

**NEW SOCIOLOGY:
JOURNAL OF CRITICAL PRAXIS**

Cover Artist Statement

In this poster, I invite the viewer to reclaim life by connecting to their inner child. The central message is supported by my choice of colours. The colours are easy on the eyes and call upon a childlike joy of colouring and scribbling without a care. However, the doodle-like drawings are in juxtaposition against the backdrop of an unfinished to do list. The “SSHRC” is intentionally more visible than the remainder of the list, to call on the fact it is an academic’s to do list. The drawings themselves feature images of life and grief, with the welting balloon and soaring kite/bird. Finally, the words sprinkled around the poster offer the viewer some context, as well as a chance to dive deeper into this separate dimension. The poster asks the question, “What is possible if we allowed ourselves to pause the lists and invite our minds to rehearse long abandoned freedom?”

Cover Artist Biography

Shams Seif is an artist, academic, writer, and exhausted activist. They are a PhD student in Gender, Feminist, and Women’s Studies, and they run a writing collective named The Poetry Passport. Shams enjoys caring for plants and prioritizing space for self-reflection. Their current focus is on employing creative writing techniques for non-writers as an aid in their self-identification process. They believe that wearing masks and socially distancing is necessary and a social responsibility.

BECOMING (UN)PRODUCTIVE: GRIEVING DEATH, RECLAIMING LIFE (VOL. 1)

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Being online during a pandemic in the climate of black death is absolutely triggering. To let the pain out, I've had to tap out—had to let those who love me pull me out of this trigger. We, as Black women, carry the heaviness of anti-black/misogynoir policing and anti-black violence with COVID. As Brand contends, 'we've been living in a pandemic all of our [black] life; it is structural rather than viral; it is the global state of emergency of antiblackness'. #SayHerName, #ICantBreathe, #Blacklivesmatter, sigh, I'm so tired. I don't want to live this pattern time and time again. I want to harness this anger/energy to build alternative possibilities for Black life, but I'm just so drained. So now, with this weight on my spirit, I am required to uphold my scholarly duties in addition to tutoring and mentoring the future of tomorrow, guest lecturing, hosting anti-black workshops, all whilst navigating an anti-black world that is determined to script my ancestors, descendants and I out of this narrative of life. It's a lot. But I'm managing.

- Beatrice Anane-Bediakoh, Chief-Deputy-Editor

This year, I have felt simultaneously stuck in stillness but also surrounded by chaos. I feel frozen in time, trapped by the same mundane four walls that I call home, unable to think beyond their ontological restrictions. I feel time speeding past me as I stumble, fumble, and watch helplessly as it slips through my outreached fingers. My stuckness has forced me to rely on technology to marginally satiate my visual and auditory senses. So, I, the cyborg, use my new digital eyes and ears to escape these walls and find myself in chaos. I watch stewing in my impotent anger, but not shock, as the structures that make up our society continue to function as intended and wreak coordinated havoc on the world, committing gratuitous violence on people of colour, but especially Black people, around the world. I'm tired, and my weariness builds as I attempt to support my community, family, and friends in any way I can. My mind becomes more chaotic by the day as the 'need' for productivity builds and sits immiscibly with my awareness that productivity makes me implicated and complicit in reproducing this shitty system. But I the half-person, half-machine, must keep on keepin on, so I suppress and compartmentalize my emotions to continue producing during my 'free' time and stand idly by and watch as the academy squeezes every last drop of value from my body, too tired to think of an otherwise.

- Giovanni Carranza- Hernandez, Chief-Deputy-Editor

My head feels like a bottomless container of all the things I have to get done. Grade midterms, conduct interviews, read, email, coordinate mutual aid project, do mutual aid – cook, deliver, repeat, speak on panels, email, coordinate this journal, manage our social media, manage social media for mutual aid project, email, edit articles, submit articles, revise articles, find articles, try to have a life... I'm always doing something, and yet, the list never gets smaller. I'm productive. Always productive. Friends say: "I don't know how you do it." It bothers me. People mean well when they say it, but it's intended to celebrate my seemingly endless ability to output, to keep up, and the thing is, I'm not keeping up with anything. I feel like my body is disintegrating on a cellular level. I'm not even tired, I'm just exhausted. I don't want to sleep, I want to rest, to sit, to breath, to stop. That's what endless, uncompromised productivity really looks like. You don't actually keep up; something has to give. Nobody keeps up with academia and feels OK about it, especially not us. Something always gives, or breaks. I think I'm breaking, or something.

- Jade Crimson Rose Da Costa, Founder/Editor-in-Chief

EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION

Inline with the spirit of this issue, we begin with three epigraphs from the senior editors of *New Sociology*: Beatrice and Giovanni, our Chief-Deputy-Editors, and me, Jade, the founder and Editor-in-Chief. All of us are upper-level graduate students; all of us are tired, all of us are negatively racialized (albeit unevenly); all of us are sources of knowledge, insight, and strength.

These epigraphs mirror the exhaustion and resiliency that you will find pulsating throughout the pages of this issue: *Becoming (Un)Productive: Grieving Death, Reclaiming Life* (Volume 1). The theme of the issue was inspired by the realities of graduate students like us; those of femme, queer, trans* and or Black, Indigenous, and People of Colour academics, organizers, and creatives trying to live through academia and society's obsession with productivity during a time of widespread murder, grief, and unrest; during COVID-19 and, in the wake of George Floyd's, and more locally, Regis Korchinski-Paquet's, murder, the public's heightened (and now discarded) interest in Black Lives Matter and the state sanctioned killing and letting die of Black and Indigenous people especially and people of colour more generally; during protests and job searches, emails and naps, webinars and evictions; bursts of performative activism and endless calls for publications; social isolation and constant zooming.

These epigraphs are intended to speak for us, and, more specifically, me, as I fumble to write this introduction. I don't have the time or energy to write a proper one, so I'm not going to. Indeed, doing so would be disingenuous to what we have set out to do here: give people like us the space we need to produce and create on our own terms, and not according to the imperializing rhetoric of academia and racial capitalism. Also, we do not want to ask you to read more than you need to. We have too much shit to read and no time to read it in. So, this is all I'll say for now: *We're just so drained, too tired to think of an otherwise. And something has to give.*

What that something is, and what its absence gives way to, we don't know, but we continue to imagine, dream, and hope for an otherwise, for a world beyond productivity and death.

I will, however, introduce our pieces in traditional editorial fashion, as we want to show our

authors not only the respect they deserve, but the gratitude we have for their art, poetry, and prose. The issue is broken into five parts, each organized by a prominent theme, all containing three pieces each: *Sleep*, *Contagion*, *Movement*, *Productivity*, and *Storytelling*. These are the themes our authors naturally oriented towards and revealed to us through their art. The first theme, *Sleep*, begins with the featured piece of the volume: "Sleeping into Wakefulness: Traversing the Three Stages of Sleep Towards Liberation", written by activist-artist Anjali Appadurai, and activist-scholar Sasha Askarian. Feeling the power, beauty, and raw energy of Appadurai and Askarian's words within our bones, our editorial team unanimously agreed to make this our featured piece. A combination of poetry, social commentary, and collage artwork, *Sleeping into Wakefulness* uses sleep as a reality and a metaphor for the trauma and resistance of racial-gendered-classed being under white-supremacist-capitalist patriarchy, moving through the sleep cycle – light sleep, REM sleep, and slow wave sleep – to speak to the liberatory energies contained within our unconscious minds, creative energies, and (un)known imaginaries. In essence, this piece literally details the power to dream of an otherwise. The authors' words spoke to us and our team on a cellular, spiritual level, and, in doing so, perfectly embodied the critical praxis ethic of our journal: art and politics as lived practice.

The second piece under *Sleep* is a creative nonfiction essay written by Andie (Amy) Keating, entitled "I Need a Nap: Living with Idiopathic Hypersomnia in Sleepless Capitalism". Keating combines the best of academic critique with the power of personal prose in a seemingly effortless way that is nothing short of profound. The sleep to which they speak is exhausting and unquenchable, conditioned by the body and by the social, by their idiopathic hypersomnia and the hyper-productivity of our violent capitalist state. In approaching the question – the trauma, the desire, the idea – of sleep in this way, Keating blends the public and private realms of living (and dying) in our devastated world to intensely explore the ills of our current milieu from the rhythms of the somatic self. This piece points to the potential of academic work to bridge the intellect with the beautiful and the ordinary, the ability to push so-called academic writing from the confines of citations, literature reviews, and themes, to the power of the everyday. In doing so, Keating's

words are a harbinger for how art can improve and enrich academic analysis.

The last piece of the section is a devastatingly beautiful poem entitled “To sleep overseas”, which is written by scholar and international organizer Roxana Escobar Ñañez. The poem speaks to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on her home country, Peru. There is a pain and a truth contained within the poem that is as undeniable for the reader to feel as it is as hard for me to capture. Escobar Ñañez’s powerful and intense writing uses the images of sleeplessness and nightmares to reckon with the fear and anxiety that she feels as an international Peruvian student living in so-called Canada. As a result, she brings the “far away” impacts of COVID-19 on the Global South to bear on those of us living in Tkaronto/Three Fires Territories and beyond. Her poem reminds us that the nationalist thinking through which Westerners often interpret collective trauma, such as COVID-19, tend not to speak to the transnationally complex realities of many refugees, im/migrants, and international students/workers living in Tkaronto especially or so-called Canada more generally. Left with the haunting image of loss that so many of us deny or turn away from, Ñañez’s poem foregrounds her personal grief in politically impactful, socially compelling, and poetically striking ways that we all must sit with and hold onto.

The next section of our issue is entitled *Contagion*. The pieces under this theme all use the power of visual imaginary to highlight the societal undertones – from the racial to the environmental - of infection, dirt, and disease, giving substantive focus to COVID-19, Orientalism, and their intersections. Piece one, entitled “Mutations in Yellow: Tumeric, cumin, cinnamon, and chili powder on rice paper”, is a photo essay by local artist and non-architect michelle liu. Featuring images of a serial arrangement of yellow pigments on rice paper, this photo essay gestures to the relationship between botany, viruses, and empire using turmeric, cumin, cinnamon, and chili powder, thereby exploring how the overlapping “yellows” of infection, foreignness, and invasion are often rendered into matters of racialized contagion within the white imaginary of Western nation states. The contagion of liu’s art is that of the Orientalized Other navigating a world that is medicalized, if not sterilized, in alignment with the racial purities and suffocating cleanliness of white supremacy.

The second piece in this section is a captioned photo essay written by photographer-scholar Brittany Schaefer, which is entitled “Lysol Lakes, and Other Photographs”. The photographs featured in this essay vibrantly bring to life the mundane horrors of COVID-19, highlighting the now normalized traumas we must endure to stop the spread of the deadly virus. Schaefer’s images are as haunting as they are beautiful, drawing focus to the oh-so-still nightmare of our new world order using intensely visceral yet tedious sites of un/contaminated public landscapes. This photo essay will leave you simultaneously validated and devastated. Following this, is a piece by scholar and creative Mengzhu Fu, who uses a clever comic strip to not only show us “how to wear a mask” but, in doing so, challenges the rise of Sinophobia in the wake of COVID-19. In this illustration, Fu disrupts the myths of why people might wear masks through a basic 101 tutorial that mimics the style of the safety instruction cards found on air flights as well as the colonial-esk posters featured in Anglo-colonial university washrooms that tell Chinese students not to stand on the toilet seats. Fu’s piece disperses the eroticism around masks to provide white people with the information that they apparently need to reframe from attacking masked East Asian folx. Rife with meaning, complexity, and colour, this brief comic illustration is a more than impressive balance between art, political satire, and academic critique.

The third section of the issue is called *Movement*, and it captures how we move, or do not move, the mind, body, and spirit to grapple with the simultaneous beauty and trauma of life. The first piece of the section, entitled “Thoughts of Sorts”, is a multi-media poem written and embodied by dancer, poet, and researcher Sebastian Oreamuno. A Toronto-based artist and PhD student born in Santiago, Chile, Oreamuno uses poetry and abstract imagery to visualize how he mobilizes dance and movement to articulate a sense of being and becoming that is as full, rich, and fluid as the worlds he inhabits, and which his art brings together. Equal parts poetry, dance, and methodology, *Thoughts of Sorts* is a testament to movement’s ability to resist and restore.

The second piece in *Movement* is a short but powerful poem written by Fiona Edwards, called “Sitting in the dark: COVID-19 and mental well-being”. An expression of how collective trauma

and non-movement go hand-in-hand, Edwards explores how the COVID-19 pandemic stagnates us, particularly young folk who are forced to come of age amongst a global health crisis defined by death, social isolation, and lack of mobility. Edwards' words speak to a reality of troubled mental health that plagues much of our postCOVID¹ society and will likely mark generations to come. From here, is the last piece of the section, which is a co-authored multi-media project entitled "What's Safe". Written and composed by local researchers, creatives, and educators Mélika Hashemi, Maryanne Casasanta, Lauren Runions and Heddy V. Graterol, the piece uses dancing and creative problem-solving, captured in prose and videos stills, to explore social distance measures and the limits of productivity in our immediate postCOVID world. Staged at Trinity Bellwoods Park in Tkaronto, Ontario, the dance score registers with many Torontonians/GTAers struggling to adapt to our shifting notions of (un)productivity and our desire to reimagine productivity along the lines of play and imagination.

Next, we have the section *Productivity*, which features pieces that explicitly challenge notions of productivity following the onset of COVID-19. First, we have an email exchange entitled "Imagining an (Un)productive Anthropology Through the Night" by Vishwaveda Joshi and Ira Famarin. Mobilizing the unique yet now overly familiar medium of email, scholar-artists Joshi and Famarin engage their minds, bodies, and souls as sites of trauma from which they can explore the thematic potential and insight of nighttime and nightness. In their exploration, they challenge static notions of productivity and reclaim the everyday as a site of artistic vision. Most profound, is their use of email, a platform that we have come to associate with the rigid hyper-productivity of our digital, postCOVID life, to diametrically detail the beauty, care, and power of everyday intimacy. As such, this piece is as novel in vision as it is in form and content.

The second piece under *Productivity* is a digital image curated by scholar-creative M-A Murphy, entitled "You Are More Than Your Productivity". While seemingly a simple message, the words

encapsulated in the title, the design, and the text, have become a mantra in the wake of COVID-19, in the wake of blurred boundaries, endless workdays, a million Zoom meetings, and even more emails: *we are more than our productivity*. We are art, beauty, and pain; we are alive. Murphy's words stand as a reminder to all of us attempting to write and work through collective trauma; through pandemics and broken social systems and all-around injustice and inhumanity, that our value, our worthiness, our lives are not contingent on our productivity, but the connections and relationships to the energies that make up our world and the loves in our life. Lastly, we have "Quarantine Diaries: A Look into Isolation, Self-Hatred, and Acceptance" – a series of diary entries written by poet and emergent scholar Gloria Park. An intimate exploration into the exhaustion, anxiety, and depression of self isolation, widespread grief, and deep uncertainty, Park shares pages from her personal diary to highlight the all-too-common mental health struggles of COVID living. At once personal and social, spectacular and mundane, intimate and general, this piece is not only a metaphor for the blurred public-private boundaries of our new world, but a radical reimagining of its potential, resonate of the feminist adage "the personal is political" and the underlining belief in the power of everyday social critique.

The last section of our issue is entitled *Storytelling*. These pieces highlight the pedagogical, critical, and radical power of personal and creative narratives, blending emotions, lived experiences, and artistic prose with political critique and praxis. The first story is a visual essay called "Writing through Story: The Death of my Mother", written by creative writer Deanna MacNeil. Curated in the form of a blog post, *Writing through Story* is a heart wrenching, heart warming, and soul nourishing narrative about MacNeil's loss of her mother and the radical re-imaginings of family and kinship folded around, between, and across her grief. Rich in both affect and possibility, MacNeil's essay rests in your bones and radiates throughout your body, joining

¹ We mean postCOVID in the same way Ryan Kanté Jobson means the term postpandemic, as implied by their tweet: "So the "post" in postpandemic is the same as the "post" in postcolonial, no?"

Accessed June 14, 2021. Available at: <https://twitter.com/RyanCecilJobson/status/1401909046391853061?s=20>

sensations of loss and hope together in ways mirroring the complexities of family itself.

Following this, is another story rooted in lived experience: “A Cultural Reset” by emergent scholar Sarah Gaddam. Moving through the complexities of racial-ethnic-national belonging in our transglobal and diasporic world, Gaddam moves through the ebbs and flows of being and belonging by sharing her experiences as a first-generation South Indian of mixed Canadian-American nationality who is now living in Brampton, Ontario. Drawing specifically on her simultaneous loss of and yearning for her family’s native language, Telugu, Gaddam reminds us of the boundaries and contradictions inherent to ethnic-racial identifiers such as Brown, South Asian, and even Indian. Lastly, we have our first, only, and much appreciated piece of fiction, “The Factory Women”. Beautifully written by writer-researcher Natalie Welsh, this story brings the historical past into the historical present by sharing the stories of Italian immigrant women in Toronto in the 1960s prior to their acceptance into the whitestream. Reminding us that not too long ago, many ethnic groups who now benefit from whiteness were Othered and cast aside, *The Factory Women* is a call for solidarity among once “off-white” migrant settlers to reach into their past and to find themselves, their stories, in the faces of those who still reside at the margins.

As an issue born out of the trauma, heartbreak, exhaustion, violence, and resilience of the COVID-19 pandemic, we hope you find parts of yourself in the poetics, artistry, stories, thoughts, critiques, and visions of the words and images that radiate throughout the following pages. This issue was a labour of love in the truest sense of the phrase, and we could not be more thankful and proud of our contributors: thankful for their contributions, proud of their survival (and/or their lack thereof). These stories are testament to the power of those ignored, overlooked, and exploited by academia. We bring them to the center of knowledge in the face of collective trauma and profound social reimagining. We bring them to the center in the face of the endless calls to be productive despite the death, loss, and anxiety surrounding us. We bring them together to challenge academia’s (not so) hidden white supremacist-capitalist-cis-heteropatriarchal-ableist social fabric. *We bring them together to say fuck you, productivity, fuck you, racial capitalism,*

fuck you, academia, we’d rather keep resting, surviving, creating, and simply existing.

