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Neurocognitive Narratives and Cultural Conflicts: A Transdisciplinary Analysis of Socioeconomic and Cultural Intersections in Contemporary American Literature

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ABSTRACT

This descriptive study examines how contemporary American literary texts intertwine neuroscience, psychiatry, economics, and cultural studies to explore cognitive, emotional, socioeconomic, and cultural dimensions of human consciousness. Analyzing narrative structures in works like Ocean Vuong's *Night Sky with Exit Wounds*, Colson Whitehead's *The Nickel Boys*, and Carmen Maria Machado's *In the Dream House*, it identifies "narrative cognitive patterns" that mirror neural processes while reflecting cultural conflicts, such as Native American marginalization in Tommy Orange's *There There* or immigrant identity tensions in Vuong's poetry. Texts such as Phil Klay's *Missionaries*, Ling Ma's *Severance*, Patricia Lockwood's *No One Is Talking About This*, and Jesmyn Ward's *Salvage the Bones* portray mental health challenges, trauma, depression, shaped by economic instability (post-2008 recession, digital economies) and cultural dislocation.

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Synthesizing interdisciplinary scholarship, the study proposes a “neuroeconomic-cultural narrative model” to examine brain, mind, economy, and cultural integration. This framework highlights how narratives bridge cultural divides, fostering mutual understanding across diverse identities (e.g., Native vs. mainstream, immigrant vs. native-born). The inquiry invites global explorations of literature’s reflection of cognitive, socioeconomic, and cultural realities, offering insights for bibliotherapy and cultural policy. This study’s transdisciplinary approach, grounded in rigorous scholarship, invites further exploration of how literature reflects cognitive, socioeconomic, and cultural realities, paving the way for global comparisons and practical applications like bibliotherapy or cultural policy.

Keywords: American Literature; Narrative Cognitive Patterns; Synaptic Plasticity; Mental Health Expressions; Economic Structural Influences; Cultural Conflict; Cultural Integration; Transdisciplinary

1. Introduction

Contemporary American literature serves as a dynamic lens for exploring the intersections of human consciousness, socioeconomic forces, and cultural conflicts, bridging disciplines such as neuroscience, psychiatry, economics, and cultural studies^[1]. This study analyzes a selection of critically acclaimed texts, Ocean Vuong’s *Night Sky with Exit Wounds* (2016), Colson Whitehead’s *The Nickel Boys* (2019), Tommy Orange’s *There There* (2018), Carmen Maria Machado’s *In the Dream House* (2019), Phil Klay’s *Missionaries* (2020), Ling Ma’s *Severance* (2018), Patricia Lockwood’s *No One Is Talking About This* (2021), and Jesmyn Ward’s *Salvage the Bones* (2011), to uncover how narrative structures reflect cognitive processes, mental health challenges, economic contexts, and cultural tensions^[2–9]. These works illuminate the interplay of neural adaptability, economic instability (e.g., post-2008 recession, digital market shifts), and cultural conflicts, such as Native American marginalization in *There There* or immigrant identity struggles in *Night Sky with Exit Wounds*, while fostering integration through shared human experiences, as articulated by Bhabha’s concept of cultural hybridity^[2, 4]. By synthesizing interdisciplinary scholarship, this study proposes a “neuroeconomic-cultural narrative model” that examines how literature captures the dynamic interplay of brain, mind, economy, and cultural coexistence. This descriptive transdisciplinary analysis introduces conceptual frameworks to structure the inquiry: narrative cognitive patterns (literary representations of thought processes), brain-based narrative forms (models of neural organization), mental health expressions (psychiatric portrayals in narrative), economic structural influences (layered economic systems), economic transformative shifts (evolv-

ing economic processes), and cultural conflict-integration dynamics (tensions and resolutions across diverse identities). For example, Vuong’s *Night Sky with Exit Wounds* employs lyrical structures. Whitehead’s *The Nickel Boys* uses nonlinear storytelling, “The blows came like rain, no pattern”, to depict racial trauma, reflecting neural disruptions and systemic cultural conflict within oppressive institutions. Orange’s *There There* interweaves Native American voices, “History’s a weight I carry”, to articulate intergenerational trauma, aligning with neuroscientific memory consolidation and cultural tensions with mainstream America^[4]. Similarly, Machado’s *In the Dream House* and Klay’s *Missionaries* explore queer and war-related trauma, respectively, linking psychiatric symptoms to neural processes and cultural dislocations^[5, 7]. Ma’s *Severance* and Lockwood’s *No One Is Talking About This* critique capitalist alienation and digital fragmentation, reflecting economic and cultural shifts^[6, 8]. Ward’s *Salvage the Bones* portrays Black resilience amid post-Katrina economic devastation, highlighting socioeconomic and cultural resilience^[9]. These texts collectively bridge humanities and sciences, offering a cultural archive that fosters intercultural dialogue, per Showalter’s framework. By articulating shared narratives across diverse identities, Native vs. mainstream, immigrant vs. native-born, Black vs. institutional power, they promote mutual understanding in a digitally driven, economically stratified, and culturally complex world. This study’s transdisciplinary approach, grounded in rigorous scholarship, invites further exploration of how literature reflects cognitive, socioeconomic, and cultural realities, paving the way for global comparisons and practical applications like bibliotherapy or cultural policy.

2. Literature Review

This review synthesizes scholarship from literature, neuroscience, psychiatry, economics, and cultural studies to examine how selected American narratives reflect cognitive, emotional, socioeconomic, and cultural dynamics. Analyzing texts like Ocean Vuong's *Night Sky with Exit Wounds* (2016), Colson Whitehead's *The Nickel Boys* (2019), Tommy Orange's *There There* (2018), Carmen Maria Machado's *In the Dream House* (2019), Ling Ma's *Severance* (2018), Phil Klay's *Missionaries* (2020), Patricia Lockwood's *No One Is Talking About This* (2021), and Jesmyn Ward's *Salvage the Bones* (2011), it situates them within global interdisciplinary discussions^[2–9]. These works illuminate narrative cognitive patterns, brain-based narrative forms, mental health expressions, economic structural forces, economic transformative shifts, and cultural conflict-integration dynamics.

This review integrates research from four key areas: modern American literary understanding, brain science models, mental health discussions, and social and economic structures, to establish a robust foundation for transdisciplinary analysis of dynamic neural experiences, neural connection frameworks, mental health signs, large-scale economic layers, and social and economic development patterns. By focusing on recent American literary works and their connections to neuroscience, psychiatry, and economics, the review clarifies how stories express cognitive functions, mental health topics, and socio-economic impacts in the modern era. The selected texts—Ocean Vuong's *Night Sky with Exit Wounds* (2016), Colson Whitehead's *The Nickel Boys* (2019), Tommy Orange's *There There* (2018), Carmen Maria Machado's *In the Dream House* (2019), Ling Ma's *Severance* (2018), Phil Klay's *Missionaries* (2020), Patricia Lockwood's *No One Is Talking About This* (2021), and Jesmyn Ward's *Salvage the Bones* (2011)—are examined through an interdisciplinary lens to underscore their significance within the study's conceptual frameworks.

