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In American Neo-Noir Films, The Aesthetics of Trauma Are Explored in An Effort to Study as Little as Possible

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Abstract

The Searchers offers a glimpse into unresolved suffering that upends culturally rewritten narratives, especially those pertaining to gender and race. The analysis of how aesthetics reflects the *mise en abyme* of trauma should not be the focus of trauma theorists. The reader is transported into the current geopolitical environment by the brief depictions of utopian societies found in Toni Morrison's writings. In non-mainstream American cinema, the transition from traumatic erasure in noir films to traumatic disclosure in neo-noirs and other works demonstrates the necessity of drawing attention to these crises and identifying the manner in which certain groups and individuals are traumatized. The enigmatic ends of *Paradise*, *Beloved*, and *The Bluest Eye* bring long-lost tales back into the past and resurrect traumatized voices that continue to speak for us now. Hollywood trauma films gradually undermine archives and the grand tales we seek. The societal significance and ramifications of these incidents are frequently downplayed in favor of white male worries about heterosexual love, despite the lengthy history of racialized and gendered trauma portrayals in cinema noir.

Keywords: American, Trauma, Neo-Noir, Cinema and *Beloved*

Introduction

Although he is capable of murdering anybody, including his niece (as is almost often the case in *The Searchers*), even the archetypal rough-and-tumble Westerner has shortcomings when his unspoken suffering becomes apparent. *The Searchers*, similar to American neo-noirs, provides a window into unprocessed pain that disrupts culturally re-inscribed stories, particularly those that deal with gender and race. It is possible that Ethan's last motion was a sign of a wound from a previous combat. Ethan Edwards upholds and subverts Western hero conventions throughout the complex film. Many are waiting for the legendary John Wayne to make a stunning and heroic departure as he speeds toward the horizon on his horse. Going back to the original screenplay, viewers may see Debbie's emotional return to the Jorgensen property as a metaphor of Ethan's character changing for the better.

In contrast to the erasure and neglect of female and racially

othered characters' traumas, *The Searchers*, similar to the aforementioned neo-noirs and Westerns, briefly depicts the pain and responses to trauma experienced by white males. Even if Ethan can only muster a brief gesture to convey his pain and may never talk about his experiences, the horrible murders and traumas endured by American Indians and women can only be represented via the feelings of white men. We don't see the murders of Debbie's family members onscreen, so we have to figure out Ethan's response to figure out what happened. When questioned about the tribe that abducted Debbie, Debbie said, "These are my people," contradicting Ethan's assertion that Scar raped Debbie. Her imprisonment seemed to have had little effect on Debbie. Because Debbie's choice to go into the house's encompassing darkness demonstrates that she does not freely choose to return to white civilization, she is snatched once again at the end. Since the murder of Look and the death of Scar occur offscreen, Ethan is the only one who

witnesses them.

Later on, these fatalities are cut from the picture due to diegesis. "What were the soldiers thinking when they killed Look?" Marty remarks after venting his anger at the murder, but then he totally ignores the topic. Check it out! Deborah is the proud owner. Ford is that person. Despite the fact that Marty's Cherokee heritage had previously caused him difficulties, he becomes an accepted part of Anglo society by the film's conclusion. Laurie is even re-united with him. Although Scar's troubled background and family tragedy are revealed, they are secondary to Ethan's own tragedies throughout the film. The film does, however, draw attention to the fact that the demolition of Scar and Look was historically significant. The cultural oblivion shown in *The Searchers* is recurrent in neo-noirs. Here we take a look at how cinematic portrayals of terrible events have shaped our collective memory and how much influence they have had. Although it may seem inappropriate to begin a chapter on neo-noir with a review of *The Searchers*, I am captivated by the way various film archives uncover connections across eras and genres. *Taxi Driver*, *Vertigo*, *Chinatown*, *The Return of Navajo Boy*, and *Chan is Missing* are some of the films that I examine in this chapter; they are all impacted by *The Searchers*. The often-overlooked repercussions of trauma are brought to light via complex depictions of gender, race, and violence. The filmic archive is both a reference and citational resource, but it also has the ability to fictionally rewrite historical events within the framework of the eras it depicts, when it was created, and when it was consumed and interpreted. The locations and people in films, even in entirely fictional plots, could seem strangely familiar because they were really there at the time, even if they are merely performing in a made-up situation. To create an archive, according to Michel Foucault's *Archaeology of Knowledge*, "the discontinuity that separates us from what we can no longer say" exists. One way to rethink Foucault's theory is to seek for new ways of making sense of these omissions in the archives. Archives, according to archivists, are "caught up in the very things they connect," which means that they create new possibilities for themselves as they work. Writing in her piece "Canon and Archive," German cultural theorist Aleida Assmann expands upon Foucault's work to examine the complex links between time, location, and discourse in relation to archives. "The archive is the basis of what can be said in the future about the present when it will have become the past," Assmann writes. Similar to archives, films exist in a complicated fashion both inside and outside of time.