We would like to thank the authors, creatives, and dreamers who contributed to *New Sociology*. A special thank you also goes to our peer reviewers, editorial team, advisory board, York Digital Journals, York University Printings Services, and the York University Sociology Department. We would especially like to acknowledge Audrey Tokiwa for her unconditional support. Finally, we would like to thank Erika Mulder for designing the first six proofs of the issue and Brittany Myburgh for designing the rest. Brittany, in particular, is a main reason we were able to get the issue out on time and her thoughtfulness, reliability, and overall respect for our work allowed our issue, in all its power and beauty, to shine through and out into the world, giving our senior editors and authors comfort in the face of so much uncertainty. Thank you.

Jade Crimson Rose Da Costa, NS Founder and Editor-In-Chief, with Beatrice Anane-Bediakoh, NS Chief-Deputy-Editor, and Giovanni Carranza-Hernandez, NS Chief-Deputy-Editor

SLEEP

Sleeping into Wakefulness: Traversing the Three Stages of Sleep Towards Liberation

Anjali Appadurai & Sasha Askarian

Abstract

This piece is composed of a blend of poetry, social commentary, and collage artwork. It aims to draw connections between sleep and liberation, exploring how deeper levels of rest can draw us toward freedom, not only in our material conditions, but of thought, imagination and spiritual exploration. Using the three stages of the sleep cycle – light sleep, REM sleep and slow wave sleep – as a metaphorical and literal device, this piece explores productivity culture’s limiting effect on our mental and spiritual health; the piece creates poetic connections between the physical phenomena and the mental and spiritual possibilities that lie within each sleep stage. As working people, especially racialized working people, we are subject to generations of sleep deprivation through historical processes of enslavement and forced labour extraction, which translates to many lost years of the higher functions of rest: self-knowledge, memory, creativity and resilience. In today’s highly corporatized economy of neoliberal social relations, all working people are subject to a similar theft of the physical, mental, and spiritual power of deep rest. As racialized women of immigrant families, we draw upon our experience of witnessing firsthand the neoliberal ideology of sleep deprivation and extreme productivity portrayed as a necessary rite of passage for our families to have established belonging, stability and safety in Canada.

Keywords

Sleep, rest, capitalism, resistance, dreams, liberation



Light Sleep

The body begins to still into the midnight shift and we drift to the edge of sleep. Our heart slows, temperatures decrease, breath shallows, muscles relax and a light twitch plays upon our eyelids. We are in *light sleep*, a transitory phase between this world and the world of dreams. Our brain waves begin to lengthen as their daytime patterns slow into a relaxed state. We ride low frequency alpha and theta waves and move toward the threshold of memory, intuition, knowledge and dreams. We begin to distance ourselves from the external world, yet remain awake. Still awake.

A light tap upon the body is all that is required to pull us back into the waking world. In this stage, the brain is in purgatory. We can only go so deep into meaningful rest as our daily realities have a grip on us. The state of light sleep can never completely channel a deep, meditative focus on the signals originating from within.

We remain in light sleep because of our troubled histories, fears and future anxieties, all of which are fueled by the need to survive in a world that devalues social bonding, communal relations and meaningful rest. We are faced with perpetual sleep deprivation and a crisis of derealization. The body

and mind cannot integrate and access knowledge or power because our daily lives have detached us from ourselves and our environments. Racialized, migrant and labouring bodies have not only faced the capitalist theft of daily life and time, but also the sanctity of deep sleep, a level of rest that acts as a source of vital information and pathways into our pasts.

This light, cyclical and shallow stage of sleep speaks to a larger crisis. It is a crisis of the everyday long hours, stress and increased economic, emotional and affective labor that hinder our ability to achieve deep, active sleep. Locked into this non-restorative stage, we will not heal from the traumas of our waking world or dream revolutionary futures.¹ Ultimately, this lack of rest, the absence of a deep insightful sleep, is symptomatic of a wider social pathology of corporate-driven labour extraction.

Still, we shall rise

In stillness we begin to know

The vast and shallow pools surrounding the city

Detaching and detaining us to machine functions

Until we dip our calloused feet into murky waters

Ground ourselves into the earth once again

And escape the fatality of the booming city

REM Sleep

We enter the second part of the sleep cycle: *rapid eye movement*, or **REM sleep**. Our muscles tense, become rigid. Our eyelids flutter to life, darting frantically around emerging dreamscapes in our minds. The dreams begin, hurling us into worlds both familiar and fantastical. In this stage, brain activity closely mimics that of waking life, but can quickly surpass these levels. Synapses fire in new and untested ways.

When we access REM sleep, we access our dreams. When we access our dreams, we begin to push the conditioned boundaries of what is possible. When we dream, we begin to colour outside the lines; we tread outside the familiar neural ruts burned through daily work, daily acquisition of resources, daily survival, daily distraction.

Dreaming is a right, not a privilege. How else would we access our depth? Our boundaries? Our capacity to change, to grow? How else would we confront our fears, access our subconscious? To dream is to exist – if only in our minds – in a world without the limits of our flesh. Our dream worlds are without the need to produce daily in order to live, in order to be seen, in order to have a place in broader society.

*We shall sleep for sleep's sake,
we shall dream not to escape,
but to discover hidden truths,
uncovering a grander reality
than in the world in which we wake.*

Lucid dreaming occurs when the dreamer becomes aware of the dream. A common and trainable phenomenon, lucid dreamers can quite literally take flight, able to experience anything their imaginations can conjure. The lucid dreamer can bring to life the characters from their lives and interact with them in new and unforeseen ways. Lucid dreaming is a creative and empowering practice potentially available to us all; it offers the ability to transpose our fears – both subconscious and omnipresent – into living symbols, characters and sometimes defeatable adversaries. Sometimes, in this period of high activity and volatility, we can also confront the demons manifested through sleep paralysis.

*In sleep I break the master's spell
I dream his body damned to hell.*

Accessing the powers of sleep, lucid or unconscious, is a deeply creative and empowering practice acting as an avenue for new social imaginings untapped in our present state. Our rationalist Western culture considers the subjective space of sleep and dreams as merely “imaginary,” but unknown worlds and dream-visions offer truths that are inaccessible through the body’s senses and often obscured by Western epistemologies and hegemonic understandings of truth and knowledge.

*There's work I must do alone tonight
Led only by light of moon
Leave me to my work, I say
I am strong, I will surface soon.*

*I am lowered down by starry light
Into pools of mirrored tears
They stalk me through the glittered swamp
The smiling, snarling fears*

*The hand that stabs, the Jabberwock,
I'm weighted down with lead
I scream but only breeze comes out
I shift, I change, I tread.
Leave me to my slumber now*

*There's something I must do,
If I slay them all tonight,
I'll come back home to you..*

Sufi poets would evoke such powers of dreams and disrupt the linear temporalities of the present by practicing ritualistic sleep, following dream-stories as spiritual insights into our material existence¹¹. The spiritual signals in this twilight state hold an evocative power but remain faint and often fleeting if we do not sleep, rest and push the rigid and often violent boundaries of productivity.

Slow Wave Sleep

We have traversed past our dreams and entered our own uncharted depths. We are now in the longest and most critical sleep stage: *slow wave*, or **deep sleep**. Here, we don't dream: we become.

Our breath grows long and even, our muscles

settle into a deep stillness. Finally, there is quiet, there is space, there is room to grow. Deep within our bodies, our cells regenerate. Wounds heal, skin repairs itself, growth hormones are released. In deep sleep, the natural functions of the body may come to life at last, free of the busy chatter of the mind. Delta waves resound from our brains throughout our sleeping forms. The day's buildup of toxins are cleared away, and the body integrates what it has learned that day.

In deep sleep we are physically, literally becoming ourselves. This is Rest in its truest sense, where the many fragments of life's unending stimuli can float gently into place, allowed to integrate into tomorrow's waking self. In this state of rest, there is no struggle, nor is there joy. There is simply Being.

*As the sun falls into the West
And I have outgrown my nest
I think of the night as moments
blessed and of progress
Not from the sweetness of wine
But from the diligence of rest*

Historically, we have been deprived of sleep. Deep, unhindered sleep, past the reach of our fears, is not a luxury of the working person. It has not been the luxury of enslaved and racialized peoples whose rest-deprived docility is necessary to populate the lower rungs of the economic ladder. Permitted to sleep only enough to sustain productivity, we are denied growth, self-realization, and healing. We are kept complicit, afraid, vulnerable, reactive.

Sleep, unlike race and gender, is not often a visible marker of social and economic hierarchies, but it is nevertheless a significant obstacle to equity in any true sense. While we are robbed of sleep, those who benefit from neoliberalism's power structures also enjoy some of its greatest spoils: the freedom to rest and explore their dreams and longings within the haven of sleep.

*I am as tenacious as I am sleepy.
I am waves upon a shore.
I will do my work even as I rest, retreat.
I will create my own existence, and do good with it.
I will exude love
as an endlessly replenishing gift.*

To sleep deeply – for us – is to *resist*. In slow-wave Rest, we elude the twisted hierarchy of late-stage capitalism. We refuse to become disposable. We grow rich in self-knowledge, resilient in our minds and courageous of heart. We access wisdom from other realms, and we are fortified by our own spirits and those of our ancestors.

As we heal and integrate in deep, active sleep, we grow more independent and creative in our thinking. We move steadily toward our highest selves.

In deep sleep, we become dangerously Awake.

*Let us dream with intention,
Let me sleep with determination,
Let us rest with purpose and power*

Author biographies

Anjali Appadurai is a climate justice activist, communicator, and artist of South Indian descent. Her work in climate justice advocacy has ranged from engagement with the United Nations' international process down to grassroots organizing in her current home of Vancouver, BC. As an activist, Anjali has sought to draw connections between the geopolitical, social, and economic aspects of climate change, advocating for equity-based solutions to what is inherently an issue of justice. In her work as a Climate Justice Campaigner with the environmental organization Sierra Club BC, she works to bring a strong equity lens to campaigns, movements, and environmental discourse across the province. Viewing the climate crisis as a symptom of the deeper pathology of excessive growth and inequality driven by centuries of colonialism and erasure of traditional ways of knowing, the spiritual aspects of this field of this work give life to Anjali's creative pursuits as a singer, producer, and writer. In her collaborative musical project *Aluma Sound*, Anjali weaves mythology and imagery from her South Indian roots into the emergent landscape of the diasporic identity, exploring what it means to exist as an immigrant settler from the Global South on unceded Indigenous lands. In her solo work, she expresses through poetry, songwriting, and original compositions.

Sasha Askarian is an Iranian-Canadian PhD candidate in Political Science at York University. Her studies specialize in comparative politics, feminist epistemologies, and Science, Technology, and Society (STS). Her research explores the racial and gendered dimensions of mass incarceration in the United States and Canada, with a current focus on emerging Artificial intelligence (AI) technologies and their role in the shaping and disciplining of subjects in prisons. In examining this rapidly growing form of technological power, she seeks to illuminate how AI is dramatically shifting the ways we think and imagine the capitalist state's power. Sasha's work in the feminist movement, particularly through social projects with women's centers, has offered the radical space necessary for feminist praxis. She has helped organize demonstrations against anti-choice groups, acted in solidarity with grassroots feminist groups, and facilitated and organized workshops around feminist pedagogies and mental health awareness. Her time within the feminist community has inspired a radical understanding of power and politics in a way that continues to fuel her passion in the pursuit of knowledge. Sasha's first love, however, is the arts. Her passion for feminist praxis and political movements is best expressed through the medium of poetry.

i Rest as resistance and particularly the importance of healing the traumatized body and soul from the violence of capitalism and productivity culture interprets and builds upon the critical work of Tricia Hersey, founder of *The Nap Ministry* (<https://thenapministry.wordpress.com/>). Their work shared through social media, performance art, and physical installations is critical in demonstrating the nuanced ways in which Black and other racialized peoples have been subject to various forms of bodily and spiritual deprivation through the ongoing historical structures of slavery and colonization.

ii Learning about Sufism and more generally from our cultures and families has been integral to understanding the transformative power of sleep and dreams as a source of knowledge and self-representation. Various writers on Sufism and dreams have established the epistemological value of dream visions in the waking world (Amira Mittermaier, 2015) and dreaming as creative problem solving (Fariba Bogzaran & Daniel Deslauriers, 2012). Furthermore, Indigenous systems of knowledge express how dreaming and visioning act as essential ways of knowing our physical world and ourselves more deeply (Leanne Simpson, 2000; Dawn Marsden, 2004).

I Need a Nap: Living with Idiopathic Hypersomnia in Sleepless Capitalism

Amy Keating

Abstract

This work of creative non-fiction makes use of auto-theory and personal journaling to unpack my experience of living with idiopathic hypersomnia in a hyperproductive capitalist context. My discussions are undergirded by my frustration that I must depend upon the medicalization of my body and products of capitalist pharmaceutical corporations to function. I centre my experiences around my reality as a graduate student. Success in academia requires a gross output of ideas beyond the grasp of many folk who live with various chronic conditions. Using affect theory, queer crip studies, queer phenomenology, and temporality, I meander through the ever-present burden of existing in a tired body with the yearning to change (destroy) a system that already makes us *all* feel far too tired.

Keywords

idiopathic hypersomnia, queer theory, crip theory, embodiment, affect theory, autotheory, creative non-fiction

I Need a Nap: Living with Idiopathic Hypersomnia in Sleepless Capitalism

I have taken to getting up and staying out of bed once Margot's squeaky meow wakes me, usually around 6:30am or 7:00am. She's a hungry gal and it's breakfast time. If I don't shake out my limbs and walk around my apartment, I'll go right back to sleep. Some days, I feed Margot in a fog and return to bed: later, I check her bowl and my brain to recall if I have already gotten up that morning, noticing I have slept through at least four alarms.

I am learning to enjoy the mornings. Things still a little quiet, dew on the grass. With the prompting of my psychiatrist I have made a full list of morning activities I can do to keep me awake: a morning crossword puzzle, light tidying, sitting outside with coffee when it's warm out. Other days, I just make my bed and shift my tired body to a chair in the corner of my living room. Sometimes I start a crossword there. Often, I doze off again, for a few hours. This time with my neck a little craned in the dusty orange upholstery.

People like to comment on exhaustion:

you got how many hours of sleep?

last night I got (less/more) because
I (was working/haven't slept in weeks)

I am also *so exhausted* because
I have been *so busy*.

Etc., etc.

What about when I am so tired after days of doing nothing? It is not the *noble* pursuit of productivity but the blanket of lethargy that wraps me up tight. It is not the badge of honor worn only after burning ourselves out. 'Idiopathic' means 'we don't really know why,' and 'hypersomnia' means excessive sleepiness (Khan & Trotti, 2015). And, because these words form a 'diagnosis' given to me by a doctor, it is a thing I can point to and say *that's why I am so tired* (still without knowing really why). This diagnosis follows me into my career as a graduate student; it shapes my every move.

A professor discussing how to translate a PhD into the "non-academic" world once said how all work we do during graduate school should be directly related to our career goals. Another professor, after hearing I had been spending a lot of time working at my restaurant job lamented: "that's too bad, I wish you were working more on your *own* work."

Underlying this comment is the presumption that this is a simple choice. But academia does not privilege those short on time, energy, or money. It does not privilege those who cannot use every bit of their energy to produce, produce, produce (or, publish, publish, publish).

The comment suggests it is as if those summers I had spent lugging around jugs of chlorine at the swimming pool store was a purposeful, enjoyable, choice—while my middle-class peers were gallivanting from conference to conference, bulking up their CVs, making connections, starting new projects (I cringe and boil a little thinking back on the customer who—having pried into my personal life because a pool store worker is no career fit for a 'lady'—asked me if I was doing my PhD to find my husband).

As if coming home from nine-hour workdays to slump into my bed and sleep through my alarms most mornings was the career-building opportunity I had sought.

As if even the four-hour shifts at the fancy Italian restaurant, pretending to be a little straight to the hetero couples so I could try to earn tips while ignoring my co-workers' casual homophobia, was my idea of a relax and recharge, ready to dive back into theory upon returning home sweaty and smelling like old pasta.

(it wasn't how the professor meant it, but these jobs did turn out to be directly related to my research)

Our survival depends on capital (I write, as if that's news). And, we need to produce to earn money. You should be publishing in your undergrad to make it, we're told (but only in *prestigious* journals, of course). At least in your Master's. Regardless of your class status and the directly related student-debt accrued and lack of savings... *Publish or perish, publish or perish.*

I once let it slip to a new friend, despite trying to avoid the subject completely: I am feeling pretty tired today.

You're tired? That's me. I'm the one always tired. You're not allowed to feel tired.

Oh, okay.

I can't recall if I had told this friend about my idiopathic hypersomnia yet. But another time, after I am sure I had, she says to me on a particularly groggy day: how are you still tired from camping? (I camped for one night and I had to take two whole days to recover, I could have used three, but time is money, and I couldn't afford it).

It's not 'funny' that we are all tired. Not ha-ha. Not in a strange or coincidental way. It's purposeful. Once, in a graduate paper, I referenced a sentiment from Sarah Ahmed in a tweet that is no longer available. I stumbled upon a phrase with a similar intent in her online blog:

Exhaustion as a management technique: you tire people out so they are too tired to address what makes them too tired (Ahmed, May 30, 2018).

This paper talked about my queer and clumsy body. Still queer, and heavy limbs still clumsy. I used to write a lot about my clumsy body moving through the structure of academia. I appear able-bodied. Indeed, taking up crip theory feels tenuous to me. Is it really mine? I keep googling whether or not "idiopathic hypersomnia" is a disability. Is it an illness? A chronic condition? Why do I take Ritalin for it every single day, and still feel too tired to keep up with all of this required **output**?

