and morality that has still to be surpassed in its incisive condemnation of the patriarchal manipulation of race and gender” (Carby 1987, 108). She was not just a black woman, she was a black woman who refused to ascribe to the standards expected of black women and thus rejected – at least at a political level – by the larger community.

Ida B. Wells remains one of the most *intellectually* and culturally influential writers of the black community despite her political isolation and failure, as well as one of the strongest critics of not only lynching, but of a wider system of race and gender norms created and institutionalized by a society that hated those outside the mainstream. While she has seen a revival in her status and a greater awareness of her work, Wells must be seen as a radical for her time whose work could strike

even sympathetic audiences as overly antagonistic and confrontational. She feuded publicly and frequently with the dominant white, male culture but also with those who were more moderate or reform minded thinkers on racial issues. The consequence is that Wells, like many radicals of her time, saw little political victories at her time or little support at her time. However, Wells can be seen in a larger context of many radical movements of this time that, while failing to secure any major political victories, managed to have a lasting intellectual and cultural impact that would lead to the later success of their movements, as well as representing the growing activism and awareness of racial and gender issues.

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***Robinson Crusoe* and Isolation in Immigrant America**

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Once the Homestead Act was passed in 1862, foreign settlers were presented with the prospect of owning extensive amounts of land across the Great Plains of America, provided that they cultivate and enrich their acreage. This promise of land and economic possibility encouraged mass migration from Europe to America, with the pioneering immigrants making their claims and attempting to cultivate the dry prairie soils of the Midwest. An array of characters within Willa Cather's *My Ántonia* (1918) have followed this course and travelled to America under the illusion of finding a better and more profitable life; such is the case with the Shimerda family. However, such promises were often cruelly misleading and the unrelenting farmland proved severely challenging to cultivate in the extreme weather conditions. It is a culmination of this unforeseen difficulty and a sense of dislocation from their culture which leads to tragedy for the Shimerda family, as Mr. Shimerda's overwhelming sense of helplessness and isolation results in him committing suicide.

Succeeding this incident, the narrator and protagonist Jim Burden, alludes to an object which exemplifies these concepts of loneliness and dislocation during an analogous time of pioneering expansion: Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* (1719). Burden recalls "[t]hen, for the first time, I realized that I was alone in the house [...] I got 'Robinson Crusoe' and tried to read, but his life on the island seemed dull compared with ours" (Cather 43). Although the texts were published two centuries apart, many of the themes and experiences within Defoe's classic novel would have continued to resonate with the nineteenth and twentieth century readership of *My Ántonia*, most frequently the concepts of economy and materialism which prevailed during American modernity. Furthermore, the novel's position within the narrative implies a clear connection between the obstacles of the shipwrecked mariner and the hardships which faced the recently deceased Mr. Shimerda. As Joyce McDonald suggests "Cather's allusions to *Robinson Crusoe* [...] in all of her plains novels [...] suggest she perceived prairie life as being shipwrecked on

an island, cut off from the civilised world" (McDonald 21). The embedded intertextuality of *Robinson Crusoe*, both in terms of its physicality as a text and its allegorical implications to *My Ántonia*'s wider themes, performs as a symbol of isolation for Mr. Shimerda and the settlers of the Great Plains, particularly during a period of xenophobia at the turn of nineteenth century America.

Robinson Crusoe was pioneering both in its content and in its genre as it was arguably the first novel ever written. Whilst Crusoe's adventures across exotic landscapes are attuned to eighteenth century readers during the height of Empire, his voyages may be seen in this instance as emblematic of the expansion and migration across North America as *My Ántonia* also looks away from ordinary life, towards remote lands and peculiar customs. Similar to the traits of the "local colour" genre of *My Ántonia*, *Robinson Crusoe* retains moments of both romanticism and realism, such as what Michael Seidel suggests when he writes "[...] it is not just what Crusoe manipulates and arranges on the island that produces the book's realism, but what imprints on Crusoe's mind as well" (32). These similarities which remain extra to the plot of the two narratives successfully aid Cather in creating an underlying, definitive connection between her novel and Defoe's, in order to strengthen the association between the lives of Crusoe and Mr. Shimerda. Furthermore, Cather's awareness of genre concurrently draws attention to the points of contrast. Jim Burden's choice to turn to *Robinson Crusoe* shortly after the death of his family friend Mr. Shimerda, brings his religious beliefs into question. After attempting to read the novel, Jim questions "[...] whether Mr. Shimerda's soul were lingering about in this world [...]" (Cather 43), as though *Robinson Crusoe* and its tales of religious redemption have triggered him to consider the return of Mr. Shimerda's spirit. Cather is thus displaying a clear contrast of belief systems between Jim, the American and Mr. Shimerda, the immigrant. For Jim, tales of imperial expansion appear to obtain a sacred or divine property, as colonialism acts somewhat as a creation story for America. Mr. Shimerda, who in contrast is characterised by his devout Catholicism, has remained dislocated and unsettled in this country and the religious undertones of such colonial fiction do not resonate as part of his Old World values.

The passage within *My Ántonia* which includes reference to *Robinson Crusoe*, and is so indicative of Mr. Shimerda's isolation, is achieved by Cather's emphasis instead on the actions of Jim Burden; he narrates "I felt a considerable extension of power and authority, and was anxious to acquit myself creditably. I carried in cobs and wood from the long cellar, and filled both the stoves [...]" (Cather 43). Jim and Mr. Shimerda deal with their isolation in very different ways; the feeling of loneliness and separation causes Mr. Shimerda's downfall to depression and suicide, whilst it enlivens Jim with a positive sense of responsibility and stimulates him into productivity.