Literature Review

Alan *et al.* (2014) ^[1]. The 2015 Peggy O'Brien Book Prize was bestowed to it by the Irish Association for American Studies. The study looks at how trauma is depicted in modern American literature, both fiction and non-fiction. The impact of trauma on authors and how they portray it in their work is the focus of this book. 'Metafiction' and other storytelling tropes are examined, together with current events in the United States, such as 9/11, the Iraq War, and responses to Bush's government. Joseph Heller, Toni Morrison, Tim O'Brien, Mark Danielewski, Art Spiegelman, Jonathan Safran Foer, Anthony Swofford, Evan Wright,

Paul Auster, Philip Roth, and Michael Chabon are among the contemporary American writers reviewed extensively. An Oppositional Intervention into Debates Regarding American Writers' Depictions of Trauma and Its Consequences: Contemporary American Trauma Narratives. Amwiine *et al.* (2024) ^[2] This study delves at the ways in which communal and personal memories shape cultural identities, as well as the ways in which historical narratives link memory with pain. This study explores the interplay between individual and communal trauma experiences, as well as the transmission of these memories across time, by using trauma theory and collective memory. Keeping one's identity alive after experiencing cultural or historical tragedies like genocide or war is a common function of collective memory. This study applies theory and case studies to the question of how historical discourse shapes narratives that either affirm or question cultural identity by remembering, forgetting, or transforming traumatic experiences. In the end, this investigation adds to our knowledge of how memory can be a bridge to the past and a wedge between communities.

İsmet *et al.* (2024) The purpose of this dissertation is to analyze the ways in which Sebastian Barry's *The Secret Scripture* (2008) ^[3], Kazuo Ishiguro's *A Pale View of Hills* (1982), and Michèle Roberts' *Daughters of the House* (1992) depict collective and individual trauma through storytelling. Literary trauma theory's meteoric growth has had a profound effect on writers' strategies for dealing with trauma in fiction. Historical accounts and first-hand accounts of trauma were the primary concerns of literary trauma scholars prior to the development of literary trauma theory. Nevertheless, authors may now delve into the emotional, psychological, and narrative ramifications of trauma and memory thanks to literary trauma theory. The narrative tactics used by Ishiguro, Roberts, and Barry—including their writing styles, word choice, fragmented narration, unbalanced narrators, and storytelling-help to fictionalize pain in their works. Etsuko, Thérèse, and Roseanne, the heroines of the three books, all utilize storytelling as a tool to face, expose, and accept their horrific war experiences. This research has highlighted the narrative methods of the three books and shown that Ishiguro, Roberts, and Barry all suggest that storytelling may be used as a self-healing tool to help trauma survivors communicate about what they've been through.