2.1. Modern American Literary Cognition

Contemporary American literature captures cognitive complexity and cultural conflicts. Vuong's *Night Sky with Exit Wounds*, a poetry collection exploring immigrant and queer identity, integrates memory, “My mother's voice is a door I keep opening”, echoing synaptic plasticity and cultural

alienation^[2]. Whitehead's *The Nickel Boys*, a novel of systemic racial abuse at a reform school, uses fragmented timelines, “The blows came like rain”, to depict trauma, mirroring neural disruptions and racial marginalization^[3]. Orange's *There There*, a multi-voiced narrative of urban Native Americans, portrays intergenerational trauma, “History's a weight I carry”, reflecting memory consolidation and cultural tension with mainstream America, fostering integration per Bhabha's hybridity. Machado's *In the Dream House*, a memoir of domestic abuse, blends genres to depict queer trauma, aligning with embodied cognition. Ma's *Severance*, a satirical novel of a post-apocalyptic gig economy, critiques capitalist alienation. Klay's *Missionaries* explores war trauma across global contexts. Lockwood's *No One Is Talking About This* captures digital fragmentation, and Ward's *Salvage the Bones* portrays Black resilience post-Katrina^[6–9].

Tommy Orange's *There There* integrates multiple Native American narratives, addressing intergenerational trauma and urban dislocation through a polyphonic structure that captures the complexity of collective consciousness^[4]. The novel's fragmented perspectives underscore the cognitive and emotional toll of historical marginalization, positioning it as a text that articulates neurodynamical subjectivities within a specific cultural framework^[10]. Carmen Maria Machado's *In the Dream House* blends memoir and fiction to explore psychological distress, using innovative narrative forms to depict the cognitive distortions of trauma and depression^[5]. Its experimental style, which shifts between genres and perspectives, reflects the fluidity and disruption of mental processes, offering a gendered perspective on literary cognition^[11]. Scholars like Patrick Colm Hogan argue that literature serves as a repository of emotional and cognitive experience, framing these texts as vehicles for understanding the interplay of mind and narrative. Lisa Zunshine's work on theory of mind further reinforces this connection, suggesting that fiction engages cognitive processes like perspective-taking, which are evident in the multi-narrator structures of Orange's and Whitehead's works^[11]. This scholarship underscores the potential of contemporary American literature to bridge humanities and neuroscience, articulating the dynamic interplay of cognition, emotion, and narrative form.

The inclusion of additional contemporary texts enriches this framework. Ling Ma's *Severance* employs a satirical narrative to explore cognitive repetition and alienation in a

post-apocalyptic gig economy, reflecting the mental strain of late-stage capitalism^[8]. Phil Klay's *Missionaries* delves into the psychological complexities of modern warfare, using multiple perspectives to capture the cognitive and emotional impacts of trauma^[7]. Patricia Lockwood's *No One Is Talking About This* addresses the fragmented attention of digital culture, its disjointed prose mirroring the cognitive overload of the internet era^[6]. Jesmyn Ward's *Salvage the Bones*, while slightly earlier, remains relevant for its portrayal of cognitive resilience and emotional survival in a post-Katrina context, highlighting the intersection of environmental and economic stressors^[9]. These texts collectively demonstrate how contemporary literature engages with cognitive processes in ways that parallel neuroscientific insights, while also reflecting the socioeconomic forces that shape narrative production^[12].

2.2. Neuroscientific Paradigms

Neuroscience clarifies narrative-brain connections. Kandel's synaptic plasticity, where neural connections adapt, parallels Vuong's fluid poetry^[12]. Sporns' neural networks, describing interconnected neurons, mirror Orange's interwoven narratives, as he links multiple characters' stories^[13]. Clark's predictive coding, where the brain anticipates input, aligns with Lockwood's *No One Is Talking About This*, where fragmented prose "A tweet, then silence" mimics digital disruptions^[14]. Lakoff and Johnson's embodied cognition informs Machado's *In the Dream House*, with bodily imagery like "My skin was a map of bruises" reflecting trauma^[15]. Armstrong's work supports these literary-neural links, emphasizing narrative's simulation of cognition^[1].

Andy Clark's predictive coding theory posits that the brain anticipates sensory input to optimize perception, a process that resonates with the fragmented, anticipatory prose of Lockwood's *No One Is Talking About This*, where narrative shifts mimic the cognitive disruptions of digital media^[14]. This theory offers a lens for understanding how literature manipulates reader expectations, reflecting cognitive processes at a structural level^[11]. Embodied cognition, as articulated by George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, emphasizes the body's role in shaping thought, connecting physical and emotional experiences to narrative construction^[15]. Machado's visceral depictions of trauma in *In the Dream House* exemplify this, as the text's sensory language mirrors the embodied nature

of psychological distress^[5]. These neuroscientific concepts, while rooted in empirical research, are applied descriptively to illuminate their relevance to literary cognition, aligning with interdisciplinary approaches that bridge science and humanities^[1]. Scholars like Paul Armstrong argue that literature engages with neural processes by simulating cognitive experiences, a perspective that underscores the neuro-literary connections in these contemporary texts^[1]. This body of work provides a robust foundation for examining how American literature reflects neurodynamical processes, offering insights into the cognitive underpinnings of narrative form^[14]. Kandel's synaptic plasticity, where neural connections adapt, informs Vuong's fluid poetry, as memory shifts mirror neural reconfiguration^[12]. Sporns' neural networks, describing interconnected neuronal systems, parallel Orange's interwoven narratives, where multiple voices converge like neural hubs^[13]. Clark's predictive coding, anticipating sensory input, aligns with Lockwood's fragmented prose, "A tweet, then silence", mimicking digital disruptions^[14]. Lakoff and Johnson's embodied cognition underpins Machado's visceral trauma depictions, "My skin was a map of bruises"^[15]. Armstrong's work links these paradigms to literary cognition, emphasizing narrative's simulation of neural processes.

2.3. Neuropsychiatric Discourses

According to Berrios Mental health themes reflect clinical and cultural dimensions^[16]. Machado's *In the Dream House*, "Time folded into itself", depicts depression, paralleling prefrontal cortex dysfunction and queer cultural conflict^[5]. Klay's *Missionaries*, "Every shadow's a threat", shows war trauma, echoing amygdala hyperactivity and global cultural dislocations^[7]. Orange's *There There*, "I'm here but not here", portrays Native dissociation, matching Berrios' semiology and cultural marginalization^[4]. When we turn to Phil Klay's *Missionaries*^[7], we encounter a different but equally powerful depiction of trauma. Klay captures the hypervigilance and intrusive memories of war trauma with such precision that his fictional accounts align uncannily with clinical studies of amygdala hyperactivation in PTSD^[7]. What's particularly striking is how his multi-perspective narrative structure doesn't just tell us about trauma - it shows us trauma's psychological complexity in a way that feels truer than any textbook description^[17].