Publish or perish, publish or perish or publish or perish or

Within the past year I have managed some sort of normalcy, I suppose. It has included serious sleep-hygiene. Only books before bed. Phone out of my room, far enough to have to walk to turn off the alarm, but not too far where I can't hear it. Lots of coffee. But not too late in the day. Morning work-outs (*trying not to spend too much time equating working-out with disordered eating habits*

and body dysmorphia, letting that thought come and go, or linger in the background again, whistling, waiting for its turn to come up the next morning when I then feel too groggy to go for my run). Sit on the uncomfortable loveseat if I want to watch any TV before bed (fall asleep with my back crunched again anyway). Great. Now I can wake up with my cat and choose from any of the list of activities I can do so that I don't fall back asleep. *Seven hours is not enough. Eleven is not enough. Nine, six, five, fourteen.*

I keep thinking it is not a disability because I am not registered with disability services at my institution. Because people tell each other everyday just how exhausted they are. And look at me, I've managed a decent routine. I think this while knowing that the concept of "disability" is shifting and contested (Kafer, 2013, p. 20). The medicalization of bodies is fraught, disability is socially constructed in many ways (p. 6). Yet, I am still bound to this body. I am so tired; everyone is so tired. It is impossible within me: we are all exhausted but every time I bring up having a chronic condition people respond with "oh my god I am also so tired," and I feel invalidated. The twisting of my lethargic limbs aches to defer to the medicalization, the nights at the sleep clinic and the following torturous days of napping in intervals, blood tests, and psychiatric evaluations: Yeah but **I** have a medically diagnosed condition. As if this somehow makes my exhaustion more real, without considering the privilege I had to have doctors believe my accounts and care enough to push further for an answer. I wonder how many folks I encounter daily may have an undiagnosed sleeping condition.

After explaining that I don't have a driver's license to a friend: yeah, but couldn't anyone just fall asleep at the wheel?

Isn't that a big part of the problem?

A direct consequence of my sleep disorder has been my interest in queer temporality (certainly in tandem with my queerness). Beyond my research, "chrononormativity" is in my daily vocabulary. Elizabeth Freeman conceptualizes chrononormativity as the dominant way in which our socio-economic and political systems are structured, giving specific value to temporal rhythms. She writes how it is the use of time to organize individual bodies toward maximum productivity. (Freeman, 2010, p. 3). Individual bodies toward maximum productivity. Every moment toward what we can contribute to

capitalism. Heteronormativity developed neatly alongside this, too. Freeman also shows how chrononormativity deeply affects queer subjects to the point of asynchronicity. When these temporal rhythms are expected to feel “natural” through constant policing and social discipline (p. 18), queers tend to fail when attempting to fit into gender/heterosexual/capitalist expectations (Halberstam, 2011; Muñoz, 2009). As queers do not line themselves up with traditional familial linearity, they start to veer away from the expectation of maximum labour and maximum efficiency in a capitalist context.

By virtue of existing in a ‘deviant’ body, attempting to conform to expectations of heteronormativity and capitalism can have a tangible, exhausting affect. In the jobs that I have mentioned, I was always expected to read ‘neutrally,’ which means adhering to gender roles and expectations under the precarity of capitalism. Ahmed writes that the “normative dimension can be redescribed in terms of the straight body, a body that appears ‘in line’” (2006, p. 66). Hiding what I think are markers of queerness, I work at femininity, trying to emulate my ‘female’ coworkers.

(Looking back on that time a co-worker was yammering on in expo about how he didn't understand how anyone could have gay sex. Not to me, directly. But I was there rolling silverware into napkins. I rolled so tightly they would have had to been ripped apart by the next customer. Another co-worker was fighting him on it, I could see her frustration. Too new to the restaurant, and already aslant from its gendered expectations, I remained tense and silent. I did not want to explain queer sex to a man I barely knew. I strained to hide my hurt as I brought my table their appetizers, pretending to be aligned). Following this ‘linearity’ means “to direct one’s desires toward marriage and reproduction; to direct one’s desires toward the reproduction of the family line” (Ahmed, 2006, p. 74). A heteronormative body may seem neutral because it aligns with what is considered the norm: “lines disappear through such processes of alignment” (p. 66). Anything aslant means that I deviate, an androgynous haircut, ungendered clothing, a sleep disorder. Yet in these jobs I contort myself to appear aligned because sometimes I lack the choice. It’s physical, it’s tiresome.

I think about these bodily contortions in relation to crip theory via Alison Kafer. She writes that both crip and queer times change our expectations of milestones and benchmarks, as well as our valuation of productivity and daily activities: “Rather than bend disabled bodies and minds to meet the clock, crip time bends the clock to meet disabled bodies and minds” (Kafer, 2013, p. 27). Crip time acknowledges the ways current temporal frameworks are based on a very particular embodiment, that is, white, “able,” young, etc. For a person with a disability accounting for chronic pain and fatigue, temporality shifts:

the present moment must often be measured against the moment to come: if I go to this talk now, I will be too tired for that class later...this idea of conserving energy, of anticipating, can be read as queer in that it bucks American ideals of productivity at all costs...in other words, how might we begin to read these practices of self-care not as preserving one’s body for productive work, but as refusing such regimes in order to make room for pleasure? (p. 39)

A crip time, like a queer time, does not align with time-as-productivity models of capitalism. The root of my exhaustion is ever blurry. Circular: the snake eating its tail. Embodying and acting, craning, shifting, contorting straining, into a specific space and within a specific timeline under a very specific system. Yet, always aslant and consequently affected. Melissa Gregg and Gregory Seigworth (2009) discuss that affect can be a relational feeling, one which is comprised of both intimate experience and interrelated bodies, “becoming a palimpsest of force-encounters traversing the ebbs and swells of intensities that pass between ‘bodies’” (p. 2). *The negative space between my body and a soft surface is weighty, and if I let it take hold I am gone for an hour or more, only to wake up with despair and limbs full of fog. Mandatory shutdowns were announced in March of 2020, and I became laden with the shrinking of that negative space.* So much of whatever normalcy I had worked toward since my “diagnosis” (or medicalization of a deviancy) involved attention to time and space. After years of trial, work, which I am fortunate enough to do from the comfort of my home, has to be staged with attention to this space. Where is my desk situated? Can I work in my pajamas? With soft pants in a blanket cocoon, I fall asleep at my desk again. I must go

somewhere else and return. Move my body. Change into something a bit uncomfortable: tight, digging into my chubby belly when I sit. Makeup so I can't rub my eyes, maybe.

I've little spaces left to go, lucky that I can work from home.

I don't want to denounce the privilege I have working in academia. But things are complicated. I have spoken with some non-academic folx since the shut-down in March. "Was your work affected?" They ask. "I work from home" I respond quickly. But I don't say how I was deeply affected. How I had to continue to grade papers and defend my candidacy exams and continue to produce and produce because if I go any longer than my allotted funding, how will I pay for my school? How will I finish? I can't take a break now. Publish or perish or publish or perish or

Better check the number of COVID cases in my town (I can't). Better check what the new symptoms are now (Nope). I am so tired, and I am only sleeping because I've stopped checking the news. But then I can't stop. And I can't stop scrolling. And yelling and feeling angry because I have learned about Breonna Taylor's murder, and George Floyd and Dominique Rem'mie Fells. And Jacob Blake was shot seven times. And I am so tired, but I have a home and a room to work in and I am white. The brain power and embodied awareness of existing in a racialized body is an exhaustion I'll never know (Hersey, 2020). My queer body feels straight people like eyes on the back of my head. My whiteness fades into the background (Ahmed, 2007). My "medically validated diagnosis" cringes when people complain of exhaustion and wants to fight back calmly and sleepily and hold claim to exhaustion, when we are all at the mercy of sleepless capitalism. I remember walking from a bus to get coffee, cognizant of the frat bros nearby, maybe they are lovely but maybe they are queerphobic and I know I look like a dyke. A police officer smiles and nods. I'm a dyke but I'm white.

Tomorrow I am going to a protest. And then I am going to nap. I hope you do too.

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Author Biography

Amy Keating is a PhD candidate in the Department of Gender, Sexuality, and Women's Studies at Western University in the area known as London, Ontario - the land of the Chippewa of the Thames, the Oneida of the Thames, and the Muncey Delaware Nation. Forever searching for other queers and community connections, Amy noticed that many queer communities surround various forms of art and creation. Their research thus explores how queer art and aesthetics can foster spaces of belonging and joy for queer identified folx in a world that was not made for deviant bodies. As Amy lives with idiopathic hypersomnia, they are forced to interrogate the way the structures of capitalism value a temporal framework that privileges the able, hetero, cis, male, and white body. Outside of academia, Amy also loves learning and writing queer folk songs on the banjo and sharing freshly baked bread with their friends.

To sleep overseas

Roxana Escobar Ñañez

Abstract

In this piece, I reflect on my fears regarding the COVID-19 pandemic in Peru, the country with the third highest rate of deaths per capita cases in the world. As an international Peruvian student living in Canada, my mind and heart were constantly worrying about the safety of my family and friends in the months following the pandemic. In the last week of May, I realized that for the first time in my life, I could no longer remember my dreams. I was waking up at 4am incessantly thinking about my country's situation. From the comfort of my Ph.D. desk, I saw how things were getting worse with time. Government efforts weren't succeeding. My family was calling every day with bad news. In June, the majority of my family was infected. I gave up on dreaming. I realized I did not have to dream anymore; the morning tales from Peru were surreal enough. This reflection is the outcome of a sleepless morning in the noisy construction site known as Toronto, Ontario.

Keywords

COVID-19, Peru, dreams

To sleep overseas

What do you dream about?

Since May, I wake up every night at 4 am with the same thought: I'm not dreaming anymore. I'm tired, and I'm concerned. I'm afraid, and every day I'm feeling more and more claustrophobic. As a Peruvian living in Canada, with all my family far away from me, it is easy to be afraid.

Especially when your country of residence does not care about you
and when your home country is in crumbles

I wonder.

How do you go to bed every night, when people in your beautiful city, thousands of them are walking for days or weeks to return to their places of origin? Because in Lima, there are no more jobs. There is no more food or hope. Hospitals are collapsing, and people are dying on the streets, some of COVID-19, some of hunger. *La ciudad está llena de tristeza.*

How do you close your eyes when the news shows people sleeping on the side of the road? Catching whatever is thrown at them from a moving car. Sometimes crackers, sometimes water, sometimes just words of encouragement. And while some are moving away from the darkness, others are disappearing in place. Two thousand women are missing—all of them during a national lockdown.

How do you have breakfast when all you see is that markets, such essential spaces for Peruvian people, filled with smells and sounds, full of colours and life, are now places of death. Everyone is infected with the damn virus. Market vendors, patrons, EVERYBODY. How do you wake up when all you can think is about the lady from the market, the one that is super nice every time you come back? A person who knows you since you were little. Is she safe? Would she be there the next time you visit? *Ojalá que sí.*

How do you eat calmly knowing that your brother went to the market yesterday?

It is difficult to put clothes in the morning while reading a text saying: your cousins, your uncles, your aunties, ALL OF THEM, got infected on their way to work. Or when your mom calls you because her chest hurts. Or when your friend tells you that ten of your neighbours are dead. ALL GONE. And you are not there to say goodbye. My father is hurting. *Acaba de perder a sus amigos.*

How do you go back to sleep when your rent increases during a pandemic? And around you, constructions never stop. How do you write when you can't hear your thoughts? Or maybe you don't want to listen to them anymore? Is Toronto just noise?

I don't remember the last time I dreamt.

Do we even have mornings in a pandemic?

Author Biography

Roxana Escobar Ñáñez is a PhD student in Human Geography at the University of Toronto. Her research focuses on Afro-Latinx Black geographies, feminist geography, and fatphobia in Latin America. Her doctoral thesis analyses the different ways in which Afro-Peruvian women contribute to the history and spaces of the city of Lima.

CONTAGION

Mutations in Yellow: Turmeric, cumin, cinnamon, and chili powder on rice paper

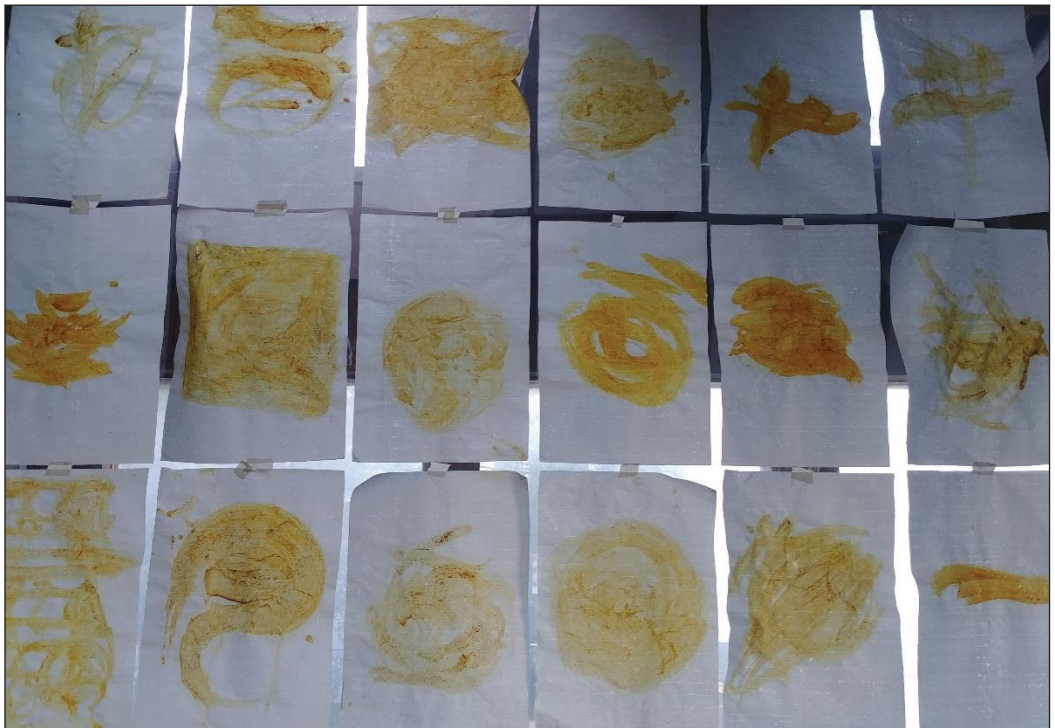
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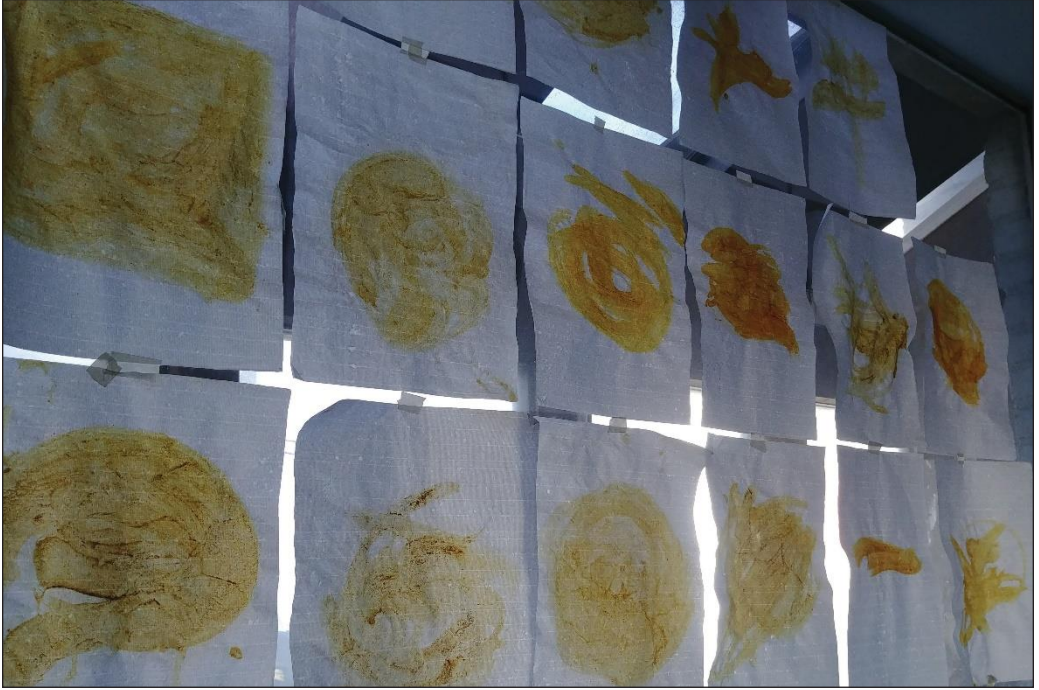
Abstract

Mutations in yellow, a serial arrangement of yellow pigments on rice paper are reflections on botany, viruses and empire. The studies investigate the materiality of yellow, using turmeric, cumin, cinnamon, chili powder to make imprecise diagrams; reminiscent of, but neither calligraphy nor painting; gestures that trouble and muddy the taxonomies of yellowness and the historical entanglements between 18th century colonial studies of plant disease, imperial routes and racial capitalism. The invention of “yellow” as a racial description associated with “dirty, lurid, treacherous, suspect, diseased, weak, lazy, melancholy, unproductive” appeared in natural science publications, frequently representing maladies and infectious afflictions to biological and human (European Man) health and reproduction. The images evade scientific conventions of pictorial accuracy that typify botanical illustrations and instead present the colour yellow as medium in non-linear, non-teleological “mutations”—present and willfully unproductive, like withdrawal from the descriptive apparatus mapping “yellow” to infection, foreignness and invasion.

Keywords

virus, yellowness, mutations





Author Biography

michelle liu (they/she) is an artist and a non-architect with a BFA in Visual Arts and a MA in Theory and Criticism. They are a settler living in Tkaronto on territories subject to the Dish with One Spoon Covenant, from Hong Kong and the nowhere of diaspora belonging. Their minor practice involving sometimes writing, sometimes sound, sometimes video, and sometimes interventions, searches for moments, encounters and shifts that resemble art and explores the themes of opacity, softness, texture, messiness, and critical resistance at the edges of nothingness and empire. Her engagement with architecture is oblique and is concerned with de-professionalization and practices in architecture that trouble relations, structures, and economies of domination. They are interested in experimenting with and mobilizing art and architecture as revolutionary service for the people, as well as punctuations in the rhythms of everyday life. They are inspired by abolitionist imaginaries, fugitive infrastructures, oceanic poetics, slow militancies, and riotous possibilities towards collective liberation.