Maite *et al.* (2017) ^[4] Using a wide range of critical approaches and viewpoints from the cultural, political, historical, ideological, ethical, and aesthetic spheres—as well as from the inter- and trans-disciplinarity spheres—this collection examines how traumatized individuals, groups, and cultures construct and portray their memories in modern Western art. Cathy Caruth, Jacques Derrida, Judith Butler, Homi Bhabha, Abraham and Torok, and Joyce Carol Oates are among the diverse thinkers whose complementary concepts are introduced in the chapters. These thinkers draw from Memory Studies, Theory of Affects, Narrative and Genre Theory, Cultural Studies, and other fields. Examining trauma as something that is deeply ingrained in culture, *Traumatic Memory and the Political, Economic, and Transhistorical Functions of Literature* challenges the notion of trauma as something that is abstract, universal, and transhistorical.

Negin *et al.* (2015) [5] Literature has had a significant impact on people's lives. Its empowering phrase reveals man's inner universe. Pain, wound, and trauma-colored memories may reside in this area, along with reflection, retrospection, flashbacks, foreshadowing, and horrible experiences. The narrative of contemporary worry is ready to be produced at this very now. The societal, political, and spiritual ties that female characters in Margaret Atwood's works are subject to criticism. In her pursuit of female empowerment, she seeks to depict the anguish and suffering endured by female protagonists. Her exploration of the creative process in her works *The Robber Bride* (1993), *Cat's Eye* (1988), and *The Handmaid's Tale* (1985) delves deeply into the characters' imaginative worlds and artistic endeavors. Research on mental enactments, trauma, intersubjectivity, mentalization, association, dissociation, and nonlinear dynamic theory is what she uses. She wraps off by talking about how language impacts the maturation of identity.

Trauma Cinema, Aesthetics, And Collective Memory

By identifying themes and tropes shared by trauma-focused films, scholars like Joshua Hirsch and Janet Walker (among others⁷⁵) have attempted to define trauma cinema. "Linear chronology collapses in [trauma cinema]," argues Joshua Hirsch in *Afterimage: Film, Trauma, and The Holocaust*. Time seems to be passing at a dizzying rate, and nobody feels like they can stop it. Updated to include "manifesting and celebrating an aesthetics of disremembering," Janet Walker refined her depiction of trauma cinema. (the following) [T] In order to convey the fanciful elements of memory and the historical precariousness of physical qualities, trauma films use a sensory-abstract aesthetic. This new style of communicating and comprehending is established via trauma films. The significance of fragmentation is emphasized by both trauma film research and trauma studies. While scholars may agree on the concept of trauma cinema, it does not include films that investigate how our culture erases pain.

By offering this description of trauma cinema, I want to draw attention to the important differences between the films in question and those often associated with the genre. Horror is prevalent in contemporary cinema, yet it is seldom the primary focus.

In order to consider how films outside of trauma cinema portray violent oppression and the consequences of this apparently inadvertent representation, this chapter analyzes neo-noirs that portray trauma indirectly or even accidentally. While films that show trauma head-on are powerful, influential, and educational, this chapter focuses on neo-noirs that show trauma in a more indirect or even inadvertent way.

"While the obsession with the meaning-defying dimensions of trauma and *mise-en-abime* may offer stark or provocative aesthetics, such an obsession risks becoming a closure in its own turn." - In the preface of *Trauma and film: Cross-Cultural Explorations*, E. Ann Kaplan and Ban Wang discuss the critical focus on the abstract depictions of trauma in film. It puts an end to further discussion and study by proclaiming representation dead at the pass. Trauma theorists should not get caught up in analyzing how aesthetics reflects trauma's *mise-en-abime*. Therefore, instead of seeing pain as something abstract and

disconnected, we should include in our discussion the tangible and meaningful ways in which it has been reinterpreted as art. Watching these films makes us think about what we just witnessed, its cultural significance, and how it relates to our worldview because of the agony of witnessing something upsetting.