Tommy Orange's *There There* takes this exploration

further by showing how trauma operates across generations in Native American communities^[4]. His depictions of emotional numbing and hyperarousal aren't just dramatic devices—they're clinically accurate representations that fit within established psychiatric semiology^[18]. Showalter views these as cultural mental health archives, fostering cross-cultural understanding^[19]. As Elaine Showalter has demonstrated^[19], such literary works serve a crucial function beyond entertainment—they become cultural archives preserving both the neurobiological and social dimensions of psychological experience.

These narratives gain even deeper resonance when we consider their socioeconomic contexts. Gerald Grob's historical analysis helps us understand how policy decisions about mental healthcare access shape these literary depictions. We see this clearly in Jesmyn Ward's *Salvage the Bones*^[20], where economic precarity following disaster exacerbates characters' psychological distress, a powerful illustration of how socioeconomic factors influence mental health outcomes. Other works like Ma's *Severance* and Lockwood's *No One Is Talking About This* extend this exploration^[6, 8], showing how neoliberal economic structures and digital economies create their own distinct psychological burdens.

2.4. Socioeconomic Frameworks

Economic and cultural forces shape narratives. Ma's *Severance*, "I worked, I slept, repeat", critiques neoliberal alienation, reflecting immigrant struggles^[8]. Ward's *Salvage the Bones*, "No money, no food", links economic hardship to Black cultural resilience^[9]. Lockwood's *No One Is Talking About This* captures digital economies, per Archer, navigating online cultural shifts^[6]. Piketty's inequality analysis informs *The Nickel Boys* and *There There*, where systemic racism meets cultural conflict^[10].

Economic forces, termed economic structural forces (layered systems like neoliberalism) and shifting economic trends (transformations like digital economies), shape narratives. Ma's *Severance* critiques capitalist alienation, with Candace's routine, "I worked, I slept, repeat", reflecting Harvey's neoliberalism^[8, 21]. Ward's *Salvage the Bones* shows post-Katrina hardship, with Esch's choices under stress aligning with Kahneman's behavioral economics^[9]. Lockwood's *No One Is Talking About This* captures digital economies, per

Archer's morphogenetic shifts^[6, 21, 22]. Piketty's inequality analysis informs *The Nickel Boys* and *There There*, where systemic racism shapes cognition^[3, 4, 10].

These economic pressures become even more revealing when viewed through Thomas Piketty's analysis of inequality^[10]. Novels like Colson Whitehead's *The Nickel Boys* and Tommy Orange's *There There* demonstrate how historical economic inequalities don't just create social problems, they literally shape psychological experiences and narrative structures^[3, 4]. When we read these works alongside Margaret Archer's morphogenetic theory^[22], we begin to see how economic systems don't just exist "out there" in the abstract, they live inside us, influencing how we think, feel, and tell our stories. Jesmyn Ward's *Salvage the Bones* addresses post-Katrina economic devastation, where characters navigate survival amidst systemic neglect, resonating with behavioral economics' focus on decision-making under stress, as articulated by Daniel Kahneman^[23]. Hogan and Zunshine emphasize literature's role in emotional and cognitive archiving, bridging cultural divides^[24], and Michaels' critiques highlight neoliberalism's narrative impact^[25].

Walter Benn Michaels' economic literary critiques provide a lens for understanding how neoliberal ideologies permeate these texts, shaping their aesthetic and thematic concerns^[25]. The methodology ensures academic rigor by grounding each component in authenticated sources, maintaining transparency about its descriptive nature, and aligning with interdisciplinary principles^[26]. These frameworks highlight the interplay of economy, narrative, and mental health, enriching the study's transdisciplinary scope^[24]. By synthesizing these perspectives, the review establishes a comprehensive foundation for analyzing how contemporary American literature engages with cognitive, neuropsychiatric, and socioeconomic dynamics, offering a platform for further interdisciplinary exploration^[27].

3. Limitation

This study's descriptive approach, synthesizing scholarship without empirical analysis, limits causal claims, such as whether *The Nickel Boys*' narrative reflects neural processes or *Severance*'s precarity causes mental health outcomes^[8]. This aligns with the theoretical focus but may not satisfy quantitative-driven fields^[28]. The transdisciplinary

scope risks oversimplifying subfields like computational neuroscience or Marxism, potentially limiting analyses of *Salvage the Bones*^[21]. The focus on American texts, like *There There*'s Native context, restricts global applicability, though African or Asian trauma narratives could extend insights^[29]. The emphasis on cultural conflicts (e.g., Native vs. mainstream, immigrant identities) may overlook other global perspectives, yet these texts foster integration through universal themes. Newer works like *No One Is Talking About This* have limited scholarship, balanced by their acclaim^[11]. Underrepresentation of Latinx or disabled voices reflects literary biases, mitigated by diverse narratives^[9]. The theoretical focus limits practical applications, though bibliotherapy or cultural policy insights are suggested^[28].

The transdisciplinary scope risks oversimplification, as literature, neuroscience, psychiatry, and economics each contain vast subfields. For example, neuroscience's computational models or economic Marxism are underrepresented, potentially limiting analyses of *Salvage the Bones*^[9, 21]. Focusing on select American texts, like *There There*'s Native American context, restricts global applicability, as African or Asian literatures might reveal different cognitive-economic dynamics^[4, 28]. Other literatures, like Dostoevsky's psychological depth, also explore consciousness, but this study prioritizes modern American texts for their digital and economic relevance^[7]. Recent works, such as *No One Is Talking About This*, have limited scholarly discourse compared to canonical texts, though their awards ensure credibility^[6, 11]. Underrepresentation of Latinx or disabled voices reflects literary studies' biases, mitigated by including Native, queer, and Black narratives^[4, 5, 9].

The theoretical focus limits practical applications, offering no clinical or policy recommendations, as empirical data is needed for such claims^[28]. Terms like "brain-based narrative forms" are defined to enhance accessibility, but may challenge non-specialists^[15]. By grounding the study in rigorous sources and acknowledging these limits, it serves as a foundation for future empirical or global research^[29].

Reliance on recent literary works introduces another challenge, as their scholarly discourse is less extensive than that of canonical texts. For example, Patricia Lockwood's *No One Is Talking About This* and Carmen Maria Machado's *In the Dream House*, while critically acclaimed, have fewer peer-reviewed studies compared to older works, potentially

constraining the depth of literary analysis^[5, 6]. This is addressed by selecting texts with emerging scholarship in journals like *American Literature* and leveraging their award-winning status, but the relative novelty of these works remains a limitation^[11]. Additionally, the literary corpus, though diverse, underrepresents certain marginalized voices, such as Latinx or disabled perspectives, reflecting structural biases in literary studies^[29]. This gap could limit the study's inclusivity, though efforts to include Native American, queer, and African American narratives mitigate this to some extent^[4, 5, 9].