Lysol Lakes, and Other Photographs

Brittany Schaefer

Abstract

Since the worldwide implementation of lockdown measures due to COVID-19, there have been substantial changes in how we interact with our social and material worlds. Urban landscapes are being reimagined (Pierantoni et al., 2020), individuals are finding new ways to re-create outdoors (Rice et al., 2020), and many health services are being digitized to increase accessibility (Taylor et al., 2020). This short photo essay adds a visual component to such everyday social and material changes. More specifically, it is composed of three photographs that I took while on my solo-walks in Southern Ontario during the initial lockdown. The collection explores three themes: the irony of cleanliness, danger and contamination, and the importance of staying connected with loved ones during COVID-19.

Keywords

COVID-19, materiality, contamination, sociality, lockdown



Lysol Lakes

Among the aquatic vegetation and other flotsam occupying the harbour, you can see the bright yellow beacon of a discarded disinfectant aerosol canister. There is an irony here somewhere; the newfound obsession with cleanliness is simultaneously contaminating our lakes. Increased consumption of disinfectant products is another part of our changing material reality.



No Fun Allowed

No longer a place of climbing, laughter, games, and scraped knees, this playground became a site of danger and contamination. Caution, it says, Do Not Enter. The ordinary is now a threat. The COVID-19 pandemic has imposed constraints on our ability to exist outside, and the repercussions of this will disproportionately affect those who rely on these resources the most.



Wash Hands, Call Grandma

Aside from my father dropping off groceries, my grandmother was alone for the first weeks of the provincial stay-home advisory policy. Despite her simple request for a visit from her grandchildren, we did not feel comfortable visiting. What if we gave her COVID? She insisted that we come see her. She said that she would rather have a shorter life surrounded by family than extend it by a few lonely years.

This photo serves as both a reminder for maintaining proper sanitary hygiene, and of the importance of reaching out to our loved ones.

Wash your hands. Wear a mask. Call Grandma. Stay safe.

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Author biography

Brittany Schaefer is an MA student in Public Issues Anthropology at the University of Guelph. Her research interests sit between the disciplines of environmental anthropology, gender, and leisure and tourism studies. Pre-COVID, she had prepared to collect data for her thesis project on tourism and waste in coastal communities. The project was titled, *Living with Waste and Caring for Place: Trash and Tourism in Koh Lanta, Thailand*. This research is on hold until further notice. Dismayed by the unprecedented pressures of the “new normal”, Brittany began taking photographs on her walks around the neighbourhood. Being able to see the world through the camera’s lens brought a new perspective and has helped her to focus on the positives in her new position as a person living through a global health pandemic. Currently, Brittany is preparing a new thesis project focused on how humans interact with the nonhuman worlds in Ontario. Specifically, she will be exploring how rock climbers engage in reciprocal relationships with the more-than-human world of the Niagara Escarpment with attention to the material aspects of conservation and care. When she is not reading, grading, or climbing, she can be found trying to cultivate a reciprocal relationship with her houseplants. So far, she has had limited success.

How to use a mask

Mengzhu Fu

Abstract

In the beginnings of the COVID-19 pandemic, Asians wearing masks in white colonized countries became a target of white supremacist violence. This piece of fabric has been a point of contention for anti-maskers who feel like their freedoms are being threatened. To dispel the myths of why people might wear masks, this is a basic 101 tutorial on how to use a mask. The comic tutorial breaks down what this apparently exotic cultural artifact is, why people wear it and how to use it properly. This is directed at white people so that next time they see East Asians wearing face masks, they will be equipped with all the relevant information to NOT punch us in the face, kick us out of supermarkets, bully Asian hospital workers, or abuse us on the streets or online. This comic was inspired by the safety instruction cards on flights and the patronizing posters in Anglo-colonial university washrooms that tell Chinese students not to stand on the toilet seats. Thanks to Kirsty Fong for the idea and for being a reference.

Keywords

COVID-19, masks, racism, pandemic symbolism, white supremacy

HOW TO USE A MASK

WHAT IS A MASK?

THESE ARE SOME TYPES:

- 1  MEDICAL-LOOKING ONES (DISPOSABLE)
- 2  COOLER CLOTH ONES (RE-USEABLE)
- 3  THE ZOMBIES ARE COMING APOCALYPSE ONES (EXPENSIVE)

FOR THE PURPOSE OF THIS TUTORIAL, WE WILL MOSTLY COVER THE FIRST ONE.

WHAT A MASK IS NOT:



A PUNCHING TARGET FOR WHITE SUPREMACISTS,

A REASON FOR RACISM, XENOPHOBIA, SINOPHOBIA, HARASSMENT OR ASSAULT,



AND NOT PERMISSION FOR TOILET PAPER HOARDING !

WHY WEAR A MASK?



THE MOST COMMON ONE DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC: IF YOU ARE SICK OR DON'T WANNA GET SICK.

IF IT'S COLD AF AND YOUR FACE IS FREEZING. IT WILL KEEP YOU WARM.



IF THE AIR IS TOXIC DUE TO THE POLLUTANTS FROM INDUSTRIAL CAPITALISM.

ANONYMITY: IF YOU'RE A HOT SHOT CELEB AND YOU WANT TO AVOID THE FANS.



IF YOU'RE AT A DIRECT ACTION AND YOU DON'T WANT THE POLICE OR THE MEDIA TO GET YOUR PHOTO.

HOW TO PUT ON A MASK:



MAKE SURE YOUR HANDS ARE CLEAN AND IT'S A NEW MASK IF YOU'RE USING THE DISPOSABLE KIND



PULL THE RIGHT STRAP BEHIND YOUR RIGHT EAR

PULL THE LEFT STRAP OVER YOUR LEFT EAR. RELEASE.

MOLD THE WIRE AROUND YOUR NOSE. MASK UNDER GLASSES TO AVOID FOGGING.

PULL THE BOTTOM UNDER YOUR CHIN. DONE.

THIS IS NOT CORRECT



WEAR IT PROPERLY. DO NOT RE-USE DISPOSABLE MASKS. STAY SAFE ❤️ AND END COLONIAL CAPITALISM.



Author biography

Mengzhu Fu is a PhD student in the Gender, Feminist and Women's Studies Department at York University. As a grandchild of farmers, factory workers, and educators, they have been involved in grassroots activism aimed at racism, gender-based violence, and migrant solidarity for Indigenous sovereignty, most of which was in Aotearoa (New Zealand). Their MA research focused on the lifeworlds of young Asian survivors of domestic violence in Aotearoa (New Zealand) through an analysis of structural violence, age, and intersectionality. They enjoy zine-making, using traditional art media, tattooing, and creating comics. Self-published zines that they were involved in creating include issues 2-9 of *Mellow Yellow*, an Asian feminist zine that was started by Wai Ho in circa 2005, and a recent zine called *Intersectional Youth Leadership*, which is based on a decade of youth work in Asian, African, and Middle Eastern immigrant communities in Aotearoa. Currently, they are a co-editor of the blog, *Te Tangi a Te Ruru* (the Cry of the Ruru), which features voices of Indigenous writers and people of colour who are signalling warnings in a time of colonial capitalism and calling for otherworlds to be birthed.

MOVEMENT

Thoughts of Sorts

Sebastian Oreamuno

Abstract

My multi-media daily practice of dancing, drawing, and writing is a generative space that does not buy into the idea and pressure of productivity. It has been over four years since I started this daily practice, which I began on June 21, 2017. I engage this practice to process. It is a practice for processing “things” such as texts, theories, daily situations, and our current time, informed by sensations and feelings. What has emerged for me in this practice is how every aspect of it — the dancing, drawing, writing, music, silence, camera, space, time, cats (yes! my cats sometimes dance with me), and life — plays a role. All of these things are in conversation with one another, and they inform who I am, my becoming. Lately, I have engaged this practice as a methodology. That is, I have used it to excavate and re-connect with the Chilean national dance, a dance form that I used to practice when I was a child in Chile. However, for me, this practice is much more than that. These writing and drawings are from me, about me, and extensions of me — my thoughts of sorts.* And, they are my gifts to you.

Keywords

reflections, refractions, traces, daily practice, art

* The title is inspired by, and taken from, Georges Perec’s book of the same name: a collection of essays that explores the everyday.

April 4, 2020

from the nebulous
the ether
emerges a phantom
a dream only now remembered
only now recognizable
and
that's it
that's the way forward
the path meant to be
taken
or perhaps it was only a déjà vu
nevertheless, the tingling comes
and you proceed

April 8, 2020

I'm reminded of the ocean
that salty liquid that leaves stars on your skin
and a stickiness that is both unbearable and
joyous because you know, I know, I got to swim,
dunk my head, relax, maybe ride a wave
the sun in my eye as I float
the sizzling of my skin as the sun touches me more and more
the smell of coconut – the sunscreen
away, so far away
I'm nostalgic for a time that is many times,
for a place that is no place
and all because I danced
in a basement

April 13, 2020

the days seem to disappear before
I can even register them
I am continuously faced with
a lived ephemerality
a lived evanescence
these daily traces are all
that remain
a reminder of what I've
forgotten

April 22, 2020

doubling
 involving in time
 the timing couldn't
 be better
 multiplying takes
 time
 double it by
 folding in
 half
 then in half again
 and again and
 again and again
 until you're so
 involved, so folded
 in that you come out
 the other side

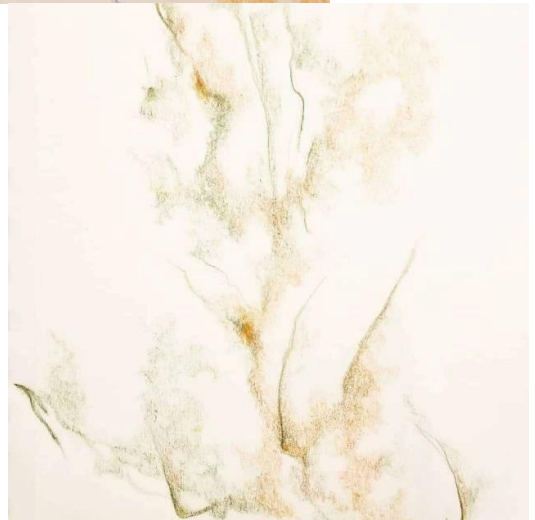
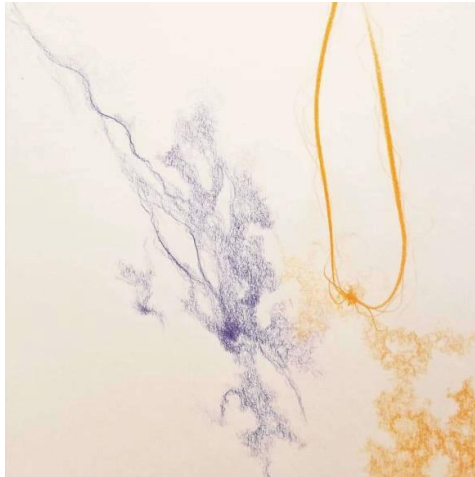
doublings are creases
 in time, not projections

April 25, 2020

there's always a story to tell
 in a kiss
 in friction
 in a meal
 a story,
 waiting and wanting
 to be heard

May 2, 2020

a leafy monster emerges in time
 the pencil crayons and paper have
 a pedagogy of their own
 a pedagogy of patience, layering and
 allowing for spaces, gaps, in-betweens
 the leafy monster emerges to teach me
 about growth and decay, vibrance and rot,
 cycles and transitions
 it stares at me in silence
 I hope I've learned the/my lesson



May 5, 2020

it was through imagination and sensation
that I was able to bear witness from afar
 to be there from a distance
I cannot remove or discard what
has been incorporated, what I've read
and I don't intend on claiming those
as my own
 I'm just trying to contend with
 the mine that's not mine, or
 the not mine that is now a part of me

May 9, 2020

echoes
ripples
 affected
 uncertainties lead to
 moving
 reverberations
 choices
 all to try and be free
 to find the margin of
 manoeuverability
but cracks lead to new
spaces/enclosures
 follow the breadcrumbs?
 feel the ripples
 hear the echoes
 sense the reverberations
 then let them go
 let yourself go
 be affected and affect

May 14, 2020

the race was never there
the competition didn't exist
I made it all up
we made it all up
 perhaps now I can relax
 and rest

May 17, 2020

abeyance...
 ...to dance the spell of my own creation

holding on to our practices of making time speed up
 does not create more time, just momentum
 towards a future we don't understand
 we believed progress was containable
 we believed in progress
 and now, we're in a much-needed suspension

May 20, 2020

a changing landscape emerges
 or rather a landscape that was already in
 transition becomes apparent
 when you tune your awareness to the movement
 when you turn towards the movement
 you can't search for it
 you can only sense it and try
 to focus on it
 don't bother trying to grasp it
 because it's ungraspable
 fleeting
 evanescent
 transient
 it is and was and will be
 always already out of (your) reach

May 31, 2020

suspended and lost
 in trajectories
 of thoughts unfolding faster
 than I can process
 a process
 of traversing at the speed
 of neurons firing
 of connections and gaps being made
 all I really know is
 that I'm processing
 and perhaps I don't even know that
 because my awareness is split
 but I can feel the process of processing
 I feel suspended and lost

June 12, 2020

the hunger, the hunger
to feed
and swallow
take it in
all of it
taste it and swallow
chew it
or let your saliva
break it down into a
paste
then swallow
take it in
and digest
the hunger, the hunger
will come again
to feed
but you'll know what
to do

June 16, 2020

finding a way forward
sometimes only requires
remembering the paths
not taken
a different orientation
leaning a different way

June 19, 2020

meet me in the fork in the road
so we can walk down the path together
meet me in the lair below
so we can ride out the tempestuous weather
meet me where the fire-souls go
so we can drift through dreams like a feather
meet me somewhere no one will know
the memory that has us tethered

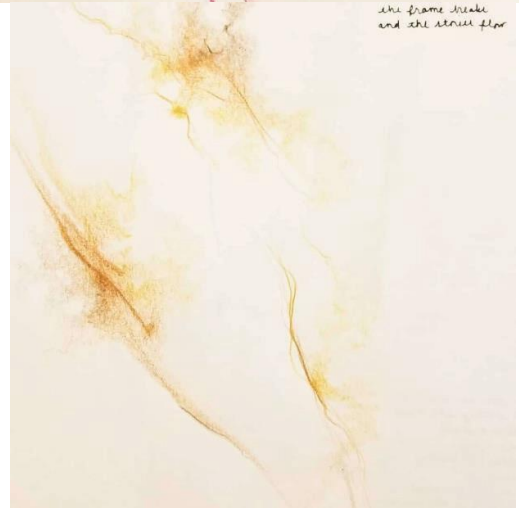
June 21, 2020

I can't find the words
 they're around me
 buzzing
 but I can't seem to
 focus on them
 this is this moment
 and the next might hold
 something different
 but for now I'll have to sit
 in the confusion
 between numerous trains
 of thought
 and find my place
 in the swirl
 perhaps it wasn't words
 or a word I was looking for
 but a feeling
 tranquility



July 2, 2020

frames
 the stories they tell
 aren't the stories they hold
 stilling movement
 framing scenarios
 fantasizing containment
 the illusion of the frame
 a window
 looking out to interpretation
 things don't stay so neatly
 packed, packaged, framed
 the frame breaks
 and the stories spill



July 23, 2020

this interruption was necessary
 we needed to do this to keep going
 ruptures are openings
 and if we open together
 if we open up together
 then we can go through
 the rupture, the crack

Author biography

Born in Santiago, Chile, Sebastian Oreamuno is a Toronto-based artist, educator, and researcher whose artistic and academic interests trace the connection between movement and memory, (im)migration and diaspora, the participatory body, popular culture, and multi-media practices. Sebastian holds a BA in Psychology from Simon Fraser University (Vancouver), an MA in Dance from York University (Toronto), and he is currently working on a PhD in Dance Studies at York. His Master's project investigated the relationship between men and pointe work, a practice primarily associated with ballerinas. Sections of this project have been published in *Contingent Horizons*, *Performance Matters*, and *Dance Collection Danse: The Magazine*. His doctoral research explores how movement participates in the summoning of memories, particularly in the context of Chilean migrants in Canada. Sebastian is currently developing *Fragmentos*, a multi-media project that explores the fragmentation of self through the imposition of assimilation, with documentary filmmaker Juan Pablo Pinto. Sebastian is also a co-founder of *Untitled 37*, a multidisciplinary arts collective that engages "steeped" practices as a way to question "panic-production."

Sitting in the dark: COVID-19 and mental well-being

Fiona Edwards

Abstract

COVID-19 has created a new reality for countries worldwide as leaders are tasked with the responsibility of enacting safety measures to stop the rate of infection. Social distancing is promoted as one of the main ways of curbing the spread of the virus. Such measures limit social interaction and the spaces people are free to occupy. The following poem, entitled “Sitting in the dark: COVID-19 and mental well-being” speaks to the mental health impacts of such closures on the youth population, highlighting that no one is immune from the virus. This poem also explores the interconnectedness of a person’s physical and mental health and the subsequent need to pay attention to both realities during times of global crisis. Despite the challenges the pandemic presents, it is imperative that youth find an outlet to cope, one that will help them develop resiliency and a sense of hope.

Keywords

COVID-19, youth, mental health, well-being, social distancing

I am youthful and untouchable

That's what I thought.

My age gives me security

That's what I thought.

But you proved no one is immune

From the youngest to the oldest.

You came into the world

Like an uninvited guest.

Traveling from country to country

Defying their borders,

Putting restrictions on human behaviour

Disrupting their very existence.

I am forced to barricade

Within the confines of my home

Limiting my social interaction

To protect my physical health

While mentally I am fading

With no way to cope

Sitting in the dark

Wondering if the walls are crashing in.

Never felt so alone in a time like this

Where I am searching for a moment,

When my life was not sequestered

By social distancing.

Sitting in the dark

My mind is racing from thought to thought

To occupy the space that is between me

And the outside world.

My life is being robbed by a pandemic

That's linked to a disruptive path

Sitting in the dark

Seems to be never-ending,

It feels like an inescapable reality.

However, holding on to the memories of what can be

I hope for a better future where being confined

Does not hinder my understanding of life.

