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In Flux: Experiences of Social and Political Betweenness

Cover art by Eric Goodchild

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York University, Tkaronto, So-Called Canada

EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION

This issue of *New Sociology* examines life in states of liminality and uncertainty, seeking to understand what it means to live in flux across experiences of transnationality, gender, queerness and disability (to name a few). How does it feel, we wonder, to be in a constant transitional state, always traveling but never arriving? What kind of possibilities emerge from this ebb and flow of social and political betweenness? And how do those living in such continuous flux come to define and mobilize resistance?

In Flux: Experiences of Social and Political Betweenness explores how systems of oppression subjugate people to states of unbeing and unbecoming, allowing the specter of dismissal and erasure to loom large. At any given moment, these lives are at risk of political scrutiny, targeted violence or exclusion. The unrelenting angst about how broader social and political churnings will impact their everyday lived reality can be overbearing, if not debilitating. We believe that it is important to share these stories, to amplify those marginalized voices who are "talking back"[i] to the unjust displacement and abjection that constitutes their lives. We desire to go beyond what we are supposed to know (and *how* we are supposed to know it) by embracing the messiness of humanity.

The theme of this issue was inspired by the instability and anxiety of the present political moment(s). Diplomatic decisions, and social and political developments constantly call the rights, wellbeing, and autonomy of non-white, queer, trans, sex worker, poor, and disabled communities into question. At the time this issue is being edited, genocidal, settler colonial violence runs rampant in Gaza, depriving Palestinian people of crucial resources, subjecting those who have been detained to horrific abuse, and taking countless lives. Additionally, for members of the Palestinian diaspora and allies who choose to fight the institutional forces that allow this violence to continue, the surveillance, violence and punishments that accompany this kind of activism pose a constant threat. At the same time, there are many silenced genocides across Africa. In Sudan, Congo, and Tigray, millions of people have been murdered by state sanctioned violence, some over decades, with almost no recognition from either mainstream or social media. There are more genocides taking place, of displaced people all around the world, but it seems that mass death has become so commonplace, that in this introduction, we can only name a few.

We also see efforts to erase and disappear queer and trans people in numerous countries, including our own. As right-wing groups and mobilizations grow, social justice milestones that were hard won through decades of LGBTQ+ activism hang in the balance, and hateful, exclusionary projects are carried out in the name of "protecting the children." Amid efforts to restrict their access to healthcare and support, young queer and trans peoples' voices become obscured as their lives and identities become political battlegrounds.

Finally, the uneven and unjust distribution of citizenship rights creates precarity in the lives of many. Around the world, non-white people, people with precarious migration 'status', the unhoused, and people with disabilities face a constant threat of violence and imprisonment, as carceral systems expand, drain public resources, and overstep basic rights and freedoms. In short, the social and political struggles of the moment have compelled us to use this issue to find wonder and meaning in all the uncertainty.

This volume is divided into three themes, each containing four pieces, followed by a book review. The themes are: *Between, Beyond,* and *Against*. These spatio-temporal terms are used to describe

the pieces' relationship to flux. The first theme, *Between* is intended to capture the process of realizing or reflecting upon one's experience of flux and of subsequently navigating continuums of fixity and stability. The section opens with Eric Goodchild's "Indomitable Colour Schemes," the volume's featured piece. In this visual poetic essay, the author evokes the feeling of instability by taking the reader through the challenges and traumas that have shaped their work and life. Colour, negative space, and discordance are all used to represent the fluidity of survival and to create art from a social position conditioned by volatility and vulnerability.

The next piece is entitled "Leaving, *Again*," a reflective piece that recounts the author Areej Alshammiry's emotional journey of leaving Kuwait, her native land. It captures the bittersweet reality of living between two worlds, mapping some of the struggles she felt as a result of leaving loved ones behind in Kuwait in order to build another life in so-called Canada. Following this we have "A Love Letter to the US," by Mari Sobrewal, who uses the popular concept of the American dream to problematize ideas about citizenship and belonging. A reflection of Sobrewal's personal experience, this essay highlights the importance of understanding the roles national histories play in perpetuating colonial narratives. To conclude the section, we have "A Sudden Epiphany," by Joddi Alden. This photo poem offers a contemplative reflection on a nighttime walk through the famed city of Vienna, capturing the capital's many cultural achievements alongside its dark colonial roots and genocidal afflictions. Balancing the beauty of the present and the horrors of the past, Alden depicts a harrowing moment of realization as felt in a world of harrowing instability.