Robinson Crusoe was originally considered a children's text, as amid the adventure narrative resides important life lessons and a celebration of the value of hard work; the overall impression being that active and productive effort is necessary for survival, even at a time of complete isolation. Within the passage, Jim is clearly exercising his adherence to this theory and is heavily contrasted to the deceased presence of Mr. Shimerda, who's failure to internalise these New World values has led to his demise, as Joseph R. Urgo suggests "[...] Jim, unlike Shimerda, will learn to turn his sense of loss into productivity" (56). Cather's repetition of foregrounded personal pronouns throughout this paragraph, in addition to her use of complex and sophisticated lexis and Jim's appraisal that "life on the island seemed dull compared to ours" (43), all accentuate Jim's personal development and the ease at which he has overcome the obstacle of isolation. Moreover, this passage is one of many within *My Ántonia* to act as an emblem for the concept of "coming of age" which was a new notion within twentieth century attitudes and one which *Robinson Crusoe* is hereby helping Cather to explore in her contrast between Jim's progression and Mr. Shimerda's deterioration.

The significance of isolation in *Robinson Crusoe*, which is projected on to the deceased Mr. Shimerda, is concurrent with the idea of homesickness and Jim explicitly announces "I knew it was homesickness that had killed Mr. Shimerda [...]" (43). By identifying Shimerda as homesick, Cather can create a further contrast between he and Jim who, in distinction, characterised as homeless. Urgo suggests that "[d]espite what Jim thinks he is essentially a migratory American [...]" historic immigrant crossing is the archetype of his own restlessness" (55). Throughout *My Ántonia*,

Jim is in perpetual motion, refusing to remain in one place or settle for any amount of time and it is this trait which opposes his character to Mr. Shimerda's as fundamentally American. Urgo goes on to declare "[...] the great fact of American existence is to continue moving on to find a home" (57). This hypothesis is highly indicative of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, during the proceedings of pioneering and countrywide expansion. Jim recalls just prior to picking up his copy of *Robinson Crusoe* "[t]he quiet was delightful, and the ticking clock was the most pleasant of companions" (Cather 43). Cather is therefore suggesting that Jim, the rooted American, finds great reassurance in the progression and development of time.

Whilst Jim proceeds with perpetual agency, Mr. Shimerda is stranded both in time and place, his progression inhibited by his emotional attachment to his home country and Urgo concludes "[a]lthough his body has uprooted and immigrated to Nebraska, his mind never left Bohemia [...]" what Jim managed to erase on the passage to Nebraska, Ántonia's father won't erase from his mind" (59). *Robinson Crusoe*, as a character, is able to project his English heritage onto the uninhabited island as part of his colonial mission. In contrast, the vast multiplicity of cultures, religions and national principles that were a result of the extreme levels of immigration to the Great Plains, Mr. Shimerda is prevented in doing the same. Jerome Reich alludes to the relationship between motion and immigration as he claims "[Germans] tended to settle as church groups and retain their language and customs. This [...] retarded their absorption into American life" (136). By refusing to fully settle and become a permanently progressing American, Shimerda cannot be rewarded with a return journey; his only means of release from this static entrapment of cultural disharmony is his demise.

In addition to the ethnic and social dissonance which inhibits Mr. Shimerda's ability to fully assimilate with American culture, is the unremitting presence and desperation for economic success. *Robinson Crusoe* has been most frequently analysed in terms of its exploration of economy and its treatment of trade and commerce, as Ian Watt declares "*Robinson Crusoe* is a symbol of the processes associated with the rise of economic individualism" (40). *Crusoe* and Mr. Shimerda have both come from respectable and prosperous backgrounds to find themselves stranded and impoverished in their unfamiliar territory. *Crusoe*,

fortified by his isolated productivity is able to dominate his environment and survive successfully outside the usual modes of trade, as Seidel details, “[the life] of Crusoe is a kind of exercise in material possession and possessiveness” (56). For Shimerda, meanwhile, this change in status merely creates a further degree of isolation and separation from who he once was in his distant home.

The American mind-set which prevailed at the time of publishing *My Ántonia* was heavily concerned with prosperity as a result of the preceding Industrial Revolution and the increase of modernity’s materialistic consumerism. This materialism and drive for economic prosperity is something again which Jim Burden appears to grasp far more successfully than his Bohemian neighbour and we learn early on within *My Ántonia* that Jim can look beyond the beauty of the prairies to see the land for its economic worth; Cather writes “[t]here was nothing but land: not a country at all, but the material; out of which countries are made [...]” (7). The concurrency of Crusoe’s success and Jim’s vision is shown in harsh contrast to Mr. Shimerda’s repetitive failures at farming and its denial to his prosperity, therefore reiterating his removal from American settler life and towards isolation once again.

In conclusion, the presence of this eighteenth century work gives an exemplary account of successful relocation and settlement within a challenging and foreign landscape. Jim Burden’s reference to *Robinson Crusoe* immediately following Mr. Shimerda’s death marks it a medium through which the characters are contrasted in their ability to pioneer in the American Midwest. It is Jim’s internalisation of the American values first exhibited by Crusoe, such as movement and materialism, which allow him to successfully progress and integrate into society in the Great Plains, whilst Shimerda’s unaffected connection to his homeland and culture refuses him the right to success.

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Liberty and Republicanism within the North American Context: A Study of the American Revolution and the Canadian Rebellions

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Introduction

The Atlantic Revolutions of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries were prosecuted on the advancement of liberty and republicanism. Within the North American context, these broad tenets articulated the importance of a sovereign, educated and virtuous citizenry as well as the standards of an effective government constitutionally constrained in its authority. The American Revolution and the Canadian Rebellions stand as specific affirmations of these principles.