Author biography

Fiona Edwards is a Ph.D. candidate in Social Work at York University, Toronto, Canada. She also received a Masters of Social Work from York University in the spring of 2012. Fiona has over eight years of professional experience in the field of child and youth mental health. This experience is the impetus for her doctoral research. Her current research explores the lived mental health experiences of Afro-Caribbean Canadian youth in Southern Ontario urban areas. Fiona's broader research interests include child and youth mental health, the racialization of mental illness, mental illness stigma, mental health and well-being, religiosity, spirituality, anti-oppressive social work, and race, racialization, and racism.

What's Safe

**Mélika Hashemi, Maryanne Casasanta,
Lauren Runions & Heddy V. Graterol**

Abstract

What's Safe (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jl6JuRlq8Ic&feature=youtu.be>) is an ongoing response to Toronto's social distancing measures. It is a dance score documented cinematically in Trinity Bellwoods Park, with movements inspired by Deepa Iyer's framework (*Mapping Our Roles in Social Change Ecosystems*, 2020) and Jay Pitter's open letter to Canadian urbanists (*A Call to Courage*, 2020). The project was conceived, performed, and captured by the authors of this paper. The two dancers, our second and third authors, engage in creative problem-solving by facing the reality of socially-distant grounds for play and suggesting a different type of productivity, one which is conducive to individual and social growth. The movements are then captured by our multimedia creator (or fourth author), while our artist-researcher (first author) curates and provides critique throughout. The final project considers artistic practice in response to social change as informed by (un)productivity. It uses productive imagination (e.g., play, improvisation, creative problem-solving) to investigate parameters of safety (e.g., surveillance, control, space). Through the dancers' improvisations, we attempt to navigate these tensions and better position ourselves in relation to our current socio-geographical circumstances.

Keywords

social distancing, surveillance, embodiment, control, play, liminality



Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic made us aware of the things we can and cannot control in today's society. White circles painted in Trinity Bellwoods Park, Toronto, Ontario, imply agency and safety, where we are alone but still together. The first, second, and third authors of this piece saw these circles as an opportunity to intervene, hence the emergence of our project, *What's Safe*: an ongoing response to Toronto's social distancing measures. In what follows, we provide photo stills of the final project, alongside descriptions of the energies and thoughts that went into its creation.

Mapping out What's Safe

The city traces circles in white — the same colour used to paint road markings — instructing us to maintain our boundaries and literally “stay in our lane.” What are the ways in which these tracings mimic mapping practices (e.g., city boundaries and other limits), and how do the consequences compare (e.g., impact on the community)? We could argue that these circle tracings are imagined borders within which all that exists is also imagined (e.g., the city mows the grass, retraces the circles, and people follow along). This preoccupation

with privatizing public land makes the invisible borders visible (Hunt & Stevenson, 2016). The city

may not have painted those circles to ‘privatize’ the land per se, but if I were to invite myself into a circle with someone already in it, I would be impinging upon their privacy. There is thus a sense of agency that comes with making a 2D circle into one's own 3D bubble. The question of power and equity then lives in that liminal space between circles: in that moment of transitioning between circle and non-circle, between occupation and navigation, the sharing of time and space (Hook, 2001). How do we navigate between private and public geographies?



What's Safe is a dance score documented cinematically in Trinity Bellwoods Park using a limited time shooting permit granted by the city of

Toronto through the DJI Pilot App.² Two dance artists (our second and third authors) move through the circles synchronously while maintaining social distance. They wait until the sun is at the right height, and the space to be unoccupied. Within the socially-distant grounds for play, they engage in creative problem-solving by suggesting a different type of productivity, one which is conducive to individual and social growth. They use movement and play at the intersection of body and site to investigate the relationship between public and private. Their movements are inspired by Deepa Iyer's framework (Mapping Our Roles in Social Change Ecosystems, 2020) and Jay Pitter's open letter to Canadian urbanists (A Call to Courage, 2020). In operating the drone, the multimedia creator (our fourth author) experiments with visuals to inform the role of surveillance. The artist-researcher (our first author) curates and provides critique throughout the co-creative project, opening space for accountability. In the process, we became aware of our capacities: The second and third authors as interpreters-beyond-dancers, the fourth author as witness and surveilled, the first author as ever-present but absent. We also became aware of the consequences of recording and

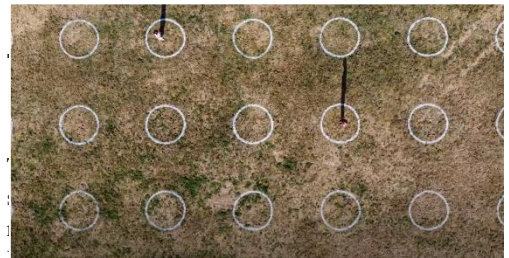
digital surveillance. What would it mean to be untraceable? Is such a thing even possible? (Warren-Smith, 2019).

Conscious Imagination as Creative Problem-Solving

Parks offer escape from the reality of urban stress, displacing us from the 'real world' (Grahm & Stigsdotter, 2003). But how do we escape when other stressors like crowds are present, and circles are taken? Can we ever really escape? As the COVID-19 pandemic goes on, the first, second, and third authors are exploring a number of play-based pieces, like *What's Safe*, that are grounded in conscious imagination. Imagination can often be unproductive and non-confrontational, like with daydreaming, where a sequence of thoughts plays on loop. Productivity can also be unproductive, as well as unimaginative, like being pushed to return to work amid a global health pandemic. But with intention, the dancers in *What's Safe* engage in

creative problem-solving, whereby they face the reality of socially-distant grounds for play and suggest a different type of productivity, one which is conducive to individual and social growth (Parnes et al., 1976).

Embodiment and movement provide potentials for transformation that engages the mind and body in a meaningful way. According to embodied performance researcher Marth Munro (2018), when new information is retained in a way that involves moving and performing, elements within the immediate environment are activated, owing to "how and where the body is moving in space" (p 10). An element activated in *What's Safe* is surveillance. Our physical experiences were recorded through a digital trace through both movement and surveillance as well as parameters of safety, which were articulated through circle tracings made by the city.



movements are inspired by Deepa Iyer's (2020) framework *Mapping Our Roles in Social Change Ecosystems*. Iyer also coincidentally uses circles to illustrate the various roles that people have

² The DJI Pilot app assists the user in controlling drones, transmitting pictures in real time, and controlling the camera and its playback.

throughout the processes of social change, which sparked a connection for us regarding the circles drawn in Trinity Bellwoods Park. In using the circles to map out our social roles in times of crises, the park becomes a playground for interventions and transformative gestures. The second and third authors' bodies 'read' the space together publicly; lifting the framework off the page and planting it into space through dance score. One moment, they are "visionaries," the next, they might be "weavers."

By the time the pandemic runs its course, they may have occupied some or all of these roles and spaces.



In performing the framework, they build familiarity in understanding the text as embodied before it is understood intellectually: they listen to their bodies until their minds catch up (Bie, February 2020). Through movement, the artist-researcher and dancers-as-interpreters explored several reflection questions formulated by Iyer (2020):

- ❖ How does your role connect to your privilege and power?
- ❖ Are there roles where you might be taking up too much space (or not enough)?
- ❖ Where could you stretch yourself and take bolder risks? (p. 6)

In her open letter to Canadian urbanists, *A Call to Courage*, placemaker Jay Pitter (2020) asks us to "research the history and untold place-based stories related to all urban design and development projects" (p. 3). Based on her work, further questions that the first, second, and third authors aim to explore are:

- ❖ How is equity-based placemaking (re)defined in the time-space of this pandemic?
- ❖ What relationships emerge between the dancers and their playground when engaging together in socially distant interventions and gestures on this site?
- ❖ What critical discourse are we in need of during and following these interventions?
- ❖ What other roles are at play that we weren't initially aware of?

Conclusion

We envision participants joining us in these improvisations inspired by the roles that come to them intuitively in Iyer's framework and our questions formulated based on Pitter's letter. *What's Safe* is a work in progress; we leave the questions open to readers and viewers to answer with us. Through our improvisations we attempt to start to answer them and better position ourselves in relation to our current socio-geographical circumstances.

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Author biographies

Mélika Hashemi is an Artist-Researcher based in Kitchener, ON. Using art as a device, she finds ways to renew intersectionality and empowerment through the curriculum beyond screens and institutional walls. (www.melikahashemi.com/)

Maryanne Casasanta is an artist educator working in photography, video, and performance. Her practice currently centers food performance as a way to generate embodied encounters that offer occasions for reflection and questioning. Grief, history, immigration and identity are just some of the personal affiliations that surface when cooking, baking, eating and discarding are enacted with deep awareness and intention. Maryanne earned a BFA from OCAD University (2005) and holds an MFA from the University of Guelph (2014). She is a Master of Education candidate in the Educational Policy program at the University of Toronto with a focus on disability studies and critical pedagogy. (www.instagram.com/maryannecasanta/)

Lauren Runions (she/they) is a dance artist, choreographer, urbaner and educator based in Tkaronto/Toronto, ON. Lauren's project I/O Movement offers performances, community workshops and residencies with the intention to activate spaces while considering the flexibility of place, and inviting movement into daily life. Overall, their practice comes down to one thing: love of place. Through experiments of scores, improvisation, sounding, drawing, walking and routine dailiness Lauren questions how our own embodied awareness relates to our relationship and responsibility to living with our urban and natural ecologies. (<https://cargocollective.com/laurenrunions>)

Heddy V. Graterol is a multimedia creator and designer experimenting with visuals, sounds, and the use of bodies to tell stories of resistance and resilience. Through his experimentations and studies, Heddy's goal is to create immersive experiences that inform and heal the mind and body in hopes to move people in a visceral way through the use of new technology to transform, transmutate and translate. (<https://heddyvargrate.carbonmade.com/>)

PRODUCTIVITY

Imagining an (Un)productive Anthropology Through the Night

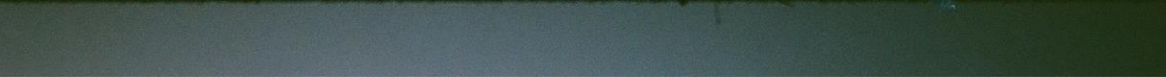
Vishwaveda Joshi & Ira Famarin

Abstract

Through this email exchange, we have tried to engage with ourselves by considering our bodies as archives of trauma, feelings, and ideas, using the thematic of the nighttime and nightness. Nightness emerges as a counter epistemology in our rumination and it transfigures the dualisms of day and night, productive and unproductive as merging in space and time. By writing ourselves as bodies of the night, such that we belong both to the day and to the night, or perhaps neither to the day nor to the night, we use the night and nightness to process our grief; to feel grief and to escape away from it into a possibility of thinking/feeling where we exist and we don't at the same time. These emails not only suggest a counter epistemology but also the possibility of an (un)productive anthropology, one which happens within each of us around nightness - away from the day, or rather, away from the neoliberal expectation of the day.

Keywords

(un)productive anthropology; nightness; grief; body; trauma




Hello Dear Friend,

As I sit staring out of my beautiful French windows of the new apartment, thinking about going back to a busier life, to our days defined by work hours, and letting the thinking sink in, I felt you, and your presence. You are thus receiving this email as I think about you and productivity and night and speculations.

As always, I am drawn to the moon, and by that extent to the *nightness* of the moon. What do I mean by *nightness*? Do I mean the quality of night... or am I referring to the time between sunset and sunrise; when the moon is made apparent? I think that *nightness* might mean a state in which my body feels the most joy and peace, it feels itself. I can think in the quiet of the night, the way I cannot think during the day. I can almost re-balance myself at night, and especially with so much information to process (Police Brutality, COVID-19; climate change), night has become my time for equilibrium, for processing, for grieving, its as though the *nightness* of the moon, and that of the night, elicits healing and processing of trauma itself. Can anything have *nightness*? Can we then challenge the temporality of night?

That's all for now!
Vishwaveda.



[August 16, 2020, 00: 51]

Hi Dear Friend,

It's so nice to hear from you. I figured I'll reply immediately as I have been sleeping late these days. My nights are long and quiet. It's currently 2:30am as I type this and I just made some chai tea (inspired by the chai tea that you made me last time).

You and the moon - I remembered the time that we chased the moon together! It was bright, full and round last time. Tonight, its crescent shape is pale behind the clouds. When you mentioned the processing, rebalancing and healing that happen at night, I think about how it is like the moon phases. We go through different phases at night. There are some nights that I truly enjoy my solitude and take the time to journal, read and pray but there are also some nights when everything is so heavy that I just want to sleep it off. Can *nightness* then be associated with escape as well? To escape from the noise, the chaos, the reality that we live in. I feel the most raw at night because I can just be -- free from the pressure and expectations of the day.

My brain is frozen right now, so nighty in the meantime!

Ira



[August 17, 2020, 02: 51]

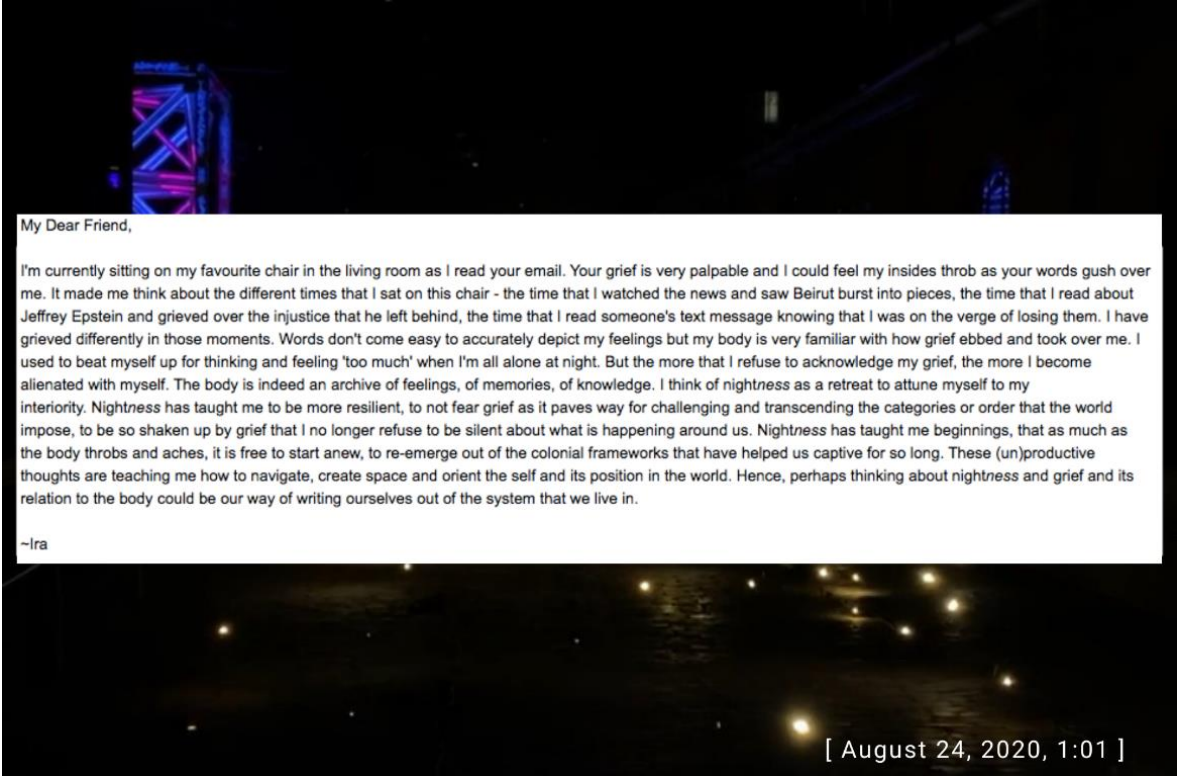
Dear Friend,

Once again, thoughts are taking shape, asserting their presence as I look at the moon through my window and attempt to sleep. I had a profound experience today at the Van Gogh Immersive Art Exhibit, and the thoughts that are wrapping me, are very much related to the profoundness of the experience. The music, the beautiful paintings that were brought to life through space and time manoeuvres, and of course the darkness, which reminded me of the night, or gave me a sense of the night, allowed me to let go and grieve freely, honestly and fully. I could not stop crying as I sat through the exhibit. Grieving about what, you might ask... grieving about the state of the world, not just because of the pandemic, but also because of the several injustices happening all around the world from Black people across the "West" being shot and killed to Six Nations demonstrators being physically harassed and jailed for peacefully protesting, grieving, because of the unprecedented violence and trauma bodies in India and Pakistan had to experience 74 years ago, memories of which reside in each Indian and Pakistani body even today and we grieve about it/through it every single day. Grieving, because this was the first time I was in downtown Toronto since March 2020, and grieving because there is no concern of another being's life in the contemporary times, because profits, power, corporations take precedence over life. Grieving, because of the increasing surveillance of our movements, not due to COVID, but because the State is responding to our collective solidarity against neoliberal, racist values by increasing policing. I experienced all of this and yet was able to escape into the beauty of the artworks being shown and the nightness of it. I do think that I escaped as you have written in the previous email, into perhaps a possibility of a thinking/feeling that happens within us precisely during moments such as this one where you are and you are not in order to grieve and heal and to be with the world, almost escaping like the moon does every 15 days and emerging new, stronger and determined. I have been thinking of a possibility of an (un)productive anthropology that happens within each one of us, and through us in moments of darkness, around nightness, away from the day, an anthropology that considers the body as an archive of feelings, of trauma, of knowledge and draws from the bodies responses to unease, pain and opportunity in times where our bodies are all we have!!

~Vishwaveda.



[August 22, 2020, 10:00]



My Dear Friend,

I'm currently sitting on my favourite chair in the living room as I read your email. Your grief is very palpable and I could feel my insides throb as your words gush over me. It made me think about the different times that I sat on this chair - the time that I watched the news and saw Beirut burst into pieces, the time that I read about Jeffrey Epstein and grieved over the injustice that he left behind, the time that I read someone's text message knowing that I was on the verge of losing them. I have grieved differently in those moments. Words don't come easy to accurately depict my feelings but my body is very familiar with how grief ebbed and took over me. I used to beat myself up for thinking and feeling 'too much' when I'm all alone at night. But the more that I refuse to acknowledge my grief, the more I become alienated with myself. The body is indeed an archive of feelings, of memories, of knowledge. I think of *nightness* as a retreat to attune myself to my interiority. *Nightness* has taught me to be more resilient, to not fear grief as it paves way for challenging and transcending the categories or order that the world impose, to be so shaken up by grief that I no longer refuse to be silent about what is happening around us. *Nightness* has taught me beginnings, that as much as the body throbs and aches, it is free to start anew, to re-emerge out of the colonial frameworks that have helped us captive for so long. These (un)productive thoughts are teaching me how to navigate, create space and orient the self and its position in the world. Hence, perhaps thinking about *nightness* and grief and its relation to the body could be our way of writing ourselves out of the system that we live in.