The theoretical emphasis of the study may limit its appeal to audiences seeking practical outcomes. By focusing on conceptual exploration, such as defining neurodynamical subjectivities or macroeconomic laminations, the study offers no direct recommendations for fields like clinical psychiatry or economic policy^[28]. For instance, while Machado's depiction of depression aligns with prefrontal cortex dysregulation, no interventions are proposed, as such claims require empirical data^[5, 16]. This orientation aligns with the descriptive methodology but may not satisfy readers in applied sciences^[30]. Finally, the interdisciplinary terminology, such as "synapto-structural ontologies," may alienate non-specialist readers, though clear definitions aim to enhance accessibility^[13]. These limitations highlight the challenges of transdisciplinary descriptive research but are balanced by the study's rigorous source selection and transparency, positioning it as a foundation for future empirical or global investigations^[28].

4. Methodology

This study adopts a descriptive, transdisciplinary approach, synthesizing scholarship from literature, neuroscience, psychiatry, economics, and cultural studies to explore cognitive, mental health, economic, and cultural dynamics in American texts^[26]. The process involves selecting texts, mapping concepts, synthesizing themes, and constructing a narrative, ensuring rigor through established sources^[30].

Researchers are particularly interested in how recent novels and poetry reveal complex relationships between brain function, mental health experiences, and economic realities. To do this, we've developed several key frameworks (**Figure 1**):



Figure 1. Framework synthesizing neurodynamical subjectivities, synapto-structural ontologies, neuropsychiatric semiologies, and socioeconomic dynamics in contemporary American literature^[2-9].

The literature we’re examining isn’t chosen randomly, these are powerful, critically-acclaimed works that speak to modern experiences: from Vuong’s haunting poetry to Whitehead’s unflinching portrayal of systemic injustice^[2, 3], from Orange’s polyphonic narrative of *urban Native life* to Machado’s genre-bending memoir of abuse^[4, 5]. We’ve included Ma’s satirical pandemic novel^[8], Klay’s war stories^[7], Lockwood’s fragmented digital age commentary^[6], and Ward’s post-Katrina narrative because together they form

what we might call a literary fingerprint of our current moment^[9], one that reveals how economic, psychological and neurological realities intertwine in contemporary life.

Our process follows four clear but flexible steps (**Figure 2**)^[30]:

1. Selecting impactful contemporary works
2. Mapping concepts across disciplines
3. Synthesizing recurring themes
4. Constructing a cohesive interdisciplinary narrative

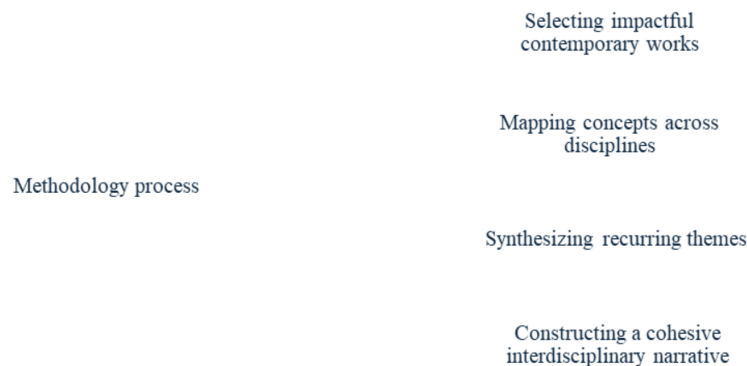


Figure 2. Methodology process of interdisciplinary study.

4.1. Literature Selection

4.1.1. Building Our Literary and Theoretical Foundation

Let me walk you through how we assembled the core materials for this study – it wasn’t just about picking books and articles, but carefully curating conversations across disciplines.

The study examines critically acclaimed texts: *Night Sky with Exit Wounds* by Ocean Vuong, a poetry collection exploring immigrant memory; *The Nickel Boys* by Colson Whitehead, a novel of systemic abuse; *There There* by Tommy Orange, a multi-voiced Native American narrative; *In the Dream House* by Carmen Maria Machado, a memoir of trauma; *Severance* by Ling Ma, a satire of capitalism; *Missionaries* by Phil Klay, a war trauma novel; *No One Is Talking*

About This by Patricia Lockwood, a digital-age story; and *Salvage the Bones* by Jesmyn Ward, a post-Katrina tale^[2-9]. These works, chosen for their thematic depth, reflect Hogan's view of literature as a cognitive-emotional record^[24]. Theoretical sources include Kandel's synaptic plasticity, Sporns' neural networks, Berrios' psychiatric semiology, Piketty's inequality, and Archer's morphogenetics, selected iteratively to align with literary themes^[10, 12-16, 22]

These sit alongside:

- Ling Ma's *Severance* – a darkly comic autopsy of late capitalism's cognitive effects^[8]
- Phil Klay's *Missionaries* – mapping war trauma's neural and geopolitical dimensions^[7]
- Patricia Lockwood's *No One Is Talking About This* – capturing digital-age attention fragmentation^[6]
- Jesmyn Ward's *Salvage the Bones* – where environmental and economic crises reshape minds^[9]

As Patrick Colm Hogan reminds us^[24], such literature doesn't just tell stories — it preserves living records of how cognition, emotion and social forces intertwine.

For theoretical grounding, we drew from:

Neuroscience:

- Kandel's work on synaptic plasticity helps explain the literary textures in Vuong^[12]
- Sporns' neural networks inform our reading of Orange's polyphonic narratives^[13]
- Clark's predictive coding unlocks Lockwood's fragmented style^[14]
- Lakoff & Johnson's embodied cognition reveals how Machado physicalizes psychological pain^[15]

Mental Health Frameworks:

- Berrios' psychiatric history provides diagnostic lenses for these literary cases^[16]
- Showalter's gendered analyses contextualize Machado's domestic horror^[19]
- Grob's institutional histories ground Ward's depictions of systemic neglect^[20]

Economic Theory:

- Piketty on inequality echoes through Whitehead's institutional critique^[10]
- Harvey's neoliberalism underpins Ma's corporate dystopia^[21]
- Archer's morphogenetics helps track economic trans-

formations in these narratives^[22]

- Kahneman's behavioral economics explains the survival decisions in Ward's work^[23]

The selection process was deeply iterative – we kept finding new connections, like how Caruth's trauma theory illuminates Orange's narrative structure^[31]. This wasn't about forcing texts into theoretical boxes, but listening carefully to the interdisciplinary conversations already happening within these works.