The Anxious Representation of Trauma in Film Noir and Neo-Noir

Hollywood movies on trauma progressively disintegrate archives and the big narratives we're looking for. Despite film noir's long history of racialized and gendered trauma depictions, the social relevance and consequences of these events are often minimized in favor of white male concerns with heterosexual love. For example, in Hawks's 1946 film *The Big Sleep*, Carmen's sexual trauma and her drugged-up witnessing of a murder are overshadowed by the blossoming relationship between Marlowe and Vivian. The complicated plot, full of dead ends and false starts, makes it hard to discern how this affects Carmen; in fact, she disappears totally in the film's second half, despite the fact that the plot revolves on her realizing what occurred. The cult classic *Blade Runner*, which depicts racial and gendered trauma via the anxieties of its protagonist, Deckard, was directed by Ridley Scott and was released in 1982. By comparing the Replicants' pain and suffering to that of our own ethically questionable hero, we undermine their attempts to overcome the racial trauma they've endured. This topic of the wiping of painful memories is present even in contemporary neo-noirs such as Christopher Nolan's *Memento* (2000). Leonard claims he seeks revenge for his wife's murder, yet he behaves as if his thoughts about her serve as an excuse for his violence. He has a tattoo that says "John G. raped and murdered my wife" (my emphasis) on his breast instead of her name. Since the emphasis has shifted to the consequences for Leonard, his wife is no longer seen as an emotionally intelligent and logical person. Many studies have examined the representations of social anxieties in noir and neo-noir films.

Whether it's personal suffering or collective tragedies, art has always been a means of expressing societal concerns, maybe even as far back as the Bible era. Many generations have complex and distinctive methods of expressing their concerns, influenced by factors such as geography and social discourses. The underlying racial, gender, and economic anxieties in noir and neo-noir provide valuable lessons for trauma studies. The "film noir" genre has been the subject of heated debate among critics since its inception in the 1940s. The term "film noir" has its origins in French critics and is defined retroactively; its use to describe a cinematic trend in the US is controversial. There are a lot of ways to define film noir, but some of the most common ones include: phenomenon, style, movement, cycle, language, mood, and style. When noir attempts to rigidly cage something naturally dynamic, it loses part of its capacity to shake up social narratives. Because noir revolves on an unlocatable threat, our vocabulary is both overdetermined and contradictory. Because of its elusive nature, the word noir serves as a useful descriptor. Here I will discuss the neo-noir theme of traumatic disclosure via the lenses of three themes: the protagonist's unstable self-perception, the femme fatale's body as defiant and hence

amenable to violent repression, and noir's equivocal depiction of race.

Trauma, Aesthetics, And the American Neo-Noir, Or How Masculinist Hollywood Neo-Noirs Represent Gendered and Racialized Trauma

Taxi Driver: As a trauma archive, The Searchers' shocking portrayal of male agony in the film's last scene has been referenced and fetishized throughout American cinema, creating a web of links. The plot of Martin Scorsese's *Taxi Driver* revolves on a group of strangers who kidnap a girl and then claim to rescue her from a cult of personality. While looking into the fun-house mirror at New York City's night(mare)scape, Travis Bickle remembers the notoriously short scene where John Wayne experiences the sorrow and torment of being an outsider. Both veterans despise conventional ideas of family, friendships, and sexual love; they react aggressively, racistly, and misogynistically to their jobs; and they are both fixated on returning a girl to her true home. The films have become cultural touchstones as a result of their significance as touchstones for American filmmaking and the many references to them in recent times. Last but not least, the turbulent racial tensions that emerged in post-war America are shown in both *Taxi Driver* and *The Searchers*.

The core of Travis's violent and distorted reality in *Taxi Driver* is his tendency to project his own anxieties, shortcomings, and doubts onto other others, particularly Black individuals in particular. Up to the very end of the film, Travis treats everyone he labels as "other" as if they were a prospective target. While his protagonist status allows viewers to empathize with him, the psychotic use of confusing overhead shots and other visual devices distracts from Travis's point of view. Viewers of all genders, races, and socioeconomic backgrounds find themselves upset by *Taxi Driver* because to the film's and its critical histories' glorification and celebration of violence. A large portion of American society seems to tolerate or even condone his savagery, given the pervasiveness of the infamous mirror incident in popular culture.