-Ira

[August 24, 2020, 1:01]

Hello Dearest friend,

I have come to love this email exchange as it has allowed me to think through the dualism of productive vs unproductive and how so much of the experience of our existence is spent in-between these dualisms. Usually, I would love to think of tensions, of in-betweenness in a very positive way, but this particular dualism causes tension that is exhausting, tiring, unrealistic. And, *nightness*, writing about grief (which gets pathologized and represented as unproductive) and thinking about it so purely, has really made me feel the tension of productive vs unproductive, the capitalist origins of it, and I have come to realize how I am so ready to break through these exhausting tensions.

Nightness, can become the way for me, for us, as you have written in the email, to break us out of these tensions. *Nightness prompts for an anthropology that allows us to get closer to our thinking and feeling selves. It provides the thinking space that is needed for such an anthropology to emerge. Then, to sum up our email exchange, and to answer some questions that I posed at the beginning, Nightness, can be a concept that acts as a counter epistemology to the neoliberal productive expectation of the day that governs our bodies, our feelings, our thoughts. Nightness as I wrote earlier, can be a way through which we can connect to ourselves, and others - humans and beyond humans that surround us!*

I am happy that we have started thinking about this, and have created an opening through these emails, to exchange thoughts and speculate. Maybe, in us being (un)productive, we are still creating-- creating thoughts, feelings, new notions to counter notions that are stifling. We are creating ways to connect with ourselves and others. We are generating after all.

I'll call you soon xxx.

Best,
Vishwaveda.

[August 28, 2020, 8:30]

Author biographies

Vishwaveda is a graduate student of Social Anthropology and Asian Studies at York University, and a dance appreciation fellow at Upasana School of Performing Arts, Ahmedabad. Her research focuses on Kathak, an Indian Classical dance form, as a tool to understand the ongoing ways in which: 1) postcolonial bodies are colonized; and 2) to decolonize the Indian body politic, particularly by understanding the dancers' interiorities and the knowing that happens in relation to different sounds of Kathak. Vishwaveda aims to create places both within individual bodies as well as outside of them, focusing on social spaces for vulnerable, affective forms of knowing — a knowing that takes us away from categorizations and identity politics and encourages intimate interactions with humans and nonhumans. Her work challenges the view of the self-contained individual and opens up possibilities for thinking about the effects of incipient, spontaneous, and vulnerable encounters on a society with more empathy and solidarity for one another. A sensory anthropologist by practice, Vishwaveda focuses on how sensory methodologies create empathetic, experiential ways of knowing individuals' worlds.

Ira is a dancer, content curator, and arts-based researcher and community coordinator that wants to pay homage to her roots and hyphenated identity. As a Filipino who was raised in Singapore and now living in Toronto, she has always been fascinated by the varied lived experiences and narratives of different diaspora all over the world. Ira is a recent graduate of the Culture and Expression Major at York University and is currently practising arts-based research to explore her hyphenated identity and how society is implicated within larger issues of neoliberal capitalism, racism, and colonization.

You Are More Than Your Productivity

M-A Murphy

Abstract

During the last semester of my undergraduate degree, which took place on unceded Musqueam, Squamish, and Tsleil-Waututh territories (Vancouver, BC), I felt like my entire life was serving tables, reading articles, and producing papers. Amidst all of this, I started drawing and making political stickers as a form of creative expression and praxis. One day, I decided to draw and digitize an image that challenged productivity and the ongoing academic and societal pressures I felt to keep producing. I was spending endless hours on my computer, researching and writing, while the rest of the time I was working. The pressures of capitalism and productivity were eating away at me. My shoulders were tight, my eyes were sore, and I began grinding my teeth at night (the dentist told me that the habit of grinding your teeth at night is increasing among younger populations). Since finishing my graduate degree, I am still grappling with the societal feelings and pressures I have to always be productive, but now within the job market. The global pandemic doesn't help. I am continually reminding myself to slow down and be present within my community — as well as help to create communities of care - but it is very challenging, particularly in a neoliberal university environment and a capitalist society. The below image is one of the political stickers I made while trying to tackle and move through this challenge.

Keywords

art, drawing, productivity, neoliberalism

*You are more
than your
productivity*



Author biography

M-A Murphy (she/her/they) is a second-generation Irish settler who recently graduated with a Master of Arts from the Gender and Social Justice program at the University of Alberta in Amiskwaciwâskahikan (Edmonton) on traditional Cree, Blackfoot, Dene, Nakota Sioux, Saulteaux, and Métis Nation territory. Before this, she completed her Bachelor of Arts in Gender, Race, Sexuality, and Social Justice Studies with a minor in First Nations and Indigenous Studies on unceded Coast Salish Territories at University of British Columbia. Her interests include settler responsibility, Indigenous-settler relations, memory studies, transformative justice, and intersectional feminist art as praxis, to name a few. She loves building community, writing poetry, being gentle, and challenging dominant power structures.

Quarantine Diaries: A Look into Isolation, Self-Hatred, and Acceptance

Gloria Park

Abstract

The following six diary entries and journaling pieces were written in the months after the 2019 Coronavirus pandemic (COVID-19) hit Canada. They express my attempts to pinpoint causes of my personal unhappiness and how overwhelming expectations of productivity affected my mental health and relationships during quarantine. My diary entries are in chronological order, containing reflections on my birthday in quarantine, notes about racial injustice, and reminders of self-love. I delve into how isolation and social distancing shifted my perspective, creating unexpected goals, and new hobbies. These reflections reveal thoughts of uncertainty about my career and concerns about my friendships. As the entries continue, themes of self-acceptance and confidence emerge. I encourage readers to empathize with these conflicting feelings of what is “normal” or “expected” during adulthood; challenge destructive behaviour, including excessive self-doubt and self-sabotage; and form uplifting habits for a better sense of self. My words have been taken directly from my personal journal and left as they are, no editing, no revising, no polishing. This composition creates an open space that acknowledges how emotions of guilt, anxiety, low self-image, sadness, and hope defined so much of our post-COVID-19 reality.

Keywords

quarantine, isolation, self-love, identity, productivity, adulthood

April 11, 2020.

23rd Birthday Reflections in Isolation

Journal Prompt:

What are you feeling a lot of lately?

I'm feeling a lot of nostalgia. I've been cleaning a lot and throwing out and donating clothes, jewelry, books, toys, and other items. Finding old pictures, birthday cards, things I wrote as a kid, and old clothes makes me reminisce a lot about the past and my childhood. I have been re-reading my childhood books from the *Percy Jackson* books to the *Series of Unfortunate Events* and I realized why I loved reading so much and how I miss reading for fun.

I feel like I'm being left behind in terms of career. I don't have a job and haven't been looking although I feel like I should be...I don't know honestly. I'm frustrated at the whole job process and now it's April. I could cry from joy when I get a job. Also, in terms of friends, most of my friends have a job right now or are guaranteed one and I can't help but compare myself to them. I also feel so lost with where I'm at with my friends – not many have been reaching out and I just feel so lost, so incredibly alone and isolated and even more so during this quarantine time. Are my expectations of friendship too high? I feel just left behind in relationships.

I feel a lot of hurt overall it seems like. I don't know how to move on from baggage of people hurting me and of me feeling hurt. I can't tell if I'm being sensitive but the bitterness, anger, guilt, and confusion is creeping up on me and growing just more and more. I don't know who to tell or what to do at times. I can't help but feel responsible for so many things that's happened whether it's gossip or people drifting apart or getting closer to me. I haven't confronted anyone yet and I think that's what's killing me. Also, the lack of communication where people haven't been quick to notice or quick to message or call... I just feel utterly alone. Alone in my thoughts and feelings. It's funny because last year, I felt quite similar emotions of hurt and betrayal but it had to do with a guy and now it's these same emotions but about friends. I keep dwindling and coming back to do this, this past week this is all I've been thinking about on and off. I know I'm giving power to these thoughts and nobody can mindread, but I've been having such a

shitty few months in terms of friendship, career, and just transitioning to adulthood. I feel like I'm going crazy at times.

Alone and being "okay" with being alone is something I want to achieve. A state I want to achieve is just being content in myself; flaws and all. I want to fight for me and my respect and my character over relationships. I'm tired of feeling like second place. Cleaning my room makes me feel a lot better about my room and myself. I like being creative and doing different things, I want to be surrounded by people who encourage and care for me despite my flaws. People who can uplift but also have difficult conversations with and talk about life and just be my ride or dies. I'm proud and happy about the things that I've done this past year from traveling alone, with friends, family; graduating; doing research; cooking; just having goals; and reconnecting with old friends. I think life is crazy and I'll never be able to fully prepare for it. I want to crush being 23 and feel everything good and bad but I think I deserve to feel as much love for myself as I give to others. I need to prioritize myself. Seeking good habits for me because I want to, because it's healthy, and it'll be good long-term. I wonder what'll happen while I'm 23. I want things to change and I think changes are happening. We'll see. I hope I don't let myself down. I hope I keep my goals of prioritizing me over my friends more now. Keeping productive measures to make time for me, to love myself, and to encourage myself more I want to do these things more in whatever capacity that may look like, I think my dependency on friendships has been a habit but now I want to be confident in myself and in being alone.

June 6, 2020.

To be honest... I don't even know what to say or how to react. Racism is a powerful tool, a destructive one. I feel so much sadness for George Floyd, Breanna Taylor, Regis Korchinski-Paquet, and so many more unfortunate, tragic, and horrific murders of [B]lack people. I initially didn't know what to even say or do. Of course, I was angry, I felt so much frustration towards the police, the government, Trump, ignorant people, even white people. It was like the balloon had burst, a 100-year old balloon that just kept growing and growing. I feel so much sadness and shame, for not speaking up sooner.

My heart feels like it's at my throat sometimes. It's a warm summer day in June 2020 and yet I feel like I'm back in grade 11 or summer of my 1st year in university where I felt so lost, so alone, so unaccomplished. Everything fades away eventually, I know having a job isn't the number one thing in life but honestly, it feels like it is. I just want to get away to Hawaii and swim, fish, and surf. These things may sound so trivial but to me, I see life. I see a newness. I am trying to find happiness in the small things again...but it's hard. I feel so small and insignificant. I feel like I can't do anything. I miss my friends...it's funny who I consider my friends now — so much has changed. The people I trusted and cared for have moved on and that's fine. I don't think every relationship is meant to be deep. I'm very secure in who I trust now or I feel a bit more secure. There are times when I realize my "aloneness" but I quite enjoy my time spent with other people who make me feel like my worth is valid, and that I do feel loved. It's a difficult concept — knowing that I'm worthy of love. I am, even though I don't feel like it. It's a struggle to go from complete and utter disgust for who I am as a person to enjoying my quirks. For the first time in over 5 years, I actually felt reminded or triggered about when I used to self-harm. I can't believe there was a time when I hated myself to that extent, where I literally wanted to destroy myself from the inside out. I've come a long way and yet I still feel stuck; I still feel like that little girl who's scared of how she looks, that feels like everyone's watching and judging her. I don't even know how to act sometimes. I'm a complete adult but I feel like a child. I'm trying to dig deeper, to search why I feel like this — to love myself. Exploring self-hatred is hard. I feel so tumbled like my insides are fighting against each other.

July 8, 2020.

I don't have to punish myself for not being on the "same timeline" as my friends or random strangers. I'm changing, I'm growing, I have new goals, different things I'm seeking. I'm not staying stagnant and that's okay, even if it may look different than what I was thinking to begin with. How I feel is valid.

My actions need to be held accountable. I need space and time to focus on my papers and that's okay. I enjoy going on walks in the evenings.

I really like how I incorporate reading into my schedule now. I'm mending, I'm finding things that bring me joy even if it's not what I expected.

July 12, 2020.

The fact that each day we are all growing, learning, and being ourselves is sort of mind-blowing to me. I need to remind myself that I am heard, I have people in my life who listen to me and understand. There are great people in my life who are interested in what I have to say or do. I'm excited to grow with people in my life who are genuinely interested, invested, and want to grow with me. It's good to know that I'm at peace with who my friends are and that they want to stay in my life.

July 13, 2020.

I'm noticing a pattern of my behaviour of feeling overwhelmed with all the things that I have to do. I will make a to-do list and feel so dejected when I can't do them all in one day. And I feel stressed that I can't do everything that I need to do. I constantly feel "behind" whether it's with editing or doing my papers. I feel like there's a lot to do and if I don't do it, I failed at my job. I guess also these new goals are things I'm trying to achieve so if it doesn't happen, it'll feel like this year was somewhat of a waste I suppose. But I know that seeing things in a different light is a lot healthier. This pattern or behaviour reinforces that there's a "timeline" I have to follow. It shows that I'm comparing myself to others in order to fit in. It's okay to not work or to relax. It's fine to take this tie for myself. I want to read more, take healthy breaks, and continue to go on walks to relax and get out of my head more.

July 22, 2020.

It's okay to disappoint people and to let things go. I always feel like I have to please people and do the right thing in their eyes even though I'm compromising my own goals or priorities. Saying "no" is so important and I tend to forget to do that. I think I'm becoming more comfortable but I'm unsure how to navigate areas I'm unsure about. I'm trying to realize that I'm worthy of love — from others but more importantly, from myself. Why do I have such a hard time accepting who I am? I think it really stems from the outside or from physical things whether it's not having the same materialistic items or physical features. I get

frustrated at my knees, my weight, my hair, my lashes, my nose, my beauty marks, my teeth, my lips, my throat, the list is endless – it's exhausting to hate yourself for the day or for days on end. Why did I decide that "the norm" would be my norm? I don't need to earn approval from others. I shouldn't have to fight for acceptance or love. Those who truly see me and love me won't diminish me or make me feel inferior. So why am I doing that to myself? I have such a big heart and so much love to give. I can give some to myself, it's okay to cherish myself. I want to really love and consider myself as precious as I believe I am.

Author biography

Gloria (she/her) is a writer, researcher, and digital and media marketer who is interested in creating content that is innovative and meaningful. Her research interests are in Indigenous rights in Canadian prisons, gender and feminism, and structural violence. Gloria has received a BA in Criminology and a Digital Marketing certificate at York University and is currently a Master of Public Policy in Digital Society candidate at McMaster University. Outside of her academic and professional endeavors, she enjoys cooking, reading, and writing poetry. As a second-generation Korean woman residing in the Greater Toronto Area, she often writes about her lived experiences with identity, racialization, mental health, and femininity, and hopes that her written work will resonate with others.

STORYTELLING

Writing through Story: The Death of my Mother

Deanna MacNeil

Abstract

I will write you a magic story, a world with no tubes and no pain. Little Dee will get in bed beside you and feed you all the squares. All the squares you want, Mom. I'll sing you all your favourite songs and write them all for you. Thank you for loving me just as you did. For being just as you are. I am who I am because of you. I love you. I will miss you and miss telling you all the stories. You would say my name just so: "Deeeaaanna". Who will say my name as you did, to let me know I'm living my best life? I'll do my best to continue Mom, and hope to hear you say my name just as you did, just as you know.

Keywords

loss, love, kinship, grief

From Toronto, Ontario to Halifax, Nova Scotia

On the morning of February 14, 2020, I received an unexpected voice message from a family member requesting I call back. I was hesitant to return the call, imagining scenarios I had no control over. Selfishly, I worried I would receive information that would disrupt my day.

I returned the call to learn my mother was bleeding from the back of her head.

My Mom, her husband, and much of our family live in Nova Scotia. When I got the call about my Mom, I was in Toronto, where I am currently doing my Ph.D. at York University.

I could not understand what happened to my Mom.

I did not know what to do.

I had plans with someone that night. It was Valentine's day and he had booked us dinner at an Indian restaurant in Yorkville. He and I had been dating for 2 months. I called and let him know, to the best of my ability, what was going on. He said he would book two flights from Toronto to Nova Scotia, for that afternoon. I asked him because I was not certain I heard correctly: "Two tickets"?

That's right. He was coming with me.

I could barely pack my clothing. After talking with Roy, my Mom's husband, things made more sense. Though Roy never said it out loud to me, I understood I was going home for a funeral. That helped me pack. Lots of black clothing, I own lots of black clothing because I worked in makeup and that was our uniform. Pack that, Deanna. Pack your black clothing.

I could feel myself sweating. I was off-balance.

What would I do with my dog Goldie? Who could I call? Thankfully, I made some new reliable friends that I trusted. They were quick to help and agreed to take Goldie immediately. Then I called another friend who is like family, who agreed to take Goldie a few days after.

I ticked off the boxes. I was not sure how long I would be away.

...

My Mom had a brain hemorrhage on February 14, 2020.

Roy, my mother's husband, tells the story like this: Mom and Roy were up first thing in the morning. Roy was getting ready for work. The grandkids were getting ready for Mom to drive them to school. Mom needed to use the washroom, but Roy was in there. When Roy was done, he went into the living room and found Mom sitting on the sofa holding the back of her head. She started screaming. She was struggling to keep her head up. She began to throw up. Mom said to Roy: "I think I'm dying." Roy asked Mom if he should call an ambulance. She said no. Roy called 911, the paramedics came. Mom was emergency airlifted from Sydney, N.S. to Halifax, N.S. for medical care.

Arriving at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital in Halifax, we learned Mom's surgery went better than expected. Now, to wait.

There was unexpected hope; we thought things might turn around.

They did not.

...

Mom died on February 19, 2020, surrounded by us, her family.

I thought I could remain bedside with my mother, holding her hand as she left us. I wanted to be strong for her, to give her comfort. That's where I started, but I could not stay. Things got scary when the nurse took the tubes out of Mom's nose and mouth. I went back to my partner and held on.

When Mom took her last breath and her heart took its last beat, I felt my parts rise in grief,¹ with the cries of my baby sister, and the sobs of those around us. Mom's sweet hands made strong fists and snuggled up to her cheek. Goodbye, my dear, sweet mother.