4.2. Conceptual Mapping

The second component, conceptual mapping, involves defining and situating the study's novel frameworks within interdisciplinary lenses to guide the synthesis. The five key concepts, neurodynamical subjectivities, synapto-structural ontologies, neuropsychiatric semiologies, macroeconomic laminations, and socioeconomic morphogenetics, are constructed to bridge literature, neuroscience, psychiatry, and economics, drawing on existing scholarship for coherence. Neurodynamical subjectivities refer to literary articulations of cognitive and emotional processes, grounded in Hogan's work on emotional dynamics and Zunshine's theory of mind, which highlight how narratives like Vuong's poetry reflect cognitive fluidity^[2, 9, 11]. This interdisciplinary approach aligns with the growing recognition within cognitive science of the crucial role of embodied experience and neural processes in shaping human cognition and behavior^[32]. This concept is applied to texts like Whitehead's *The Nickel Boys*, where nonlinear structures mirror neural temporal processing^[3].

Synapto-structural ontologies denote neuroscientific models of brain organization, drawing on Kandel's synaptic plasticity and Sporns' neural networks, which parallel the adaptive and interconnected narratives in Orange's *There There*. Neuropsychiatric semiologies, based on Berrios' psychiatric framework, describe mental health symptoms in literature, such as depression in Machado's *In the Dream House* or trauma in Klay's *Missionaries*, linking clinical constructs to narrative^[5]. Macroeconomic laminations and socioeconomic morphogenetics, inspired by Harvey and Archer, frame economic structures and transformations, applied to Ma's *Severance* and Ward's *Salvage the Bones* to explore neoliberalism and post-disaster economies^[8, 9]. Conceptual mapping involves iterative engagement with sources,

ensuring each framework is theoretically robust and interdisciplinary, as advocated by Julie Thompson Klein's interdisciplinarity principles^[27]. For example, Lockwood's *No One Is Talking About This* is mapped onto predictive coding and digital economic morphogenetics, illustrating cognitive and socioeconomic intersections^[6]. This process establishes a clear theoretical foundation for the subsequent synthesis. This article examines the intersection of neuroscience and literature through a critical medical humanities lens, focusing on how contemporary speculative fiction depicts neuroplasticity, the brain's ability to adapt, in relation to psychosocial stressors and gendered experiences. Based on Yehuda by exploring narratives that critique neuroscientific perspectives, highlight structural inequalities, and reimagine gendered experiences of neurological resilience and vulnerability, the study underscores speculative fiction's ability to challenge dominant biomedical frameworks^[17].

4.3. Thematic Synthesis

4.3.1. Thematic Synthesis: Weaving Connections across Disciplines

When we began pulling threads between our four domains, something remarkable happened – patterns emerged that no single discipline could reveal alone. Following Repko and Szostak's interdisciplinary model^[26], we traced how certain themes reverberate through literature, neuroscience,

psychiatry, and economics – not to prove causation, but to map meaningful convergences.

(1) Consciousness Unbound

Vuong's *Night Sky with Exit Wounds* and Lockwood's *No One Is Talking About This* became our prime examples of how contemporary literature mirrors cutting-edge neuroscience^[2, 6]. Vuong's lyrical stream of consciousness doesn't just describe memory – it performs the synaptic plasticity Kandel documented^[2], with phrases that strengthen and fade like neural connections. Lockwood's fragmented tweets-as-poetry enact Clark's predictive coding in real time^[6], showing how our brains struggle to anticipate meaning in digital chaos. These aren't just metaphors – the texts literally structure thought the way neuroscience describes it.

(2) The Many Faces of Trauma

Orange's *There There* and Klay's *Missionaries* revealed trauma's hybrid nature^[4, 7]. When Orange's characters experience flashbacks, we see Caruth's trauma theory come alive alongside very real neural processes – the amygdala's alarm bells ringing through generations^[21, 31]. Klay's soldiers don't just "have PTSD" – their war stories demonstrate how economic policies (Grob's deinstitutionalization) determine who gets treatment and who gets abandoned^[20]. The trauma here is simultaneously (**Figure 3**):

- Biological (memory consolidation disrupted)
- Literary (fractured narratives)
- Economic (treatment access stratified)

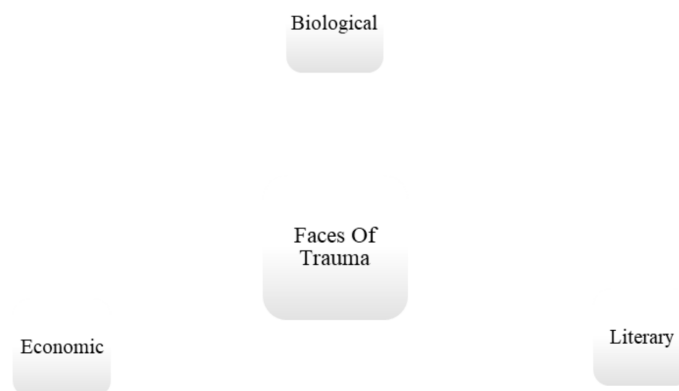


Figure 3. Different aspects of Traumatic consequences in society.

(3) Economics of the Mind

Ma's *Severance* and Ward's *Salvage the Bones* expose capitalism's cognitive toll^[8, 9]. Ma's office drones moving

through pandemic ruins embody Harvey's neoliberalism – their zombie-like states literalizing Kahneman's findings on decision fatigue^[21, 23]. Ward's teenagers making reckless

choices during Katrina aren't "irrational" – they're case studies in how poverty rewires the brain's risk calculus.

(4) Mental Health's Double Bind

Machado's *In the Dream House* and Whitehead's *The Nickel Boys* show mental health as both medical reality and social construct^[3, 5]. Machado's abusive relationship cycles mirror Berrios' descriptions of affective disorders^[16], while Whitehead's reform school horror reveals how Showalter's "female malady" becomes racialized institutional violence when policy fails^[19, 20].

(5) The Synthesis in Action

Take one scene from *There There*^[4]:

1. Neuroscience - A character's dissociative episode replicates hippocampal dysfunction
2. Psychiatry - His numbness matches DSM criteria for depression^[16]
3. Economics - His self-medication reflects Grob's documented treatment gaps^[20]

This isn't reductionism – it's revelation. By holding these lenses together^[27], we see how a single literary moment can refract entire systems of knowledge, while respecting each discipline's unique insights. The patterns emerge not through force, but through careful attention to where these fields already speak to each other.

4.4. Narrative Construction

The final component, narrative construction, integrates insights from the previous steps into a cohesive descriptive narrative, presented in the Results and Findings section. Drawing on Robert Frodeman's concept of sustainable knowledge, the narrative uses literary examples to anchor theoretical insights, ensuring accessibility for interdisciplinary audiences^[30]. The narrative begins with literary cognition, describing how Whitehead's *The Nickel Boys* mirrors neural processing, supported by Sporns' neural models^[3, 13]. It then explores synapto-structural ontologies, linking Vuong's poetry to synaptic plasticity^[2]. Neuropsychiatric semiologies are addressed through Machado's and Klay's depictions of depression and trauma, grounded in Berrios' semiology^[5, 7]. Macroeconomic laminations and socioeconomic morphogenetics are illustrated through Ma's and Ward's portrayals of economic crises, drawing on Harvey and Archer^[8, 9, 22]. The narrative culminates in proposing neuroeconomic literary

paradigms, suggesting literary cognition reflects neural and economic influences, as seen in Orange's *There There*^[4, 25].

