

## INTRODUCTION

The imprint of the catch in the cover photo tells a haunting but thrilling story, the scattered snow a temporal record of the fatal encounter between a bird of prey and an unsuspecting hare. This stark tableau invites us to peer into the past as witnesses, investigators, and readers, beckoned by the frenzied hieroglyphs to reconstruct the narrative of the hunt. This edition of *Tracks* takes a similar approach, proudly showcasing essays that examine themes of silence and struggle, violence and vindication, and predator and prey through the cultural and social imprints found in literature.

Just as the cover photo's snowy backdrop uses white space to amplify the dismal silence of the hunt's aftermath, so too does Emily Dickinson use silence as a poetic device to enhance and complicate her poetry. Caitlyn Bartz explains, in "A Voice of Silence: On Punctuation in the Poetry of Emily Dickinson," that Dickinson's elusive voice, sporting beats of silence not unlike the elegantly stealthy owl's wings, is strong enough to shape the surrounding, spoken reality of her words. Also illuminating a silent, hidden force, E. Paige Clements investigates the unspoken but inescapable patriarchal hegemony found in *Jane Eyre* in "The Patriarchy in the Attic: How Men Create Women's Madness." She examines the predatory violence upholding the patriarchy and its impact on women's mental health, highlighting the intricacies of madness as a viable means of rebellion and resistance. Another predatory force explored in these essays is that of consumptive colonial values, as explained in Roman Leal's "Flesh 'Hungry for Itself': Consumption and Cultural Trauma in *Beloved* and *Paradise*," in which he gives us a taste of Morrison's rich metaphor for cultural trauma presented through food imagery and cannibalism. He explores the characters' self-inflicted predation as a response to colonialism, unearthing the consumptive transgressions resulting from cultural trauma.

Themes of transgression and self-inflicted pain continue in Jonathon Crump's "Sentimentalizing Hawthorne: The Seduction Novel in *The Scarlet Letter*," which takes an interesting and enlightening position on the 1851 novel. As Dimmesdale and Hester's romance happens before the novel takes place, the story itself reflects on the results of those unseen and off-stage acts. Crump's thoughtful approach to Hawthorne runs in the same vein as *The Scarlet Letter*, examining the romantic, social, and religious positions of men and women in early Puritanism. Shadows of guilt track Dimmesdale through the novel, the dark glares of townspeople follow Hester, and the nature of their relationship looms over little Pearl. Crump's character analysis reveals the complexities of both Puritans and nineteenth-century men and women, beyond the surface of usual gender roles. Just as Crump analyzes character, he also explores complex

dimensions of genre. As a writer in the American Romance tradition, Hawthorne surprisingly pays tribute to - and even includes -- aspects of the often-disdained Sentimental Novel of the early nineteenth century. In Crump's argument, an ambitious Romance writer nonetheless needs the tropes of sentiment and sacrifice so central to that earlier genre. Madelyn Hagen's "Magic in the Blood: The Evolution of Complicity and Social Awareness in Allende's *The House of the Spirits* explores the role of compliance in a patriarchal and violently oppressive system. Clara inhabits a space between worlds; and Esteban dominates the realm of the physical, swooping down upon women in the community he is responsible for. Hagan's take on Clara's role in Esteban's reign of terror examines the implications of allowing otherworldly characters to be free of responsibility in the real world of patriarchal political violence. Finally, Madison Nation's "Poor Folks' Wit: Christian Milne's Authorial Claim" takes on neither otherworldly nor fictional silencing, but the literary canon itself. Milne's voice has the potential to speak for many; but, until now, she has not even been able to speak for herself. Nation reflects on centuries of discriminatory critique, and argues for a wider, more diverse canon. Nation rejects the classic literary discourse and questions the power of literary critics to exclude authors based on sex or class. Nation's attempt to give voice to those most often victimized by the systems of our world constitutes a worthy endeavor.

In "A Never-Ending Cycle: Coetzee and Indoctrination," Emily Kiker illuminates the tracks that Coetzee's novel, *Waiting for the Barbarians*, presses into a canvas of an unnamed empire to demonstrate the long-lasting societal trauma caused by the heavy indoctrination of a colonizing force and warns of the universality and destructiveness of these actions. As we piece together the events that transpired in the snow in the cover photograph -- examining the marks and breaks in the layers of powdered drift to assemble a picture of prey snatched by predator -- so too can we reconstruct events that lead to such scars as bigotry and torture. These generational wrongs, along with massive death counts caused by acts of holy terrorism, often emerge from colonial indoctrination, sexism, and violence endemic to a confining patriarchy. Mariana Lowe seeks with her essay, "Transcending Roles of Women and Privileged Motherhood in Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*," to examine the path of the victimized prey in the form of the oppressed women in Achebe's novel; and, instead of simply marking the deep imprint of the predator, she finds the agency and importance of the wanderings and choices of the seized life. With an echoing emphasis on crime and cultural trauma, Matthew Mullin's "'A Joy Presumptuous To Be Thought': Milton's Vindication of Radical Theocracy in *Paradise Regained* and *Samson Agonistes*" argues that such scenes, violent thought they may be -- whether of prey being seized or the toppling of a Philistine Temple-- can be the source of Milton's argument for accepting divine preeminence.

The readings of such ubiquitous yet elliptical scenes of oppression are as varied as the scholars that seek to understand them. Through their analyses, the researchers illuminate the sometimes-evasive power structures undergirding literary traditions, using their own voices to disrupt problematic silences in critical and engaging ways. We hope that this journal, through essays illuminating themes of silence and violence, enriches and inspires critical conversations yet to come. Thank you so much for reading, and please enjoy.

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