Within the United States, two phases of political discourse arose after the French and Indian War. The first consisted of British colonial officials who worked within the British imperial system, on a constitutional level, to bring out reforms relating to greater political autonomy. However, as tensions grew, in response to the Stamp Act crisis and other punitive legislative acts, a second phase emerged. By mid-1776, this ideological movement not only articulated the justification for independence via a political revolution, but also began to establish the principle republican motives of the new nation. The strength of this phase lies in the rapid dissemination of ideas and information through pamphlets. Paine's *Common Sense* championed this new model of moving the theoretical into practical arguments. Additionally, the *Declaration of Independence*, the *Articles of Confederation*, the state constitutions and the United States Constitution affirm an evolution of thought regarding the application of liberty and republicanism within a political system that resisted tyranny. Together, Jefferson, Madison and Washington took an active role in institutionalizing the evolved republican principles.

The political success of the American Revolution was viewed with empowerment by the colonial dominions of the Western Hemisphere. In this context, Canada was no exception to the wave of republican experiments that occurred within the

Atlantic World. By the 1830s, the domestic political situation, which had evolved dramatically since the end of the American Revolution and the War of 1812, became increasingly strained with Great Britain. In using the American political blueprint, Papineau (Lower Canada) and Mackenzie (Upper Canada) sought to combine aspects of republicanism to reform the colonial system imposed in 1791. In demonstrating a significant understanding of the philosophies and motives of the American Revolution, leaders from Lower and Upper Canada demanded similar reforms, including greater political authority and transparent administrative practices. In total, these demands would form the basis of an emerging concept known as responsible government – a fundamental goal shared by Lower and Upper Canada. However, when these requests were left unresolved, violence ensued. Even though the effects of military force lost momentum because of disorganization and regionalization, the case for reform could no longer be ignored. In the end, Canadian leaders won key concessions relating to responsible government. These actions marked a pivotal stage in the trajectory of Canada as a modern nation-state.

The American Revolution and the Canadian Rebellions stand as specific affirmations of liberty and republicanism. In seeking reforms within the constitutional framework of the British imperial system, both movements followed a similar preliminary trajectory. When the demands were not realized, violence ensued. Although leaders from both movements understood the fundamental link between liberty and republicanism, the conditions surrounding their application differed. However, both movements demonstrated a strong adherence to a similar vein of ideological discourse.

The American Revolution

The American Revolution articulated the principles of liberty and civic virtue within the context of a functioning republican political system. The revolution was prosecuted on two distinct political and philosophical tenets: The colonists' practical experiences in self-government under British rule and their knowledge concerning the nature of government in the tradition of English constitutionalism and Enlightenment figures, including Locke and Montesquieu. From these individuals, colonists acquired knowledge of inherent natural and legal rights, a social contract

and the necessity of institutional checks as a means of preserving liberty. In advocating for a limited and legitimate government, Locke articulated the following in *The Second Treatise of Government*, "... God hath certainly appointed government to restrain the partiality and violence of men. I easily grant, that civil government is the proper remedy for the inconveniences of the state of nature" (22). In building on this argument, the importance of procedure is best articulated by Montesquieu in *The Spirit of Laws*, "Whenever the people as a body holds supreme power in a republic, this is a democracy. [...] In a democracy it is crucial to have fixed rules determining how the right to vote is to be given, who is to exercise this power, who is to receive it, and what matters are to be decided by vote" (178-79). Collectively, these ideas were widely distributed in pamphlets, which demonstrates the complexity of political thought that existed within the colonies. As noted by Bailyn, "In pamphlet after pamphlet the American writers cited Locke on natural rights and on the social and governmental contract, Montesquieu..." (27). However, it took years to build a coherent political framework that not only justified reform, but also an entire political revolution. Paine's *Common Sense* marked the beginning of this connection. In broader terms, Jefferson, Madison and Washington ensured the institutionalization of evolved republican principles.

The conclusion of the French and Indian War revealed the different constitutional interpretations between the American colonies and Great Britain. In using the English Constitution as both a justification and a guide, the first phase of political discourse sought to achieve administrative autonomy within the British Empire. Beginning in the mid-1760s, individuals, including: Francis Bernard, James Otis, Jr. and Daniel Dulany attempted to rectify the political relationship. These arguments formed the basis of colonial political action until 1775.

Bernard, Governor of the province of Massachusetts Bay and New Jersey, evoked the notion of colonial rights within the context of the English Constitution. His plan consisted of several parts, including: the standardization of colonial constitutions, the appointment of a royal governor in every colony and the assertion that assemblies would have jurisdiction over local affairs by containing an independent upper house that was neither a "tool of the lower house nor yet an

executive council of the governor" (Morgan and Morgan 13). Together, these modifications would have brought colonial governments in alignment with the domestic British system.

The passage of the Stamp Act in 1765 brought with it significant actions that questioned Parliament's authority within the colonies. The law placed a tax, payable only in pure British currency, on nearly all printed materials. Both Dulany and Otis challenged the legality of the Act on constitutional grounds. Many colonial governments turned to Dulany's pamphlet, *Consideration on the Propriety of imposing Taxes in the British Colonies, for the Purpose of raising a Revenue, by Act of Parliament*, in developing their case for resistance. Dulany emphasized that colonists not only had rights, but they "could not be overthrown" by the decree of Parliament (77). Additionally, he attacked the argument of virtual representation as "repugnant to [the colonist's] conception of representative government" (82). Otis, also a pamphleteer and author of the phrase "No taxation without representation," sought resistance measures through grassroots efforts (e.g. boycotts) in order to effectively build the case for united colonial opposition. He called for the Massachusetts legislature to issue a circular letter to enlist the support of colonial governments. On October 19, 1765, the Stamp Act Congress passed the *Declaration of Rights and Grievances*, which critiqued Great Britain's imperial policies and endorsed the notion of colonial rights. The fight proved successful as the Act was repealed a year after its adoption. In response, colonists felt emboldened and subsequently sharpened their arguments against other abuses. The political effects of the Act created a network for mobilizing people and sending information. As noted by Miller, the *Sons of Liberty* served as the "first effective intercolonial union" and eventually paved the way for the Continental Congress (130). Over the coming years, Parliament's authority continued to be challenged.