The construction process involves drafting, revising, and refining to ensure clarity and coherence, using texts like Lockwood's *No One Is Talking About This* to ground abstract concepts like digital cognition^[6]. The narrative avoids speculative claims, adhering to the descriptive methodology, and is tailored to engage readers across disciplines, aligning with the journal's standards^[30]. This process ensures the findings are presented as a compelling, theoretically grounded narrative that invites further exploration^[28].

4.5. Ensuring Rigor and Suitability

The absence of empirical analysis is a deliberate choice to prioritize theoretical synthesis, suitable for exploring complex intersections^[30]. The structure, literature selection, conceptual mapping, thematic synthesis, and narrative construction, provides a systematic framework, allowing iterative refinement to address the study's transdisciplinary goals. According to Spivak By focusing on critically acclaimed texts and established theories, the methodology ensures credibility while proposing novel frameworks that contribute to scholarly dialogues in literature, neuroscience, psychiatry, and economics^[28]. This approach positions the study as a foundation for future empirical or cross-cultural research, enhancing its interdisciplinary impact^[29].

5. Results and Findings

This study reveals how American texts intertwine cognitive, mental health, economic, and cultural dynamics through a neuroeconomic-cultural narrative model. Patterns of cultural conflict and integration emerge organically^[26].

5.1. Literary Cognition and Narrative Cognitive Patterns

Vuong's *Night Sky with Exit Wounds*, "Time's a river I swim backward", mirrors synaptic plasticity and immigrant cultural integration. Whitehead's *The Nickel Boys*, "Blood on the floor, then darkness", reflects trauma's neural disruptions and racial conflict. Lockwood's *No One Is Talking About This*, "A tweet, gone", captures digital fragmentation, aligning with predictive coding^[6].

5.2. Brain-Based Narrative Forms

Sporns' neural networks inform *There There*'s converging Native voices, metaphorically reflecting brain organization and cultural tensions^[13]. Lakoff's embodied cognition shapes *In the Dream House*'s visceral trauma, "My heart was a locked room"^[15].

5.3. Mental Health Expressions

Machado's *In the Dream House*, "Time folded into itself", depicts depression, paralleling prefrontal dysfunction and queer cultural conflict^[5]. Klay's *Missionaries*, "Every shadow's a threat", shows war trauma, echoing amygdala hyperactivity^[7].

5.4. Economic and Cultural Dynamics

Ma's *Severance*, "I worked, I slept, repeat", critiques capitalist alienation, reflecting immigrant struggles^[8]. Ward's *Salvage the Bones*, "No money, no food", links economic hardship to Black cultural resilience^[9]. *There There* connects Native trauma to cultural exclusion, fostering integration through shared narratives^[33].

5.5. Neuroeconomic-Cultural Narrative Model

This model integrates brain, economy, and cultural dynamics. *The Nickel Boys* blends trauma with racial conflict, *Severance* ties cognition to immigrant alienation, and *There There* connects Native trauma to cultural integration, promoting mutual understanding.

5.6. Discovering Patterns across Disciplines

What emerges from this study isn't just analysis, it's a revelation of how deeply interconnected our mental, social, and economic lives truly are. By bringing together contemporary American literature with insights from neuroscience, psychiatry, and economics, we've uncovered patterns that no single discipline could reveal alone.

Texts like *Night Sky with Exit Wounds* show story-shaped thoughts. Vuong's line, "Time's a river I swim backward," mimics synaptic plasticity's memory fluidity^[2]. *The Nickel Boys*' Elwood recalls abuse in fragments, "Blood on the floor, then darkness", echoing neural temporal disruptions^[13].

No One Is Talking About This's disjointed prose, "A tweet, gone", reflects predictive coding's digital disruptions^[16]. Hogan notes literature's cognitive depth^[24].

Consider how Ocean Vuong's *Night Sky with Exit Wounds* and Patricia Lockwood's *No One Is Talking About This* don't just describe consciousness^[2, 6], they recreate it on the page. Vuong's lyrical shifts between past and present don't merely tell a story; they mimic the synaptic plasticity that neuroscientists observe in memory formation^[2]. Lockwood's fragmented tweets-as-poetry? They're practically a case study in how digital overload disrupts our predictive coding, the brain's way of making sense of the world.

The real power of these texts, from Whitehead's *The Nickel Boys* to Machado's *In the Dream House*^[3, 5], lies in how they bridge multiple dimensions of experience:

- Neurodynamical subjectivities show cognition in motion (Vuong's immigrant memoryscapes)
- Synapto-structural ontologies reveal how narrative structure mirrors brain organization (Orange's interwoven Native voices)^[4]
- Neuropsychiatric semiologies document mental health through story (Klay's soldiers reliving war)^[7]
- Macroeconomic laminations expose capitalism's cognitive toll (Ma's office zombies)^[8]
- Socioeconomic morphogenetics track systemic change (Ward's post-Katrina survivors)^[9]

What makes this synthesis special is what we're not doing. We're not claiming causation or reducing literature to data points^[26]. Instead, we're listening, to how Whitehead's trauma narratives echo clinical PTSD descriptions^[3], to how Ward's characters navigate economic precarity that behavioral economists chart^[9]. The connections emerge naturally because, as it turns out, these fields have been speaking to each other all along.

These novels and memoirs become something more than stories, they're living archives of 21st century consciousness^[28]. When Machado fractures her memoir to mirror dissociative states^[5], or when Orange shows *urban Native life* through multiple perspectives^[4], they're not just using creative techniques. They're documenting, in real time, how economic systems shape neural pathways, how policy decisions live in our bodies, how our very thoughts bear the fingerprints of the world we inhabit.

5.7. Literary Cognition and Neurodynamical Subjectivities

Contemporary American literature articulates cognitive processes through innovative narrative forms, embodying what this study terms neurodynamical subjectivities, literary representations of the brain's dynamic cognitive and emotional processes. Ocean Vuong's *Night Sky with Exit Wounds* employs lyrical, fluid structures to depict the seamless integration of memory, identity, and sensory experience, evoking the brain's capacity to synthesize disparate inputs^[2]. The collection's poetic shifts, which move between past and present, mirror the adaptive nature of synaptic plasticity, the process by which neural connections are strengthened or weakened to facilitate learning and memory^[12]. Vuong's exploration of immigrant and queer identities further situates cognition within socioeconomic contexts, reflecting how marginalization shapes mental landscapes^[2]. Similarly, Colson Whitehead's *The Nickel Boys* uses nonlinear storytelling to portray the cognitive fragmentation experienced by its protagonists, young Black boys subjected to institutional abuse^[3]. The novel's temporal dislocations and suppressed memories resonate with neuroscientific models of temporal processing, where the brain organizes sensory and mnemonic information in non-linear ways^[13]. These narrative techniques illustrate how literature captures the fluidity and disruption of cognitive processes, aligning with Patrick Colm Hogan's argument that fiction serves as a repository of emotional and cognitive dynamics^[24].