...

¹ I take a form of psychotherapy called Internal Family Systems. I learn about various parts that have come up from my childhood in protection of me. The parts aid in survival of the self when dealing with trauma. With a few years of therapy now, I have visualized, identified, named, and conversed with my parts. Holding gratitude for their efforts, understanding their intentions, while

being grounded in a calm, collective, confident self, can aid in healing with the parts, working in awareness and collaboration. One of my most infamous and tenacious parts, Morgan, was there, with Little Dee (the exile-who needed all the support she could get), Control – the academic, The Crow of Sadness, and the Cat of Rage.



Fig. 1 Mom, myself, and Roy at their wedding reception.

February 19, 2020

Facebook post, the Death of my Mother:

I will write you a magic story, a world with no tubes and no pain. Little Dee will get in bed beside you and feed you all the squares.⁴ All the squares you want, Mom. I'll sing you all your favorite songs and write them all for you. Thank you for loving me just as you did. For being just as you are. I am who I am because of you. I love you. I will miss you and miss telling you all the stories. You would say my name just so: "Deeeaaanna". Who will say my name as you did, to let me know I'm living my best life? I'll do my best to continue Mom, and hope to hear you say my name just as you did, just as you know.

From Halifax, Nova Scotia to Sydney, Nova Scotia

Do you recognize those moments in life where something bigger than the human species seems to hear, feel, and see us? Here is another story: Close family members gathered at the funeral home to say goodbye to my mother. As I stood alone at the casket, silently saying goodbye, I heard crows cawing in the distance. Though I was saying goodbye to the physical, material existence of my mother, I knew there was something bigger

⁴ Squares are a type of sweet, basically they are homemade cookies/treats that my Mom loved to bake, share, and eat. There were many times I'd come home late from my nights out in Toronto and call my Mom in

surrounding me, my Mom, our love, and the loss I was grieving.

I walked away from the casket towards my partner. When I was close enough that I could whisper in his ear, I asked if he had heard the crows. He did not, though it did not lessen the moment I shared with my mother.

It was time to go. Leaving the funeral home meant saying goodbye to my mother in her physical form. It was time to drive to the cemetery.

As we stepped into the hallway to leave, I saw Roy standing close to the exit. As I asked Roy out loud what I had whispered to my partner, the front doors were opened. The cries of the crows were louder. My mouth dropped open.

February 25, 2020

Facebook, and Twitter post, leaving the funeral home:

I heard the crows cawing softly as I said goodbye to my mother. Leaving the funeral home, they cawed loudly. I saw them in the trees and the leader waited, perched on a light post.



Fig. 2 Crows in trees and on a lamppost at the funeral home.

Return to Toronto, Ontario,

Nova Scotia. Most often, Mom was up after being in bed for some time, helping herself to some squares. She would answer the phone, I would tell her about my night, and we would chat.

and COVID-19

May 5, 2020

Facebook post, my birthday (edited):

I used to drive my Mom crazy with my singing. I would sing for hours on end. One Christmas she bought me a karaoke machine! I couldn't believe it! I had a microphone that reverbed my voice loudly through the speakers, like a real singer! I'd sing to the karaoke tapes of all my favourite songs. My bedroom ladder with bunk beds made my fantasy stage: I sang to a grand audience.

One day, singing in front of a real audience, Mom came up to me, at the end of the song, with tears in her eyes, and said, "that was perfect."

It meant so much to me. I always wanted to please my Mom.

After a recent therapy session, I wanted to hear the song I sang that day. The lyrics to Madonna's "Oh Father" (1989) told another story, listening again, after all these years: I empathized with my mother. Like the lyrics to the song, my mother was devoted to her father, despite their relationship having tumultuous times. When "Cranky Frankie", my mother's father, had a stroke and ended up in medical care for the last years of his life, Mom visited him every weekend. She brought us, her children, with her.



Fig. 3 Dad and Mom when they were young. Papa, my Mom's father, in the background.

Papa did not have an easy personality, even before the stroke. After the stroke though, Papa was more

difficult to be around. There was a weekend we visited; he was especially cruel. Cranky Frankie wheeled toward us as we exited the building to go, yelling at my mother to never come back. I know it hurt Mom because she cried and said she would not go back, though she did return. She visited Papa again soon, even after that. Mom loved with fierce loyalty.

May 5, 2020

Instagram post, my birthday (edited):

I was excited when my nephew gave this photo to me. Back home in Nova Scotia, when Mom was sick and then dying, the want to snuggle her preoccupied my mind. I fantasized about getting in bed with her at the hospital; to be close and bring her comfort. Physical affection for me has been a growth process, and with Mom, most special.

To know that we grew together, to snuggle as we did in this picture, as people that struggled with emotional and physical intimacy, on our own, and with each other, makes our relationship that much more special.

I remember now, the night the picture was taken. Mom and Roy were visiting me in Toronto. The guitar player from the band I sang with came over. He played guitar, I sang songs, for Mom.

Having this picture reminds me of how close Mom and I had become, how the fantasies I had when she was dying, were our actual reality. Not just on this occasion, but others too.



Fig. 4 Myself, Mom, and Roy snuggling.

wish to stay. Maybe, though, the loss hurts too

much to remember, those good times that were real. I wonder, if the fantasies I had, as Mom was dying, were my unconscious reaching out to me, and her, in the ways we grew, in love and safety, finally, with ourselves -- and each other.

Mom, we snuggled, and I sang to you. God, I miss you, I miss you still.

I got to feeling again, like numerous other times since my mother died, and during COVID, that maybe things within academia and life, are not all they are cracked up to be. I wondered about the point of it all. If any of it mattered. My mentor reached out to me, unexpectedly, with a writing project. He asked if I was interested in telling a story, about our experience in a classroom, about 13 years ago. I wrote this post, and shared it on Facebook, in response.

July 16, 2020

Facebook post, Deanna MacNeil is with Sean O'Handley (Roy's son) and Daniel MacNeil (my brother).

Sometimes, something, someone, reaches out to you, reminding you why you do what you do. Solidifying the need for hope, in people, and what you've chosen and worked so hard for, in life, with meaning and purpose.

I've had the roughest couple of months. I know we all have.

For me, continuing my Ph.D. but with teaching mostly, I've been able to get up, most mornings, with eager anticipation, because students seemed to need me, and I need them too.

Losing my mother, before, during, and approaching the changes of the shifting pandemic, I've done my best to sit with my grief and loss. And I won't apologize for it.

Losing my mother came much too swiftly, shocking me with what I thought was invincible strength -- because I've lost too many of those I've loved.

You may think because you've lost so many that you will be OK losing another. This is not true. Love is multiplicitious and we cannot pin grief down with meaning or purpose. Grief makes you question meaning and purpose; the very things that help you get out of bed in the morning. *This is why I want to teach, to learn, to hear and tell stories*

Yet, with the difficulties I've faced, the frustration and anger at the injustice, but also with the loss of my main, familiar, last living person, Mom, having my back, being gone, (DON'T hurt my daughter or you will hear from me-the wonderful wrath of my Mother) I've recognized, it's time for me to heal, Little Dee. I got you, grrrl.



Fig. 5 Daniel, Deanna (me-Little Dee) and Sean (Roy's son, who, like me, is adopted) on my birthday.

The Afterlife

Below is a blog post I shared on Facebook. After sharing my writing, extended relatives reached out to me with stories of my Mom, family, and their connections with adoption. I did not write and share for a response, though hearing stories from relatives was exactly what I needed.

When life feels meaningless, sometimes we can keep living through the telling and sharing of stories.

May 7, 2020

Deanna Danger's Blog: The Meaning of Family.

I've been posting lots about my Mom lately. She suffered a severe stroke on February 14, 2020. Mom was emergency airlifted by helicopter from Sydney, N.S. to Halifax for medical care. I flew from Toronto to Halifax with my partner to be with Mom and my family. Things did not go as we hoped. Mom died on February 19, 2020, surrounded by family. I flooded my Instagram, Facebook, and Twitter with words from me for her.



Fig. 7 Roy in a baseball hat.

My birthday was on May 5, just a few months after Mom died. Roy called and I couldn't answer the phone. I wasn't sure I could talk without crying; that the words wouldn't come out and I would make him sad. I don't want Roy to be sad. I wanted and want to be strong for him. Yet, I felt like a child. I told all my stories to Mom. The absence of her voice was too much to bear. Mom called me every year on my birthday. I'd answer the phone, and she'd break into song, singing every word of "Happy Birthday". This year, I dreaded my birthday, because I knew I would not hear her voice or have her sing to me. I miss our chats, the way she said my name and sang songs.

My father died when I was 11. When Dad died, I needed to be strong for Mom. She took my father's death hard. Relatives had to help her walk at the wake and funeral. Her brothers were on each side of her, their arms wrapped through hers, holding her body up. Mom's voice, however, did not fail her: "Danny!!... Danny!!" She screamed his name repeatedly. I don't remember crying then. I only remember Mom and the pain she was going through.



Fig. 8 My brother Daniel, me as a baby, and Dad, my Mom's first husband.

I'm also writing to express my gratitude to Roy, my mother's husband, for being the best father / father figure / friend to me.



Fig. 9 Dad at Christmas when he was sick.

After Dad's death, Mom got a job at the local junior high school cafeteria. She had four children to raise, and all on her own. I suppose the toll was too much to bear; she grieved for years. Christmas was awful. So was Easter. A trip to the graveyard accompanied our holidays, with Mom mourning Dad.



Fig. 10 Mom at her job in the cafeteria.

When I reached adolescence, Mom must have noticed something in me that needed her uplifting words. Those words were only for me. She used to say; "Deanna, you can do anything a man can do. You don't need a man. Look at me, I raised four kids on my own and you all turned out just fine." I took those words with me to my undergrad in women's studies, and then my Ph.D. in Gender, Feminism, and Women's Studies.

With the loss of my mother, I have reflected on previous losses too, like the loss of my father. Dad and I were very close. He welcomed me into his masculine-adult world. I helped him in his auto body shop. We went on adventures to the dump and the liquor store. I loved getting my hair cut with him at the barbershop. When I reached high school graduation, I was anxious. Dad would not be there. There was a father-daughter dance, and I didn't have a father to dance with. I worried I would cry during the dance. A few other students and I fought to have the name of the dance changed. The name required equity. Some of us did not have "fathers" to dance with.

Roy was my dance partner that night. I shed no tears. Roy had me laughing the whole time. He has always been there for me, for family. Roy is one of the most dedicated, kind, grounded people I know.



Fig. 11 Roy and I at my graduation, first dance.

In my 20s, while living in Toronto, I sent Roy a Father's Day card. I felt a strange hesitance mixed with love because the card said "Dad" on it. I struggled with the word "Dad" but wanted to let Roy know he was a "Dad" to me.

I had a nightmare after I mailed the card. My Dad, Danny, joined me in a dream; he told me he was my father, Roy was not. I wondered if I was an ungrateful daughter to call Roy "Dad"? Was Danny, my Dad, upset with me? I love Roy but was not sure how to navigate Father's Day. Navigating normative family functions and constructs have always been difficult for me, probably exacerbated by being adopted and growing up with sisters who are biologically related to each other and our parents. My nightmare, and the guilt-ridden feelings of confusion, felt significant though.

Looking back, with what I know now, my feelings were bound with the struggle to understand my place in family. Family is multiple and shifting, created, and non-normative. Both Roy and Dad are my fathers. Roy's children are also my siblings. My biological relatives, who I have not talked about here, are family too.



Fig 13 My sister Jennifer, me, and Michelle (aka Belle-Belle, Roy's daughter, also adopted).

Contemplating how I think differently about family, I find it interesting how people fixate on biological similarities. Roy's daughter Michelle is also adopted. Growing up so close and sharing so much time together, adults often commented on how alike Michelle and I looked. At my mother's wake, a few people wanted to know how all of us in the receiving line were related. Specifically, questions asked who is adopted, biologically related, and the children of Danny (Dad) and Cecilia (Mom) versus Roy (Stepdad) and Valerie (Roy's first wife). Someone even asked, "why do you all look so different?" I responded, "look at Michelle and I, and her daughter too, we look so much alike!"

Presently, I enjoy having a multitude of mothers, fathers, and family members. My existence subverts societal constructions of the heteronormative-nuclear, biological-essentialist "family". The roles and rules of normative families do not apply to me.



Fig. 12 Roy smiling in the kitchen wearing oven mitts.



Fig. 14 Daniel and I as youngsters. Though adopted from different families, we look alike.

Being adopted and existing outside typical family scripts, I can say who I think I look like or who I act like in my family, but really, I sound silly because we are not biologically related, yet we kind of pretend we are. When I mention who I think I look like outside family relations, I barely get a response, and if I do, it is rare someone understands me. I am trying to point out unquestioned norms that most take for granted. The assumption is that families are biologically related; there's not much room for imagining in between biology and adoption, unless you're an adoptee like me, or my older brother, Daniel.



Fig. 15 Daniel and I watching music videos.

Daniel helped me create an identity based on imagination. In our worlds of play, Daniel and I could be whoever we dreamed ourselves to be. Growing up adopted, “facts” of our adoptions were not discussed. Our parents did not know where we came from, who our biological parents were, or why we were given up for adoption. They knew the bare minimum. Back then, we did not talk about adoption like we do now. With societal insistence on biological sameness, Daniel and I belonged through our difference. We utilized fantasy. Barbara Streisand was Daniel's birth mother, Madonna was mine. Daniel and I imagined who we could be making connections through song, music video, film, and soap operas.

Roy's first wife Valerie and I also had a special relationship. Valerie died from complications from diabetes. You couldn't meet a more sensitive, giving, wearing-her-heart-on-her-sleeve person than Valerie. We watched all the sad shows together. Roy and Mom would come into the TV room laughing at me and Valerie bawling our eyes out to *Highway to Heaven*.



Fig.16 Valerie, myself, and Daniel.

I am not sure how Roy gained the strength to be without Valerie. Like Mom, he too had to raise children, and all on his own. Roy and his family were there for us when Dad died. We were there for Roy and his family when Valerie died. We did not give a second thought to the closeness of our relationships or the “fact” that we were not biologically related. We were just there for each other.

Mom and Roy got married a few years after Valerie died. Making our relationships formal, felt right, though we never needed legality to make us family.

Family is more than a biological connection and/or formal or informal adoption. Family is what we make of it; those that care and are there for us no matter what. These are the people that welcomed me into their worlds, and families too. I cherish these connections.



Fig. 17 Mom and Roy laughing.



Fig.18 Roy and Mom: a happy wedding photo.

B-Side: Fur Family

Remember when Alanis Morissette had that secret song at the end of *Jagged Little Pill*? Well, keep reading if you like B-sides. That is how I envision these next few pages.

Whiskey was my best friend throughout childhood and adolescence. She was a captive audience when I would sing. She would lay close to the speaker of the karaoke machine Mom bought me, her ears listening, her eyes watching me.

Every morning, just a few minutes before my alarm went off for work or school, Whiskey would wake me with kisses.



Fig. 19 Our family dog Whiskey.
The very best girl.

The loss of Whiskey is a story I barely tell. Even though I have discussed Whiskey’s death in therapy a few times, it is hard to go back and revisit that family trauma.

Sometimes people talk about times in life they wish they could go back to, in fantastical hopes of changing their actions, based on what they now know. I do not regret much in life, however, if I could go back in time, it would be the day Whiskey died.

If only I was more aware of what would happen that day. If only I could have believed my girl would be gone, and in a way that was too unjust for the gift she was, for me, for all of us.

Frog, the Boston Terrier in this picture, wants some of Mom's square. Frog's formal name is Coffee. He died a few years ago.

When Frog was getting older, my partner and I at the time, adopted a rescue dog named Goldie. He is the yellow dog in the photo.

Goldie was a comfort to me during Frog's senior years.



Fig. 20 Mom, Frog, and Goldie.

One-night, when Frog could not stop panting and pacing, a side effect of the drugs he needed to limit his seizures, Goldie helped me.

When it was time for sleep, Goldie laid lengthwise across the bedroom door. He had never done this before. Goldie seemed to know that blocking the doorway could protect Frog from wandering into the living room. Frog's seizures needed to be monitored, and his absence from us could be a danger to him. Frog needed to remain close, I think Goldie knew this, and blocked the doorway to give us warning should Frog try to leave.

Another rough night, Frog took a while to settle down. When Frog finally went into his crate, a space I knew that was safe for him should he have a seizure, I sat on the floor looking at him. I had finally realized the wear that age had done to my sweet boy. He was not at peace. He was not the

Frog I once knew. I looked at my old man fur baby and cried. Goldie took his paw, placed it on my leg, and looked intently up at me. Goldie let me know I was not alone; he was right there with me.

Oct 22, 2020

Facebook post, a poem I wrote while missing Mom

In My Corner

What is it about sad love songs
That make me feel so damn good

I remember
The first time
I felt like this

Didn't know
How much
I'd miss

I came home
From the Brooks Haven Dance
Something came over me

They asked me
"Deanna, what's wrong?"
I couldn't answer

Nothing was wrong
All was well

I found my way
In song
With me and you

I finally responded
"Nothing is wrong, I am happy"
And you know what?
It is true.

They both laughed
Said my name

I'm still the same
Crying 'cause I'm sad
and happy in love

In song
With you
Forever with you

Part of me came out that day
Tonight, she came out too
So, I could remember
What it was like
Being loved by you.

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Author biography

Deanna is a third-year Ph.D. student in Gender, Feminism, and Women's studies at York University, Toronto, Ontario with a joint honours degree in Women and Gender Studies and English Literature from the University of Toronto, with a Bachelor and Master of Education from York University. Born and raised in Sydney, Nova Scotia, Deanna moved to Toronto at the age of 21 to become a 'famous' singer. She found her way back to books and began writing about music. She has been published across Canada, including the *Globe and Mail*, Ryerson Free Press, and the *Rock and Roll Report*. Deanna's undergrad led her to think critically about being adopted. Deanna is a white domestic adoptee from a closed adoption. Adoptees who lack knowledge of their biological origins may have a complicated relationship with fantasy. Fantasy has the potential to blur reality and subvert normativity to create multiple identities, desires, and possibilities for self. Deanna is going back to her childhood roots to consider the ways song, story, and film reimagine identity and family.