By mid-1770s, the conversation over the British Constitution shifted into new dimensions, focusing exclusively on the authority of the Parliament and the King. A keen observation is made in *The Stamp Act Crisis*:

[Colonial politicians] had been convinced by Dulany and Otis, and by the Virginia Resolves and the declarations of the Stamp Act Congress that Parliament had no right to

tax them. [...] The burden therefore was left to those whose rights were endangered: they must resist Parliament to preserve their rights, and if that meant an end to Parliamentary supremacy, then that was what it meant. (E. Morgan and H. Morgan 125)

Thus, ending Parliament's supremacy meant that King George III remained the only political connection with the colonies. As the months continued, colonial leaders stressed cooperation. However, the Battle of Lexington and Concord changed existing dynamics as it marked the beginning of bloodshed. Politically, it forced the hand of the Second Continental Congress to assume the responsibilities of a central government by raising an army and negotiating the assistance of foreign nations. As noted in *The Great Republic*, "...the situation with the king severely deteriorated by 1775, individuals of the Continental Congress began to develop contingency plans for independence" (Bailyn et al. 226). Furthermore, the rejection of the Olive Branch Petition by George III and the expansion of military campaigns in the Northeast demonstrated that reconciliation failed.

The year of intellectual culmination for the independence movement was 1776. Jointly, the publication of *Common Sense* by Paine and the drafting of the *Declaration of Independence* by the Second Continental Congress expanded on the revolutionary notions of liberty, republicanism and constitutionalism within the emerging American sense.

Common Sense, published in January, was the first colonial document directly calling for independence. In publishing this treatise, Paine brought the notion of independence into the minds of the common man with persuasive arguments framed in familiar language. His most vivid condemnation of Great Britain is articulated as follows:

But Britain is the parent country, say some. Then the more shame upon her conduct. Even brutes do not devour their young, nor savages make war upon their families [...]. This new world hath been the asylum for the persecuted lovers of civil and religious liberty from every part of Europe. (84)

Based upon Paine's central argument, independence remained the only option to protect the New World's notions of civil, economic and religious liberty.

Beyond Paine's central thesis, his publication is significant for introducing republicanism within a coherent context. As Adams claims, "Only in 1776 did *republic*, *republican* and *republicanism* change from defamatory clichés used to stigmatize critics of the existing order to terms which affirmative connotations, stimulating a feeling of identification with the existing political system" (397). Given the overwhelming success of *Common Sense*, it is clear that Paine's arguments resonated with all levels of the colonial population.

The *Declaration of Independence*, adopted on July 4, encapsulates America's understanding of constitutionalism and liberty grounded in the principles of limited government and natural law. As argued by Maier, "In opposing the British policies, colonists saw themselves as following in the footsteps of their English ancestors who had resisted the tyranny of Charles I and James II" (29). Jefferson, who was given the chief task of writing the *Declaration* by the Committee of Five, relied heavily on his work drafting the Constitution of the Commonwealth of Virginia, as well as the writings of George Mason and Locke.

In a consistent argument form, analogues to the English Declaration of Rights, Jefferson severed ties with the old regime, provided intellectual credibility to the independence movement through Enlightenment philosophy and asserted direct evidence regarding Great Britain's tyrannical abuses. This quote from the *Declaration*—"We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, – that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness..."—is analogous to the Lockean notion that a government is instituted to solve enduring problems that cannot be rectified within the state of nature. Despite revisions and modifications by the Committee of the Whole, the document remained true to Jefferson's original mission.

In the early years of the Revolution, two significant political events occurred: the ratification of the individual state constitutions and the ratification of the *Articles of Confederation*. In considering both sets of documents, the most evident test of revolutionary principles resided at the state level. However, the *Articles* provided for an opening of the American political system. Article three outlined the binding principles of the new nation:

The said States hereby severally enter into a firm league of friendship with each other, for their common defense, the security of their liberties, and their mutual and general welfare, binding themselves to assist each other, against all force offered to, or attacks made upon them, or any of them, on account of religion, sovereignty, trade, or any other pretense whatever.

Apart from the idea of a common national defense, individual states had immense latitude in how they established their governments and managed their affairs. A clear example is contained in the preamble of the Constitution of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts:

The body politic is formed by a voluntary association of individuals: it is a social compact, by which the whole people covenants with each citizen, and each citizen with the whole people, that all shall be governed by certain laws for the common good. It is the duty of the people, therefore, in framing a constitution of government, to provide for an equitable mode of making laws, as well as for an impartial interpretation, and a faithful execution of them; that every man may, at all times, find his security in them.

Thus, the creation of a “social compact” and the recognition of citizen engagement in government affairs affirm the philosophies of Locke and Montesquieu. Additionally, the structure of the Massachusetts government served as an example to other states as it contained a bicameral legislature and a strong executive.

Madison was actively involved in American Revolution on the local, state and federal levels of government. Known as an intellectual and political statesman, he played a pivotal role in the debate regarding the effectiveness of the *Articles* and the eventual construction of a new government under the Constitution.