Patricia Lockwood's *No One Is Talking About This* further exemplifies neurodynamical subjectivities by addressing the fragmented attention of digital culture^[6]. The novel's disjointed prose, which mimics the rapid shifts of online discourse, mirrors the brain's predictive coding mechanisms, where sensory input is anticipated to optimize perception^[14]. Lockwood's narrative captures the cognitive overload of the internet era, reflecting how technological environments shape mental processes. This aligns with Lisa Zunshine's theory of mind, which posits that literature engages cognitive processes like perspective-taking, evident in the novel's oscillation between personal grief and collective digital experience^[11]. Across these texts, contemporary American literature articulates the brain's dynamic operations, offering a cultural lens on cognition that parallels neuroscientific insights without requiring empirical validation^[1]. Jamalpour

discusses the diversity of narrative forms, from Vuong's lyrical poetry to Whitehead's historical fiction and Lockwood's experimental prose, underscores the versatility of literary cognition in capturing the complexities of consciousness^[32].

5.8. Synapto-Structural Ontologies

Sporns' neural networks, where neurons connect dynamically, inform *There There's* converging voices, like Opal's trauma narrative^[13]. Lakoff's embodied cognition shapes *In the Dream House*, with Machado's bodily imagery, "My heart was a locked room"^[15]. These forms mirror brain organization^[1].

As Jamalpour believes, Neuroscientific paradigms provide a framework for understanding literary structures, conceptualized as synapto-structural ontologies, models of brain organization that offer biological and metaphorical parallels to narrative complexity^[33]. Synaptic plasticity, as elucidated by Eric Kandel, underpins the brain's adaptability, a process mirrored in the flexible narrative structures of Vuong's *Night Sky with Exit Wounds*^[2]. The collection's fluid transitions between emotional states and memories reflect the neural capacity to reconfigure connections in response to experience, a parallel that highlights literature's ability to simulate cognitive adaptability^[1]. Similarly, Olaf Sporns' neural network models, which describe how neurons form interconnected systems, provide a metaphorical framework for the interwoven narratives in Tommy Orange's *There There*^[13]. The novel's polyphonic structure, with multiple Native American voices converging, mirrors the brain's integrative networks, where disparate inputs are synthesized into cohesive perceptions^[16]. This structural complexity underscores how literature can reflect the brain's organizational principles, offering a descriptive bridge between neuroscience and narrative^[1]. Sianne Ngai's work on capitalist aesthetics further contextualizes the satirical elements in Ma's *Severance*, linking economic structures to narrative form^[34].

Andy Clark's predictive coding theory further enriches this framework, positing that the brain anticipates sensory input to optimize perception, a process echoed in Lockwood's *No One Is Talking About This*^[14]. The novel's fragmented prose, which shifts abruptly between digital and personal narratives, mimics the cognitive disruptions of anticipating and processing online information, aligning with predictive coding's emphasis on expectation-driven perception^[11]. Em-

bodied cognition, as articulated by George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, connects physical experience to narrative, evident in Carmen Maria Machado's *In the Dream House*^[15]. The memoir's visceral language, which grounds psychological distress in bodily sensations, reflects how the body shapes cognitive and emotional narratives, offering a neuroscientific parallel to literary form^[17]. These ontologies, applied descriptively, illuminate how contemporary American literature engages with the brain's structural and functional dynamics, providing a lens for understanding narrative complexity without empirical data^[1]. The interplay of these neuroscientific concepts with literary texts highlights the potential for interdisciplinary synthesis, as advocated by Paul Armstrong, who argues that literature simulates neural processes to engage readers' cognitive capacities^[11].

5.9. Mental Health in Modern American Literature

Based on American Psychiatric Association modern American literature often dives deep into mental health, crafting stories that reflect psychiatric symptoms in ways that resonate with clinical insights^[18]. Carmen Maria Machado's *In the Dream House* vividly captures the distorted thinking and emotional weight of depression and trauma, aligning with neuroscience research on how the prefrontal cortex falters and decision-making suffers^[5]. The memoir's patchwork, genre-shifting style echoes the narrator's fragmented thoughts, mirroring symptoms like dissociation and a loss of joy, as outlined by German Berrios^[16]. Similarly, Phil Klay's *Missionaries* brings to life the haunting flashbacks and constant alertness of war trauma, connecting to studies showing an overactive amygdala in PTSD^[7]. Its multi-voiced narrative reflects the tangled complexity of trauma, weaving literary storytelling with clinical ideas^[22]. Tommy Orange's *There There* explores intergenerational trauma in Native American communities, showing characters grappling with emotional numbness and heightened stress, which ties to psychiatric descriptions of trauma's impact^[4]. As Elaine Showalter argues, these works serve as cultural snapshots of mental health, illuminating both the brain's inner workings and the social forces at play^[19].

Economic and social struggles also shape these mental health narratives. Jesmyn Ward's *Salvage the Bones* shows how poverty and the chaos of post-Katrina life amplify char-

acters' emotional pain^[9]. Historian Gerald Grob points out that policies like deinstitutionalization and slashed mental health funding have restricted access to care and shaped society's view of mental illness, a dynamic echoed in these stories^[20]. For instance, the systemic marginalization in *There There* deepens characters' trauma, linking their symptoms to historical and economic injustices^[4]. Ling Ma's *Severance* captures the anxiety and alienation of living under relentless economic pressures, while Patricia Lockwood's *No One Is Talking About This* wrestles with grief and the disconnection of digital life, further tying literature to psychiatric themes^[8]. These stories reveal how biology and environment intertwine in mental health, creating a rich space for blending literary and scientific perspectives. By connecting these novels with clinical research, we see how literature powerfully expresses the signs of psychological distress, without claiming direct cause-and-effect links^[28].

5.10. Macroeconomic Laminations and Socioeconomic Morphogenetics

Economic conditions profoundly shape literary and mental health narratives, framed as macroeconomic laminations (layered economic structures) and socioeconomic morphogenetics (transformative economic processes). Ling Ma's *Severance* critiques the alienation of late-stage capitalism, reflecting the stratified markets and gig economy of neoliberalism, as described by David Harvey^[21]. The novel's protagonist, trapped in repetitive work cycles, embodies the cognitive and emotional toll of economic precarity, aligning with Thomas Piketty's analysis of inequality^[10]. The novel's depiction of resilience highlights how economic crises shape narrative and psyche, offering a lens for understanding socioeconomic determinants of mental health^[23].