A Cultural Reset

Sarah Gaddam

I was born and raised in the United States. Both of my parents come from a state in Southern India called Telangana. In their 30s, they individually migrated to the U.S., where they later got married and had me. My parents had a different lifestyle compared to the “typical” Brown person living in the Indian diaspora, as they spoke the language of Telangana and Andhra Pradesh: Telugu, which is a lesser-known Indian language in Western society. Further, they were raised in Christian homes, which is not usually associated with Indian culture — a double whammy, if you will. Growing up, my parents wanted me to practice Christianity because they valued biblical morals and ideals. They also encouraged me to speak Telugu with them, so that I would retain the language and stay connected to our heritage. Back in India, they were surrounded by people with similar upbringings, cultures, and beliefs, but by moving to the U.S. to start our family, they became minorities, always trying their best to keep their culture alive.

When I was 5 years old, I started kindergarten at a Christian private school in Chicago. There wasn’t much racial diversity. White teachers and students were the majority, with a few Black and Hispanic classmates. In my homeroom, I was the only South Indian child. Upon socializing with my peers, I realized that I was different from them. My classmates would eat sandwiches for lunch, while I would bring roti. I looked different from most of them too: My skin was Brown and my hair was drenched in coconut oil, braided into two. My classmates were able to go home and talk with their parents in English, while I would go home and speak to mine in Telugu. As a young kid, I wanted more than anything to fit in with my peers. So,

since my white classmates did not value my culture, I grew to not appreciate it.

Although I learned Telugu at a young age, I never brought the language to school with me. I wanted to relate to my classmates so that I could be like them. It got to the point where I was embarrassed to speak my language or have my parents talk to me in front of my friends. By the time I turned 6, I stopped speaking Telugu all together. Amidst this internal conflict, I forgot how to speak Telugu. I was influenced, if not warped, by the dominant culture of speaking English in the West: I didn’t want to be an outsider, so I changed who I was.

A few years later, my family moved to Brampton, Ontario, Canada, where I attended high school. The city of Brampton is known for being a town full of Desi people. Although this is true, the social landscape is primarily made up of North Indian culture, with people speaking Hindi, Punjabi, or both. This is the more “typical” understanding of who an Indian person is. My brown peers in high school spoke a different language than me, just like my white peers in elementary school did. They did not recognize me as being Brown because my family was from South India. In reality, Indian culture is extremely diverse and consists of a variety of languages and religions, thereby creating many subcultures. However, in the context of Brampton, being Brown means one of two things — and my brownness didn’t fit. To further add to this tension, I was also Christian, which my Brown peers thought of as a white religion. When I tried to explain myself and defend my heritage, some of my classmates would ignore it and try to tell me who I was. As a result, I stayed quiet when classmates would make insulting

remarks about South Indian culture, about my culture.

The learning environment that I grew up in told me to neglect my roots: I was either too brown or not brown enough. As a result, I did not appreciate my culture, and that has left a mark on me. However, I understand why and how this happened. I disregarded my own heritage to try to be more like those around me, to feel like I belonged, and that affected my sense of self. But what else was I supposed to do? I could either fit in or be a stranger.

Today, as an adult, I crave to learn more about my heritage. Understanding Telugu and embracing my South Indian culture has always been a part of me, but I abandoned it for many years. I now know how important it is to teach children to respect different cultures in school: it is one of the first places where children learn to socialize on their own and create opinions based on the influence of others. This is especially important for children of colour in the diaspora who may not understand why or how their differences make them special. As a first-generation individual, it can be hard to understand who you are and what parts of cultures you identify with. Our culture is a mix of the past, with what our parents knew, and the future, with how we live. It is reset in the hands of our generation. That said, at the end of the day, every culture should be respected because every person comes from a unique worlding. Even if we don't know much about it. With just a little empathy and kindness towards one another, we can uplift, recognize and appreciate the cultural differences between us, so why not?

Author biography

Sarah Gaddam is an undergraduate student in Biology and Kinesiology and Health Science at York University. She chose to write this piece because of her experiences as a first-generation individual. There are a number of people who share similar experiences of either being too much or not enough of their culture. As a result, some have either drifted away from their heritage or have immersed themselves even deeper into it. Whatever the case may be, such decisions should not be based on an outsider's opinion. Sarah believes that the world is a kaleidoscope of various cultures, religions, backgrounds, and identities. With that said, she believes that we should respect all people, even if someone is considered "different" and does not have the same experience as you. The ultimate goal of this piece is to shed light on the fact that we have the ability to, and therefore should, uplift each other and have empathy for one another.

The Factory Women

Natalie Welsh

Abstract

The Factory Women is a fictional account of four Italian immigrant women in Toronto, Ontario in the 1960s. Told from the second person point-of-view, the narrative aims to challenge readers to see the story through the main character's eyes. The women presented in the story sew uniforms in a small workshop that they have dubbed "the factory." One of the women, Marta, lost her husband to the Hoggs Hollow disaster, an actual historical event in which four Italian workers were killed while building a water main tunnel in Toronto. When a mysterious man begins working at "the factory" alongside the women, he tries to encourage them to join a worker's union, much to the disapproval of the workroom supervisor. While Toronto Italians have largely assimilated into mainstream Canadian society, *The Factory Women* strives to remind members of the ethnic community of their conflicted past in an effort to exhort them to speak out against social injustice now. While many young Italian Canadians have led privileged lives, they must remember the experiences of their own ancestors and continue to fight for the equality of all Canadians. While centred on the Italian experience in Canada, *The Factory Women* aims to remind all people of the importance of group solidarity.

Keywords

factory, women, country, union

The Factory Women

Your son Michele, who usually goes by Mike, tells his cousins that his shortest stint of employment lasted all of two days. The manager would shout at the servers in front of all the customers while they dined on overcooked steaks and mashed potatoes drowned in a vicious brown gravy that dripped off the plates. Mike tells his cousins that his only regret in leaving that joint was that he did not stay long enough to organize the workers. After your son finishes his story, he takes a drag on his cigarette, then throws his head back and laughs.

The first time you picked up a needle, you were just four years old, and by the time you were ten, you were sewing baptismal gowns — as soft and white as angels' wings — for babies in your village and beyond. Some of those sickly babies took their last breaths just days after the priest had poured the sacred water onto their foreheads. It was a good thing those little ones had been baptized, or they would not have made it to Heaven.

When you were just a teenaged bride, you followed your husband to this country. In this country, you both hoped to create your own heaven. You hoped that you would make so much money that you wouldn't have to grow your own food anymore — no, you would buy it from a big store where ladies in pillbox hats pushed metal carts filled with chunks of meat wrapped in cellophane packages. You said nothing when the tomatoes you eventually grew in your new backyard tasted nothing like the ones back home, not wanting to seem ungrateful after your husband had toiled for years just to bring you to this country. When a pillbox hat lady from down the street brought you a wobbling red mass on a floral plate, you said “thank you” in your heavily accented English. You noticed that the lady had brown spots all over her face and up and down her arms. When the freckled pillbox hat lady left, you had no idea what to do with the red mass, so you quietly dropped it into the kitchen garbage bin. The next day, you returned the floral plate. A flaxen-haired man answered the door, said something you couldn't understand, and gestured for you to come inside. Frightened, you ran across the street to your own house, locking the door behind you. You closed all the heavy red and white checkered drapes and prayed to Agnes of Rome, the patron saint of chaste women.

Before Mike was born, you worked at a small factory, spending six hours each day bent over a

sewing machine, Monday to Saturday. On Sunday, you went to church. Your husband, who still hates church to this day, stayed home to play cards with his friends from the construction company. At church, you sat beside Enza, your supervisor from the factory who towered over you and all the other women. Whenever Enza spoke in her booming voice, her big arms jiggled like the pillbox hat lady's mysterious red mass.

One Monday morning, a new employee joined the factory: a man with sandy hair sat down behind one of the sewing machines and began working. The only other men at the company worked in the factory office. During the half-hour lunchbreak, Flavia, who had just married an American-born Sicilian, wondered aloud why a man would want to do a woman's job. Rosa, Flavia's older sister, asked why a woman with a rich husband would want to work in the factory, a place the women sometimes referred to as “Hell.” Flavia's husband was an accountant and brought home a fat paycheque and a heart-shaped box of candies every Friday evening. Flavia said that she was saving her wages to pay for night school. She was learning English and one day she was going to read the evening news on television. You and the other women just laughed. Who was going to cook her husband's supper if Flavia had to read the evening news on television?

The new man at the factory liked to read both English and Italian newspapers at lunch. He had come from northern Italy, from a province where everyone ate rice. Sometimes, he even ate cold rice for lunch, left over from his supper the night before. He said his wife had died in childbirth in their village and that he had come to this country alone. He started to talk about organizing the workers at the factory. Marta, who had lost her husband at Hoggs Hollow, said that she liked the idea. You said you didn't understand what the man meant by “organizing the workers”, so Enza explained, telling you it was a bad idea. You would all be fired if you joined a union. Rosa ran her fingers through her chestnut-coloured hair and laughed — she wouldn't mind getting fired from the factory. Flavia threw a scrap of red fabric at her sister and told her to shut up.

Flavia invited you over for coffee one night after supper. Rosa was there too. Marta had declined Flavia's offer, saying she was just too busy that evening. Flavia's American-born husband sat in the living room, watching Walter

Cronkite in Southeast Asia. Flavia laughed as she poured the aromatic coffee, joking that maybe Marta had a boyfriend. Rosa told her sister to shut up — that was a terrible thing to say about a widow. Flavia just kept talking: the new man who wanted to organize the workers must be a communist. Weren't all union people communists? That's what Enza had said. Besides, the man was from the north. Weren't communists always from northern parts of countries? Didn't anyone watch the news? There was a war in Vietnam and the communists were from the north. Had everyone already forgotten about Korea?

Marta decided that they couldn't unionize. If Mr. Rossi and the other men in the office fired them all, she, a widow in a new country, would have no other way to take care of her elderly parents and her little boy, the one who had been named after his father — God rest his soul — who had been killed at Hogs Hollow. Flavia did not want to lose her night school money. Rosa wanted to save money to buy a television set, just like the one that Flavia's husband watched every night. You wanted to save money so that you could resign from your job and stay at home with the baby you were expecting — you hadn't told your friends at the factory the good news just yet. That night after supper, you felt too tired to go for coffee at Flavia's. Instead of working on the baptismal gown you had started sewing for the secret growing within you, you went to bed early.

The new man and Marta began sitting together at work, silently sewing the white uniforms that would be worn by hospital workers, and by maids employed in rich people's homes. At lunch, the man started sharing his cold rice with Marta, a village girl from the very south of Italy. Sometimes the man would talk about organizing the workers who wore the uniforms that you and the others sewed in the factory. Enza always told him to pay attention to his work — if they did not meet their quota, they would have to work Sunday and she did not want to miss church. One day, while you and the other women waited for the streetcar that would take you back to your neighbourhood, Flavia warned Marta that if she spent too much time with that man she might become a communist; if she became a communist, this country would send her back to Italy. Marta said the man was not a communist. He just wanted to organize the workers so that they could afford to buy nice things and

would never have to work any Sundays. Marta said she wanted to buy nice things: she wanted to buy her son a bicycle. She wanted to buy herself a record player so that she could listen to Nancy Sinatra. As you boarded the streetcar, you heard Flavia tell Marta that she would give her the portable record player she no longer used. When you got off the streetcar in your neighbourhood, you followed the other factory women into the butcher shop where you bought beef cutlets and breadcrumbs to make your husband's favourite supper.

Marta didn't say much after church on Sunday. Flavia invited Marta to her house so that she could give her the portable record player, but Marta said she wanted to go to the cemetery. You stood with the other factory women and watched as Marta left in a different direction than her elderly parents and her little boy. At work that Monday, Marta said that she felt nauseous and tired. During lunch, she sipped some hot tea but refused Flavia's offer of an order of toast from the diner down the street. The new man looked down at the table while he silently ate his chunk of bread and can of pungent sardines. Marta asked to go home early but Enza reminded her that they had a quota. The new man dropped his bread onto the table, stood up, and began shouting in English, telling that old Enza where she could shove her quota. Enza threatened to report him to management but you're still not sure if she ever did.

The next day, the man didn't show up for work. Rosa asked Enza if the factory had finally fired the communist. Enza said she didn't know. Marta surprised you by saying that she hoped she never saw that man or his foul sardines ever again. Then she jumped up from her sewing machine and ran to the bathroom with her hand clamped over her mouth. You and the other women could hear her retching into the toilet. Rosa knocked on the bathroom door and returned to the workroom with Marta, wiping the latter's face with damp toilet paper. Flavia reached into her purse and told you to go and buy Marta a tea from the coffee shop next door. As you left for the coffee shop, you could hear Enza cursing you and the other women through the cigarette that hung from her chapped lips.

The next day, the colour drained from Marta's olive-hued face until her complexion resembled the nurse's cap she was sewing. Marta stood up and shouted when she saw the vermilion pool in the seat of her chair. You and the other women jumped

up from your sewing machines just as Marta hit the hard workroom floor. Enza's plump limbs shook as she ran toward the office, shouting for someone to call for an ambulance. You felt warm tears fall down your cheeks as the blood continued to seep through the back of Marta's long black and white plaid skirt until it almost resembled a map of Canada. You wiped your face with your trembling fingertips. All Marta wanted from life was to take care of her family and to listen to Nancy Sinatra. Who would take care of her elderly parents and her little boy if something happened to Marta? You watched Rosa and Flavia fuss over Marta while the sisters simultaneously cursed the man from the north.

The factory granted Marta three days to recover from her miscarriage, but she never did return to work. Enza said she was probably fired — why would the factory want to keep a widow who slept with other men and had babies with them? Flavia threatened to sew the old woman's lips shut but Enza just kept talking: she said the factory had already hired a new girl to replace Marta, a girl who had just gotten off the boat and came from a little village so poor and remote that she had never seen a sewing machine and had been too scared to ride the streetcar to her job interview. One Saturday after you had finished work, you went by the house where Marta lived with her parents and little boy. The couple that owned the house told you in your own dialect that Marta and her family had moved away. Had they returned to their village in Italy? The couple wasn't sure.

Years later, you and Flavia were eating lunch in a suburban diner and you swore the waitress looked like Marta, save for the bleached hair and the gaudy makeup layered over her lined face. The waitress wore a name tag that spelled "Marty" and she talked to another customer about *Dallas*, speculating over who could have shot J.R. Another waitress dropped a coin into the old jukebox and Nancy Sinatra belted out a tune. A few weeks later, Rosa read an obituary in a local Italian-language newspaper about a celebrated union man and swore that the person in the picture looked just like that new man who used to work at the factory. The paper said that the recently deceased man had rallied for workers in the Italian community and beyond. But the man in the paper had a different name so Rosa wasn't so sure it was him. But the

obituary said that the union man had spent most of his life a widower and had never had any children.

You handed Mr. Rossi your letter of resignation two weeks before giving birth to Mike. You eventually gave birth to two more children, another boy and a girl. Mike eventually opened his own chain of restaurants alongside his younger brother Anthony, who insisted on giving benefit packages and pension plans to all the employees. You recently moved to the suburbs with your husband and your daughter, Rosemary. Rosemary has grown to be a striking beauty — she has your thick black hair and your husband's bright blue eyes and alabaster skin — but her mind has not grown with the rest of her body. Once a week, you use the public bus to take Rosemary to classes that stimulate her creativity — youth volunteers teach her and other intellectually challenged adults arts and crafts, including how to fashion paper pinwheels and pom-pom animals. You never did return to the factory, instead devoting yourself to your family. You still sew baptismal gowns for acquaintances at church. This past week, you began crafting a baptismal gown for Marta's unnamed baby, lost so many years ago. You tell yourself that you will sell it at a church fundraiser in the hopes that your kindness will ensure that the baby's soul will continue to find serenity in Heaven.

Once a month, you return to the city to attend church with Rosa and Flavia. After Mass, you follow the two sisters to the cemetery, clasping onto Rosemary's slender hand. You, along with Rosa and Flavia, leave fragrant flowers at the grave of Marta's husband, who died at Hoggs Hollow. You never do run into Marta or her kin at the poor man's resting spot. After visiting Marta's husband, you place a bouquet before the small private mausoleum where Enza was interred beside her husband. You take Rosemary's hand in yours and remind her how to make the sign of the cross before Enza's tomb. During the winding bus ride to Flavia's house for lunch, you wonder if Marta really did visit the cemetery after church that Sunday so many years ago.

The workers at the factory never did unionize. After you left, the factory expanded, employing more women and a handful of men. The company opened a second factory in a nearby city. They eventually moved the factories overseas where labour was much cheaper and their workers in this country had to move on to other jobs. Some learned

a trade or went to study business at community colleges. The older people retired, living off the money that they had saved for decades. Flavia heard that the old factory where you and the other women once worked will be torn down and a new company will come in to build tall towers of luxury condos. Flavia's husband is thinking of buying one now that they are both retired.

You came to this country as a teenaged bride. You now have three grown children, and several grandchildren, all born in this country. Yesterday, a local Italian-language newspaper ran a story on the Hoggs Hollow Disaster. You just turned the page because you have put all the hardships behind you, and you are very grateful for everything this country has given you. Still, you cannot stop thinking of Marta, whose husband died so many years ago.

Author biography

Natalie Welsh is an emerging writer and researcher residing in the Greater Toronto Area. She received her BA in Anthropology and her MA in Humanities from York University, Toronto. Prior to embarking on her studies at York, she obtained a TESOL certificate and taught English as a Second Language in Bangkok, Thailand. Natalie has been a lifelong fan of the arts. As a child, she devoured (though not literally!) countless books and her parents' old record collection. A late bloomer in the kitchen, she also enjoys cooking and collecting recipes. Aside from writing, and trying not to overcook family meals, Natalie is passionate about playing and listening to music. After reading the work of authors such as Viet Thanh Nguyen, Nino Ricci, Joy Kogawa, and Nguyen Phan Que Mai, Natalie was inspired to write about her experiences in her own ethnic community. She based *The Factory Women* on her undergraduate research, old family lore, stories her former co-workers told in the lunchroom, and worlds that exist in her imagination.

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