The aftermath of the Revolution, left the nation struggling with new political, economic and social forces, which lead to the rise of severe partisanship and self-interest within state legislatures. This factionalism not only paralyzed state governments, but also marginalized the republican notions of the Revolution. As argued in *The Great Republic*:

By the mid-1780s many American leaders had come to believe that the state

legislatures, not the governors, were the political authority to be most feared. Not only were some of the legislators violating the individual rights of property through excessive printing of money and their various acts on behalf of debtors, but all the states the assemblies pushed beyond the generous grants of legislative authority of the 1776 Revolutionary constitutions and were absorbing executive and judicial duties. (Wood 244)

In rejecting the notions of democracy, based upon strict majoritarianism, Madison argued that the rule of law provided citizens with the opportunity to voice their opinions within a regulated approach that includes checks and balances. A republic, as argued in *Federalist Paper* No. 10, with a “scheme of representation, opens a different prospect, and promises the cure for which we are seeking.”

As a delegate to the Constitutional Convention, Madison articulated a vision for the new nation that embodies Montesquieu’s philosophy concerning the protection of liberty through the separation of powers model. His *Virginia Plan* set the tone for the convention by illustrating a government with specific delegated powers. Additionally, he tackled the notion of voting by describing where this power was derived and where it resided. Ultimately, Madison institutionalized the procedures of governing by establishing a rigorous system of checks and balances through his role as the principle drafter of the Constitution. In total, this document, which was ratified in 1787, offered immense change to the American political system. However, the states would remain the principle level of government whereby citizens would voice their grievances and enact change. With many Americans still skeptical, Anti-Federalists and Madison requested the addition of a bill of rights in order to safeguarded citizens’ personal liberties.

Washington became very conscious in identifying the elements of fostering a virtuous citizenry. As an individual who held many executive positions, his leadership defines the very essence of service. As head of the Continental Army, Washington understood the balance between the powers given to him by the Continental Congress and his role as a citizen. In describing his reluctance to serve as president, he wrote the following to Marquis de Lafayette on January 29, 1789,

“[...] I shall assume the task with the most unfeigned reluctance, and with a real diffidence for which I shall probably receive no credit from the world. If I know my own heart, nothing short of a conviction of duty will induce me again to take an active part in public affairs...” (Allen 428)

As the first President of the United States, he built philosophical and geographical consensus by appointing Adams, Jefferson and Hamilton to various positions within his cabinet. In total, Washington rose above partisan political battles because of his strong adherence to virtuous principles and unyielding conviction to serve the common good.

The American Revolution articulated the principles of liberty, equality and civic virtue within the context of a functioning republican political system. Philosophically, the movement was rooted in the colonists' experiences of self-government and knowledge of Enlightenment concepts expressed by Locke and Montesquieu. Collectively, the *Declaration*, the *Articles*, the state constitutions and the United States Constitution affirm this evolution of republican thought. Additionally, the trifecta of Jefferson, Madison and Washington affirm the institutionalization of these evolved republican principles in the new nation.

The Canadian Rebellions

The effects of the American Revolution were not confined to the borders of the United States, as the most salient details sparked subsequent revolutions well into the nineteenth century. Canada was no exception to the wave of republican experiments that occurred within the Atlantic World. The proximity and interrelatedness of the political events in the aftermath of the American Revolution and War of 1812, both partially fought along the Canadian-American border, can be interpreted as a revolution that not only redefined the political origins of the United States, but also the trajectory of Canada. Within this paradigm, the Canadian Rebellions of 1837 actively sought to use the American blueprint to force change with Great Britain. Together, the efforts of Lower and Upper Canada directly mirror the sequence of the American Revolution. Following the military conclusions of the Rebellions, responsible government was granted introduction into the emerging Canadian framework of

government via the *Durham Report*. This concession stands as a victory of Canadian political leaders as it affirms the notion of accountability within government.

Emerging historiography recognizes the connection between the Canadian Rebellions and the Atlantic Revolutions. Therefore, it is inadequate to consider the once well accepted argument of a distinct American *Revolution* and a Canadian *Counterrevolution*, which is featured prominently in *Continental Divide* by Lipset. Although his work correctly articulates that two nations were created out of the American Revolution, the fundamental thesis is too stringent (1). Subsequent analysis reveals the similarities in ideological discourse that existed between the leaders of the American Revolution and the Canadian Rebellions. Specifically, the use of republican rhetoric by the leaders of Lower and Upper Canada to justify constitutional reforms not only links the Canadian Rebellions to the legacy of the American Revolution, but also provides the justification for them to be studied within the context of the Atlantic Revolutions. Historians, including Ducharme and Harvey, have articulated the importance of the Canadian Rebellions within the framework of the Atlantic Revolutions by specifically citing the impact of the American Revolution within Canada.

The political origins and ideology of the Canadian Rebellions are related to the decisive impact of the American Revolution and the numerous political changes that occurred after 1790. First, the *Quebec Act* (1774) partially improved conditions for French-Canadians as it revived traditions that existed during the French Regime, including: French civil law and the Seigneurial System. The *serment du test* was abolished and replaced with a simplified oath of fidelity to the English Regime. Thus, French-Canadians remained loyal to Great Britain and did not join the northern military campaigns of 1775 – as members of the Continental Congress hoped. However, the idea of a political partnership was not shelved as the *Articles* allowed for reconciliation: “Canada acceding to this confederation, and adjoining in the measures of the United States, shall be admitted into, and entitled to all the advantages of this Union; but no other colony shall be admitted into the same, unless such admission be agreed to by nine States.” Despite an open invitation, the *Quebec Act* successfully suppressed the ability of a

political partnership as it remained in effect within Canada until 1791.