He believes he has been chosen to cleanse New York City of the "scum" that afflicted it in the 1970s, and he views most New Yorkers as part of this group. The acceptance of Travis's worldview and the advocacy of violence it implies may be a response to the successes of the Civil Rights movements in the US in the 1960s and 1970s, according to one theory. By the time *Taxi Driver* came out in 1976, the recruitment and pay methods that had kept women underemployed had been criminalized by court judgments. Meanwhile, more women than ever before were joining the workforce. Later episodes show Betsy as an obnoxious businesswoman, which adds fuel to Travis's love-hate relationship with the driven political activist and implies that not everyone had a great impression of the civil rights struggle. Among Travis's many racist remarks and actions are those that cast aspersions on the Black community's remarkable social and political successes over the last several years. Despite the enactment of the Voting Rights Act of 1965 and the Civil Rights Act of 1964, both of which were signed into law by President Johnson, racial prejudice continued throughout the United States, pushing for school integration and affirmative action to take center stage in the

1970s. The central contradiction of *Taxi Driver* is the irony that, despite Travis's racist and sexist views throughout the film, he ultimately targets white guys.

Revival of the Navajo Ladder: In *Taxi Driver*, Scorsese alludes to *The Searchers* in a subtle way; however, in *The Return of Navajo Boy*, the filmmaker clearly documents the overlapping histories, present, and future of *The Searchers* and contemporary American Indian life, in contrast to *Taxi Driver*, where the references are more obvious. *The Return of Navajo Boy* is a documentary that questions and analyzes master narratives and the ways in which we remember and remember films in general. The documentary style gives the scenes an air of realism that changes the audience's relationship to them right away. "[The] gap in representation between the reality presented and the reality absent [in documentary film] introduces the real in Lacan's sense of an unrepresentable that is nevertheless apprehended... "By representing a paradoxically unmitigated and constructed reality, documentary invites passive witnessing as well as active spectatorship to critique what makes it into the final product and what doesn't, whose voices are heard and whose aren't, etc., according to Elizabeth Cowie's recent book *Recording Reality, Desiring the Real*. Viewers' socioeconomic positions significantly impact the information preserved in the returned film, as seen in *The Return of Navajo Boy*.

Vertigo: *Navajo Boy: The Return* traces a specific point in time for the Navajo people, the Cly family, and Monument Valley, while *Vertigo* retells the tale of a political area via more metaphorical means. San Francisco serves as a backdrop for Alfred Hitchcock's deconstruction of hidden political and personal history via the use of several losses and the fictions surrounding them. In his personal essay "Vertigo" about Hitchcock's San Francisco, D.A. Miller suggests that the characters in the film aren't interested in seeing the city as Hitchcock has envisioned it for them; instead, they prefer to view it in objective panoramas or rear projections, which show the city without them. It would be ideal for the filmgoers, who are a wealthy tourist class, to experience all that the protagonists and antagonists fail to do. Although Robert Burke's photography is so clear, my interpretation of it is just as careless and preoccupied as Scottie's (np)

It might seem that the subject matter of *Vertigo* conflicts with the visually stunning San Francisco directed by Alfred Hitchcock. To begin, Hitchcock's San Francisco is an awe-inspiring abstraction that is ostentatiously devoid of any human presence. "It is a sort of unsettling illusion..." (np). Like Judy's Madeleine and maybe even Hitchcock's Kim Novak, the illusion of San Francisco in Hitchcock's film is reminiscent of Judy's character. In *Vertigo*, the layers of hidden racial, gendered, and colonial histories are unveiled in brief moments of insight that upset viewers via the linkages between tragedy and beauty, recognition and abstraction. According to Miller's analysis of *Vertigo*'s use of location, "No wonder I can never find Hitchcock's San Francisco in any fullness; I am too busy, in my reveries, looking for my own, as if *Vertigo* were, of all things, a documentary" (np). San Francisco in Hitchcock's film is desolate and overdetermined, like a vision that becomes

more alluring than the actual metropolis. The San Francisco of Hitchcock is an illusion, a façade, an illusory and unattainable ideal, much like the Monument Valley of John Ford and Madeleine of Judy Garland.