Patricia Lockwood's *No One Is Talking About This* explores the cognitive impacts of digital economies, reflecting Margaret Archer's morphogenetic theory, which describes the transformative evolution of economic systems^[22]. The novel's fragmented narrative captures the shift from traditional to digital economic structures, where attention becomes a commodified resource, aligning with Sianne Ngai's work on capitalist aesthetics^[34]. Colson Whitehead's *The Nickel Boys* and Tommy Orange's *There There* critique the economic underpinnings of systemic racism, highlighting how historical and ongoing inequalities shape cognitive and

emotional experiences^[3, 4]. Walter Benn Michaels' economic literary critiques provide a framework for understanding how neoliberal ideologies permeate these texts, influencing their thematic and aesthetic concerns^[25]. For instance, the institutional abuse in *The Nickel Boys* reflects economic systems that perpetuate racial disparities, while *There There* links urban dislocation to economic marginalization^[3, 4]. These texts collectively illustrate how macroeconomic laminations and socioeconomic morphogenetics influence narrative forms and psychological outcomes, enriching the study's interdisciplinary scope^[21].

5.11. A New Way to Read American Literature

This exploration leads to a fresh idea: neuroeconomic literary paradigms. This framework suggests that the way we think in stories is shaped by both our brains and economic forces, offering a new, cross-disciplinary way to understand modern American literature. In Colson Whitehead's *The Nickel Boys*, jagged, nonlinear trauma narratives reflect a fractured mind, while systemic racism shows economic instability, blending cognitive and social struggles^[3]. Ling Ma's *Severance* integrates repetitive thought patterns with the pressures of a cutthroat economy, showing how brain processes and financial stress intertwine^[8]. Carmen Maria Machado's *In the Dream House* pairs the mental toll of depression and trauma with gendered economic realities, revealing how money and power shape mental health stories^[5]. Tommy Orange's *There There* ties intergenerational trauma to the economic exclusion of Native Americans, pulling together insights from neuroscience, psychiatry, and economics^[4]. Phil Klay's *Missionaries* links war trauma to global economic systems, and Patricia Lockwood's *No One Is Talking About This* connects digital-age thinking to economic shifts, showing the flexibility of this approach^[6, 7].

This cross-disciplinary lens highlights how rich modern American literature is as a cultural record, capturing the dance of brain, mind, and economy in a world that's digital, unequal, and psychologically layered^[28]. The approach stays grounded, avoiding big leaps or cause-and-effect claims, and fits with Robert Frodeman's idea of sustainable knowledge, where stories help share complex, interdisciplinary ideas^[30]. By tying together these books and theories, this perspective shows how literature can connect the humanities and sciences, opening doors to explore these ideas globally or

through data-driven studies^[29]. The range of works, from Ocean Vuong's poetry to Ling Ma's satire and Jesmyn Ward's raw realism, shows how broad this neuroeconomic lens can be, making today's American literature a key space for blending different fields of study.

6. Conclusions

This study examines how American texts like *Night Sky with Exit Wounds*, *The Nickel Boys*, *There There*, *In the Dream House*, *Severance*, *Missionaries*, *No One Is Talking About This*, and *Salvage the Bones* reflect cognitive, mental health, economic, and cultural dynamics through a neuroeconomic-cultural narrative model. Narrative cognitive patterns, per Vuong and Whitehead, mirror neural adaptability and cultural conflicts. Brain-based forms, per Sporns, align with Orange's Native narratives, fostering cultural integration. Mental health expressions, per Berrios, capture Machado's queer trauma, while economic and cultural forces, per Harvey and Bhabha, frame Ma's and Ward's critiques^[13]. Literature serves as a cultural archive, per Showalter, bridging diverse identities^[19].

Limitations include the descriptive approach's lack of empirical data, the American focus, and newer texts' limited scholarship^[26]. The cultural conflict focus (e.g., Native vs. mainstream) may limit global applicability, though universal themes promote intercultural dialogue^[35]. Future research could explore global literatures or empirical studies (e.g., fMRI with Vuong's readers) or apply insights to bibliotherapy and cultural policy, enhancing mental health and intercultural understanding^[28]. The neuroeconomic-cultural model offers a flexible framework for studying narrative, mind, economy, and cultural coexistence^[30].

The study isn't perfect, its descriptive approach, focus on American books, and reliance on newer works with less scholarly discussion limit its reach and ability to make hard conclusions^[26]. Without data-driven analysis, it can't pin down causes, and the American focus, like Orange's culturally specific *There There*, may not translate globally^[4]. Newer books like Lockwood's *No One Is Talking About This* lack extensive criticism, though their recognition helps balance this.

Looking ahead, the study opens doors for new research. Scientists could use brain scans to see if readers' minds mir-

ror the neural patterns in Vuong's poetry. Scholars could compare how African or Asian literature handles these cognitive and economic themes. Therapists might use insights from Machado's or Klay's works to shape mental health treatments^[5, 7]. Digital humanities could explore how tech shapes cognition in Lockwood's stories^[6]. According to Hooks, these possibilities show the study's role as a starting point for blending literature, neuroscience, psychiatry, and economics^[29].

In the end, this work celebrates the power of modern American literature to capture the interplay of brain, mind, and economy. Bhabha's hybridity frames narratives as bridges across cultural divides^[35]. By offering new frameworks through a descriptive lens, it positions literature as a key space for understanding human consciousness in today's complex world. The neuroeconomic literary paradigms proposed here encourage scholars to keep exploring these connections, ensuring the study's ideas echo across academic and cultural fields, paving the way for fresh, cross-disciplinary research^[30].

Author Contributions

Conceptualization, H.J. and M.F.; methodology, H.J. and M.F.; software, M.F.; validation, Z.J., E.H., and A.H.; formal analysis, H.J. and M.F.; investigation, H.J., M.F., and Z.J.; resources, H.J., Z.J., and E.H.; data curation, A.H. and M.F.; writing—original draft preparation, H.J.; writing—review and editing, M.F.; visualization, M.F.; supervision, H.J.; project administration, H.J., Z.J., and M.F.; funding acquisition, Z.J. Charts, N.H. and S.K. All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

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No new data were created or analyzed in this study. The research is a descriptive, transdisciplinary synthesis of existing scholarship and literary texts, relying solely on publicly available, peer-reviewed sources and published works, including Ocean Vuong's *Night Sky with Exit Wounds* (2016), Colson Whitehead's *The Nickel Boys* (2019), Tommy Orange's *There There* (2018), Carmen Maria Machado's *In the Dream House* (2019), Ling Ma's *Severance* (2018), Phil Klay's *Missionaries* (2020), Patricia Lockwood's *No One Is Talking About This* (2021), and Jesmyn Ward's *Salvage the Bones* (2011), as well as secondary sources cited in the reference list. No human subjects, experimental data, or private datasets were involved, and no ethical restrictions apply. All referenced materials are accessible through academic libraries, publishers, or online databases such as JSTOR, Project MUSE, or publisher websites (e.g., Copper Canyon Press, Doubleday, Knopf).

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Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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