The second largest issue following the American Revolution was the impact of thousands of Americans immigrating along the Canadian border into the Great Lakes region. While many were Loyalists, a significant portion was not. As acknowledged by Graham,

“By 1812 probably no more than one-fifth of the population was British; another fifth may have been genuine Loyalist, but at least three-fifths were non-Loyalist colonists from the United States. Inevitably many of these recent immigrants were tempted by the vision of their adopted country as a future territory of the Republic...” (108).

Thus, Great Britain was forced to reassess the policies governing Canada due to the changing demographics.

The most immediate political change undertaken by Great Britain to reassert imperial control was the Constitutional Act of 1791. As envisioned, the act intended to strike a balance between the French-Canadian and English populations by repealing major provisions outlined in the *Quebec Act*. However, the decades long political fallout made a tense situation decisively worse. As noted in *Challenge & Survival*, “Although the Constitutional Act was intended to meet the demands of the English minority in Quebec without disturbing the overwhelming French majority, the Act contained within it seeds of discontent” (164).

Generally, the act divided the Province of Quebec into two distinct provinces: Lower Canada (Francophone) and Upper Canada (Anglophone). In terms of administrative changes, the act restructured the colonial governments in each province to incorporate greater British influence. Accordingly, the Governor General of British North America would serve as the monarch’s chief representative. In the case of Lower Canada, the Governor would serve directly below the Governor General. In the case of Upper Canada, the Lieutenant Governor would serve directly below the Governor General.

Additionally, the act also established the Executive and Legislative Councils in each province. Collectively, the “Governor [or Lieutenant Governor], Executive Council, Legislative Council and Legislative Assembly would become the colonial counterparts of the Crown, Cabinet, House of Lords and the House of

Commons” (Herstein et al. 121). However, both Councils gained an elitist and oligarchic reputation that united colonial leaders against them. Under the revised system, colonial leaders in Lower and Upper Canada could only exercise power through the Legislative Assemblies, which governed based upon popular consent. However, this principle was severely restricted in practice as, “[a] measure passed by the [Legislative] Assembly had to receive the consent of the Legislative Council and the [respective Governor or Lieutenant Governor] before it became law (Herstein, et al. 122). Even under these circumstances, Great Britain maintained the ultimate check on colonial authority by reserving the right to nullify any law it deemed necessary.

Despite the desired goal of political stabilization, the Constitutional Act failed to achieve its objective as the relationships between the Governor and the Legislative Assembly in Lower Canada and the Lieutenant Governor and the Legislative Assembly in Upper Canada were left undefined. As argued by Graham, “The classic duel between [the Governor/Lieutenant Governor] and assembly, which had dominated the later political history of the Thirteen Colonies, was about to be repeated” (102). Thus, just as the French and Indian War revealed political differences between the American colonies and Great Britain, the effects of the War of 1812 would do the same for Canada. In effect, the Executive and Legislative Councils became more abhorred by colonial leaders as they amassed greater authority, despite the fact that they were designed to operate independently. For this reason, they became known as the Château Clique in Lower Canada and the Family Compact in Upper Canada. As near equivalences, colonial leaders within the Legislative Assemblies relentlessly attacked them as tyrannical. On this point Bourinot argues, “... the phrase [Family Compact] represented a political and aristocratic combination, which grew up as a consequence of the social conditions of the province and eventually monopolized all offices and influence in government” (140). Thus, while the War of 1812 brought to light many issues, its political conclusion did little to solve them. As Graham confirms, “[...] the inconclusive Treaty of Ghent ended an inconclusive war in December 1814” and returned the situation back to *status quo ante bellum* (114). Collectively, these unresolved issues took center stage during the Canadian Rebellions.

Despite domestic challenges, Canadian newspapers continued to report on international events, such as the French Revolution and colonial conflicts in South America and the Caribbean. By the 1820s, the situation had become increasingly volatile with Great Britain. As argued by Ducharme:

Republican rhetoric not only gave [Canadians] stronger arguments against the status quo, but it also encouraged them to question the legitimacy and the organization of the colonial political structure. After 1828, republicanism as [a] discourse and ideology became the main source of inspiration for Lower Canadian Patriots and Upper Canadian radicals. (“Closing” 200)

Within this context, reformers from Lower and Upper Canada actively sought to use the elements of republicanism to legitimize their efforts within a coherent framework. Like their American counterparts, Canadians first began to work within the British imperial system, on a constitutional level, to bring out greater political autonomy and administrative flexibility. When these requests were left unresolved, prominent politicians from Lower and Upper Canada demanded far more radical requests that led to armed rebellions.

Lower Canada: Louis-Joseph Papineau and the *Patriotes*

Papineau became the leader of the Lower Canada Rebellion because of his ability to give the *Patriote* movement philosophical direction. During his political career, he grew increasingly wary of British Constitutionalism and began to frame political arguments within the tradition of the American system.

The *Patriote* movement was born out of the *Parti canadien*, an early nineteenth century Francophone political party that argued for the protection of agricultural institutions, such as the Seigneurial System. In 1820, Papineau was elected as the Speaker of the Assembly, which made him the *de facto* leader of the French-Canadians. In 1826, the movement consolidated to form the *Parti patriote*, in reaction to the growing sense of nationalism. As political disputes deepened, the party began to consolidate its grievances and demand specific reforms relating to government accountability and increased autonomy.