Chan is Missing

With Chinatown as its epicenter, Wayne Wang's *Chan is Missing* (1982) reimagines San Francisco as a location through the prism of ethnic identity. Both the aforementioned films and the noir canon more broadly are alluding to in *Chan is Missing*. The use of many well-known San Francisco sites by Wang's protagonists in their quest for a missing person is reminiscent of Hitchcock's *Vertigo*; similarly, the primary location of Chinatown, the driving sequences, and the mystery that is full of tangential turns are reminiscent of Chinatown. There are a lot of close-ups of Jo and Steve operating their taxis, which makes me think of *Taxi Driver*. Meanwhile, the hunt for missing Chan is similar to Ethan's mission in *The Searchers*, and it changes who wanders and why again, much like in that film. Additionally, the noir-influenced narrative structure, chiaroscuro, narration, and black-and-white film material are all present in *Chan is Missing*. Wang explores the construction and stereotyping of Chinese-American identity via the lens of cinema noir and detective traditions.

The film raises questions about, challenges, and ultimately dismantles racial classifications. The missing Chan holds promise in his capacity to travel fluidly across San Francisco's many Asian cultures, even as the other characters fight for self-definition in Chinatown and the United States at large. As he vanishes, the audience is gripped by an unquenchable want for knowledge that lingers throughout the film. The film's plot unravels each of the excuses for his absence, whether it a mistress, his political beliefs, a lack of funds, etc. When the credits roll, the same question that had been on everyone's mind throughout the film returns: where is Chan? The inability to know Chan and his disappearance prompts a conversation on Asian Americans in the United States, namely how trauma and other forms of racial oppression have shaped people's sense of self.

“Monologue No Different from A Shriek”: Communal Responses to Trauma in Toni Morrison’s Novels

I’m Nobody! Who are you? Are you – Nobody – too?

Then there’s a pair of us – don’t tell!

They’d banish us, you know.

– Emily Dickinson, from #260

There is at least one group that includes the Nobody of trauma—those who have survived and been victimized—and there are probably many more. Keeping members of this group secret keeps them traumatized, reinforces the social contract's rupture, and prolongs the "missing encounter" beyond the painful event itself. A social framework that confirms and protects the victim and that combines victim and witness in a shared alliance is necessary to retain traumatic reality in consciousness, according to Judith Herman, who earlier stated. The two organizations' shared goal of providing a platform for marginalized voices and experiences is strikingly similar to those of second-wave

feminist consciousness-raising groups. Much of this project has been driven by a shared resolve to uncover the ostentatiously concealed; to name the Nobodies and proclaim the virtue of staring; and to unite as one, a community that is both aware of the dangers of survivor-victimhood and receptive to the benefits that may come from the many creative works that s/he has been an inspiration for.

Issues of trauma have been traced in this dissertation, and the concept of community runs parallel to that. We face a fundamental contradiction in our efforts to define community, even while the word suggests a group with a defining feature: Is it ever feasible for a group of people to come together and form a community when each member brings their own distinct perspective, life experiences, and thoughts to the table? As a result, when we talk of community, we frequently imply that these differences can be set aside or triumphed over.

The Bluest Eye

There is no mistaking the similarities between the critical reactions to *The Bluest Eye* and the community's scapegoating of Pecola. "Time and again, critics have become caught up in the drama of blame assessment as they attempt to determine who is responsible for Pecola's plight" (44), according to J. Brooks Bouson's book *Quiet as It's Kept: Shame, Trauma, and Race in the Novels of Toni Morrison*. 115 Many critics, including Minrose Gwin, Stephanie Demetrakopoulos, Linda Dittmar, Patrick Bryce Bjork, and Lynn Orilla Scott, have placed guilt on Cholly for raping his daughter, and this dispute has been quite persistent. When we focus only on Cholly as a victim, we fail to take into account the fact that he may have been an aggressor as well, a trait shared by many of those who commit acts of domestic violence. Scholarship and the text itself fail to discern Morrison's complex web of responsibility beyond victimhood and trauma discourses. Both the characters and the critics of *The Bluest Eye* remain stuck in their ways, unable to accept Morrison's deliberate blurring of the boundaries between victim and offender.