In 1834, *les 92 Résolutions* (or, *The Ninety-Two Resolutions*) were ratified by the Legislative Assembly. Collectively, these political grievances pushed for the *Patriote* desire of restructuring the colonial government by expanding political rights. The legacy of the *Declaration* is evident within the construction of the document as it points to specific abuses. However, the *Partiotes* were also aware of their unique role within the British Empire and sought to use it as point of leverage:

Que c'est l'opinion de ce comité, que les loyaux sujets de Sa Majesté, le peuple de cette province du Bas-Canada, ont montré le plus grand attachement pour l'empire britannique dont ils forment partie ; qu'il l'ont [*sic*] défendu avec courage dans [la] guerre, à deux diverses fois, qu'à l'époque qui a précédé l'indépendance des ci-devant colonies anglaises de ce continent, ils ont résisté à l'appel qu'elles leur faisaient de se joindre à leur confédération.

As articulated by the tone of the above section, French-Canadians understood their loyalty during the American Revolution meant something as discontent with the Constitutional Act grew.

Although the *Résolutions* were debated in London for approximately three years, they were soundly rejected in 1837. During this time, Great Britain attempted a minor counteroffer via the Russell Resolutions. With political reform all but off the table, the *Partiotes* were enraged. As Craig insists, “... the politicians of the assembly, with Louis-Joseph Papineau at their head, were convinced that they were fighting a constitutional struggle in the best English Tradition” (Craig 118). Clearly, the use of the existing political system to debate specific political grievances is analogous to the route taken by the Americans. When reconciliation was no longer a viable option, the use of military force was considered as a final attempt to force change. This new political reality is expressed by Harvey, “Frustrés par l’immobilisme des autorités impériales, les Patriotes se sont tournés vers l’indépendance, immédiate ou imminente, comme seul gage de la liberté politique des Bas-Canadiens” (199).

By the beginning of 1837, talk of revolt was increasingly prevalent. As argued in *Challenge & Survival*, “Papineau and his radical followers saw no hope of gaining reforms by [British] constitutional means. Only the use of force would convince Britain of French-Canadian

determination” (171). This realization demonstrates that French-Canadians understood a clear distinction existed between the parliamentarianism instituted by the Constitutional Act and the notions of responsible government, which respected self-government and accountability. This notion is confirmed by Hamelin and Provencher, “La loi de 1791 introduit le parlementarisme dans le Bas-Canada, non la démocratie” (47). Collectively, these grievances formed the basis of the *Patriote* cause. A speech from the *Sons of Liberty* (or, *Société des Fils de la Liberté*), a *Patriote* group based in Montréal that was created in the tradition of its American counterpart, vehemently denounced the effects of British rule and affirms the successful struggle of others who fought for republican principles. A printed selection reads:

After seventy-seven years of British rule, we behold our country miserable, compared with the prosperous Republics who wisely threw off the yoke of Monarchy. We feel that our population is equal in capacity to theirs. We see Emigrants from beyond seas, of the same class, wretched if they remain here, happy if they join the great Democratic family, and we have daily evidence that our ill fortunes are attributable to the desolating action of a Colonial government. (“Sons of Liberty”)

From this excerpt it is evident that *Patriote* leaders actively sought to use elements of republicanism to legitimize their efforts by framing them in the context of contemporary events that were transpiring within the Atlantic World.

By the fall of 1837, the *Patriotes* prepared for war. In total, three large-scale engagements occurred within Lower Canada (see FIG. 1.). Despite a stunning victory at Saint-Denis (November 23), *Patriote* momentum was severely hindered as the battles advanced into the winter months and became more disorganized. Subsequently, the Battles of Saint-Charles (November 25) and Saint-Eustache (December 14) were decisive British victories.

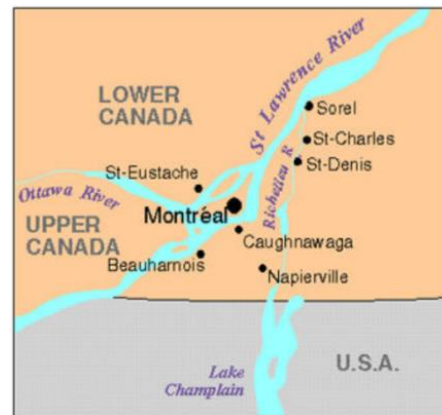


FIG. 1. “Rebellions of 1837, Lower Canada”

With the defeat of the *Patriotes* a *fait accompli*, Papineau fled to Albany, New York. In a letter dated December 18, 1837, Papineau considered his fading options and appealed directly to the American notion of republicanism, “Je suis si attaché au Républicanisme tel que l’ont compris et enseigné Thomas Jefferson et son école, dont je crois que Mr. Martin Van Buren est un des plus dignes adaptés ...” (299). Despite his impassioned pleas, President Van Buren and his administration refused assistance. As noted by Harris, the Van Buren administration considered the *Patriotes* “poor and desperate men” who were “political enemies as well as dangers to peace” (54). During his time in exile, Papineau continued to refine his beliefs in republicanism. He was granted amnesty to return to Canada in 1844 and eventually made a brief return to politics.

Upper Canada: William Lyon Mackenzie and Reform-minded Politics

Mackenzie became the leader of the Upper Canada Rebellion because of his background in journalism and print media. As an immigrant from Scotland, he recognized the necessity of reform, advocated for colonial rights and attacked the elitist oligarchies within the Executive and Legislative Councils.

The motives of Upper Canadians were rooted in constitutional reform, which translated to a less violent tone than its counterpart. The source of contention was the Family Compact, an elite group of politicians who yielded immense sway in the functions of the colonial government. The notion of responsible government, as understood by Upper Canadians, is succinctly outlined in the *Seventh Report on Grievances* (1835):

The governors of colonies, like other men, are individually liable to all the infirmities of human nature, and in their political capacity, when left to act without restraint, they, no doubt, sacrifice occasionally the interests and happiness of the people, to the gratification of their own passions and caprices. One great excellence of the English constitution consists in the limits it imposes on the will of a King, by requiring responsible men to give effect to it. In Upper Canada no such responsibility can exist. The Lieutenant Governor and the British Ministry hold in their hands the whole patronage of the Province; they hold the sole dominion of the country, and leave the representative branch of the Legislature powerless and dependent. (xxvi-xxvii)

The philosophical argument outlined above against oppressive government is analogous to the *Declaration of Independence*. Within two years, a consensus formed around insurrection as the final attempt to force change. As noted by Gates, “The [Declaration of Grievances], formally adopted on July 31, 1837, expressed sympathy with ... the people of Lower Canada, and declared it to be the duty of Upper Canada Reformers to make common cause with them” (15). The very public display of solidarity with the French-Canadians in defense of common principles is extremely significant.

Upper Canada’s more exclusive focus on constitutional arguments did not marginalize republican rhetoric. As Ducharme notes, “[Mackenzie] went as far as to reprint, in the summer of 1837, in his newspaper the *Constitution* and Thomas Paine’s pamphlet, *Common Sense*, first published in 1776 to promote American independence” (202). Despite Mackenzie’s ability to cite monumental texts to build consensus, the rebellion itself was ill-equipped from a military standpoint. The Battle of Montgomery’s Tavern, near York (Old Toronto) on December 7, lasted less than thirty minutes (see FIG. 2.).



FIG. 2. “Rebellions of 1837, Upper Canada”

As noted by Tait, “Mackenzie won enough support among American radicals and British residents in the United States to establish what he called a provisional government on Navy Island, three miles above Niagara Falls” (123). However, a counter-strike never materialized. Within the United States, Mackenzie was charged with violating the Neutrality Act of 1818 and spent a year in prison in Rochester, New York. After his imprisonment, Mackenzie became a reporter for the *New York Tribune*, covered the New York State Constitutional Convention, and moved to Albany on May 1, 1846, where he became an editor for the *Albany Patriot* in May 1847 (Gates 129 and 143). In 1849, he received permission to return to Canada.

As previously noted, Canada was no exception to the wave of republican experiments that occurred within the Atlantic World. In using the American blueprint, Papineau and Mackenzie sought to combine the aspects of American republicanism as a means of reforming the existing colonial system. The translation of famous documents and the distribution of information through newspapers and pamphlets provided philosophical justification for the outcomes they were seeking. As argued by Ducharme:

Lorsque les réformistes comme Papineau, les frères Nelson, Bidwell et Mackenzie adoptent la définition républicaine de la liberté, ils transforment un problème pratique, qui porte essentiellement sur le moyen d’assurer l’harmonie entre les pouvoirs législatif et exécutif, en un problème politique fondamental concernant la légitimité de toute la constitution coloniale. (*Le concept* 204)

Despite the Rebellions’ inability to manifest into a cohesive movement, an evident benchmark of

reform was established. The conclusion of the Rebellions would facilitate a new political reality for Canada.

The *Durham Report*, known formally as the *Report on the Affairs of British North America*, was drafted by John George Lambton, first Earl of Durham, in accordance with his observations as Governor General of British North America in the aftermath of the Rebellions. Central to the document's premise was the necessity of finding a political solution to the situation that had transpired. Even though the document, which was presented to Parliament in 1839, made irrationally strong social accusations, the fundamental political concepts articulated would have profound ramifications in describing the necessity of responsible government.

First, Durham sought the union of the Lower and Upper Canada. This policy, which extends back to 1822, received criticism from French-Canadians as it demonstrated Durham's desire to punish them for their actions during the Rebellions. The following observation is made in the *Report*:

I expected to find a contest between a government and a people: I found two nations warring in the bosom of a single state: I found a struggle, not of principles, but of races; I perceived that it would be idle to attempt any amelioration of laws or institutions, until we could first succeed in terminating the deadly animosity that now separates the inhabitants of Lower Canada into the hostile divisions of French and English.

The tension between the populations, as outlined by Durham, provided the means to justify the passage of the Act of Union of 1840. Politically, the act created the Province of Canada by fusing together Lower and Upper Canada under one colonial government. As argued by Tait, "The Act of Union was by no means the complete solution to problems in the Canadas. In fact, it was in itself rather vague. Much depended on the way in which [it] was to be put into practice" (144). Additionally, in evaluating the necessity of political reform, Durham saw responsible government as a viable policy and endorsed it. On this point, Graham asserts, "To break the chronic deadlock between executive and elected assembly [Durham] simply recommended that the executive or cabinet should be made responsible to the majority of the elected assembly in every matter relating to local affairs" (122). Under this new reality, Great Britain retained power

over complex imperial issues, however, Canadians retained a large amount of jurisdiction over internal affairs. Together, the joint government of Louis-Hippolyte LaFontaine and Robert Baldwin oversaw the institutionalization of reforms associated with responsible government in 1848. Further action would be undertaken during confederation process, which established the Dominion of Canada in 1867.

The Canadian Rebellions can be viewed as a movement that actively sought to use the blueprint of the American Revolution as a means of forcing change with Great Britain. Even though Lower and Upper Canada differed in their political approach, the common interest in government reform set Canada on a new political course toward a modern nation-state.

Conclusion

The American Revolution and the Canadian Rebellions stand as specific affirmations of liberty and republicanism within the context of the Atlantic Revolutions. Both movements followed a similar preliminary trajectory by first attempting to initiate reforms within the constitutional framework of the British imperial system. When these demands were not realized, violence ensued. Although leaders of the American Revolution and the Canadian Rebellions understood the fundamental link between liberty and republicanism, the political conditions relating to their application yielded different political outcomes. However, both movements demonstrated a strong adherence to a similar vein of ideological discourse.

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