I don't want to imply that Pecola and her family aren't scarred and oppressed; I just don't want people to perceive them through the victim lens; the victim label defines them. By reducing trauma to a static state, this classification eliminates any room for creative change. Pecola's severe and pitiful mental collapse and disconnection from reality make it impossible to see her in any other light. However, one might argue that Pecola's act of creating her imaginary buddy was a potent and maybe creative act of self-definition.

Why were you so coy in telling Mrs. Breedlove?

She was informed.

When I say "first time," I don't mean it. In particular, I'm referring to the second occasion, when you slept on the sofa.

A period

Even when I informed her, she still didn't trust me.

Is that why you withheld the information regarding the second occasion from her?

There was no way she would have believed me back then.

I see your point. Telling her is pointless if she refuses to believe you (200).

Beloved

For recently liberated slaves in particular, Morrison delves into the connection between pain and community in her best-known work, *Beloved*. To the "Sixty Million and more" (np), Morrison controversially dedicated *Beloved*. The Holocaust, often called the ultimate genocide, is characterized by the systematic extermination of six million Jewish people. Many critics and scholars have pointed out that this is an effort to establish a hierarchy of genocides by suggesting that slavery in the United States and the Middle Passage were ten times worse. And much as Leslie Marmon Silko dedicated *Almanac of the Dead* to "Sixty million Native Americans [who] died between 1500-1600," Sharon Holland writes in *Raising the Dead: Readings of the Dead and (Black) Subjectivity* that.

Paradise

It all starts with the murder of a lady in Paradise. "The white girl is shot first.

Morrison deftly establishes the novel's central issues right away: a gang of people ("they") have chosen to murder a group of women of mixed race ("the white girl first").

One staccato phrase of bullets blends murder, death, race, and gender. Like a detective narrative, what follows is an effort to fill in the gaps and explain why. In his article titled "Furrowing All the Brows: Interpretation and the Transcendent in Toni Morrison's *Paradise*," Philip Page discusses this opening sentence and how readers are made to work hard to become involved in the fictional enterprise, just like the characters and the author. In contrast to Morrison's earlier works, which encouraged reader participation, *Paradise* makes the reader exert considerable effort just to immerse themselves in the text (638). Actually, Morrison isn't new to this tactic; in her short story "Recitatif," she does the same thing. The first sentence of the novel sets up many of its binaries, including male/female, white/black, violence/nonviolence, injustice/justice, and exclusion/inclusion.

In *Paradise*, the last book in Morrison's trilogy that draws on real events, the author delves further into the microcosm of an all-Black town in Oklahoma to examine the interplay between gender, racism, and trauma. The paradoxical relationships between individuals and community groups can be somewhat summarized, as in Morrison's other works, as follows: "Quiet as it's kept." The many relationships between the women at the Convent and the townspeople of Ruby are whispered about and discussed informally, if at all. However, this pariah group is essential to the stories that the Ruby town residents talk about their past and present. As "not-the-town," they are crucial to the town's definition. These examples show everything that Ruby tries to avoid by being so guarded and isolated. "The Morrison Trilogy," by Justine Tally,

Conclusion

In non-mainstream American cinema, the transition from traumatic erasure in noir films to traumatic disclosure in neo-noirs and beyond demonstrates the necessity to raise awareness of these crises and collectively acknowledge the ways in which certain groups and individuals are traumatized. Drawing attention to the awful in our video collections attracts viewers and may inspire them to oppose

societal ideals of silence and erasure that retraumatize survivor-victims. This paper examines neo-noirs that subtly or perhaps unintentionally depict trauma in order to examine how films outside of trauma cinema depict violent oppression and the effects of this seemingly unintentional depiction. Additionally, Toni Morrison's writings contain brief depictions of utopian societies that immerse the reader in the current geopolitical environment. This project's underlying idea of a move toward audiences-communities with a shared experience-is explicitly emphasized in the last chapter, which explores the ends of Toni Morrison's *Paradise*, *Beloved*, and *The Bluest Eye*.

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