The next theme, *Beyond*, explores the generative possibilities of flux. The pieces in this section engage with flux as transition, change, and becoming. In this sense, they invite us to think about how betweenness offers opportunities to create and nurture something new. In "Purple Basil Lemonade," Calvin Prowse offers a collection of stories and personal reflections that speak to the community, loss, memory and dreams felt among Mad and disabled people, developed through the process of making and sharing purple basil lemonade. In "The Limbo Party," Giuliana Racco captures a collaborative video project created with Tivoli Föreningen, a self-organized group of refugees from different countries. The piece considers how spatio-temporal concepts such as limbo and twilight can be metaphorically connected to the state(s) of waiting for asylum.

In "The Sex Worker Historian," Evania Pietrangelo-Porco similarly captures her multi-media collaborative effort of the same name, using her skills and experiences as a trained historian to draw attention to the oppression of sex workers. Pietrangelo-Porco showcases how the project uses various social media platforms to fight against the erasure of sex workers and their histories. Lastly, in "Dawn," Erik Brownrigg uses poetry to engage the experience of time and transition in the search for utopia, using the transformative beauty of a sunrise to symbolize the fluid nature of time and to present a transformative outlook on life through the shift between night and day.

Against is the final theme, and it is used to describe a process of becoming defiant through a position of flux. The pieces in this section show how flux can be a site of resistance. The first piece, "I am myself," is a personal narrative in which author Sasha Askarian reflects on a childhood experience of being physically restrained, representing the broader themes of bodily autonomy and the struggle of self-expression. Showcasing the unique experiences of being an immigrant youth, Askarian's words astutely capture the necessity of recognizing and asserting one's right over one's body. The next piece is "Becoming Unapologetically Metis," where author Jolene Heida poetically reflects on the novel *In Search of April Raintree*. Heida recounts experiences of the complex and violent processes associated with Indigenous identity formation in a settler colonial state and engages with her memories as a means of resistance.

The third piece of the theme is "Nihilist Potato," which features a collection of original Instagram memes created and curated by Yaqing Helen Han. The memes use humour and Dadaism to delve into the author's personal troubles and aspirations, and to resist oppressive structures through satire and joy. To conclude the section, we have a poem entitled "African Mother Scholar," by

Runeni R. Mangwiza Zvemhara, which challenges colonial narrative structures and epistemologies. By decolonizing her relationship to knowledge, both of the world and of herself, Mangwiza Zvemhara embraces an identity that is resistant to the Eurocentric, patriarchal structures that seek to define her pursuits.

Finally, the volume concludes with a book review of Jennifer L. Morgan's *Laboring Women: Reproduction and Gender in New World Slavery*, by Kamilah Clayton. In this review, Clayton explores how Morgan's work examines the complex and sometimes contradicting narratives surrounding Black women's bodies, which were developed through the violence of racial capitalism and the plantation system and persist today.

Combined, the brilliant and vibrant pieces of this issue capture the contradictions and upheavals in everyday lives, as they shift between states of being and unbeing, becoming and unbecoming, stability and instability, here and not; they tell stories of hope and resilience, resistance and belonging. As such, they speak to the different ways in which lives in flux can help us better understand broader social and political forces. The reflections, stories, poetry, art, and collaborations found in this issue provide opportunities to develop a deeper understanding of what it means to be in flux, and how oscillating between worlds should not render us disposable, as it does now, but act as a harbinger of hope and futurity, enabling us to see *Between*, *Beyond*, and *Against*.

We would like to thank the authors, creatives, and dreamers who contributed to our fifth issue, *In Flux: Experiences of Social and Political Betweenness*. A special thank you also goes to Eric Goodchild for creating the cover photo for the issue and to Namitha Rathinappillai for their extensive copy edits. Most of all, we want to thank the readers of *New Sociology* for making issues like this possible. Five years ago, *New Sociology* was a dream, and today, it's a dream with more than a hundred publications. Thank you.

Naiomi Perera, NS Chief-Deputy-Editor, Muskaan Khurana, NS Chief-Deputy-Editor, and Shreyashi Ganguly, NS Chief-Deputy-Editor, with Jade Da Costa, NS Founder and Editor-In-Chief.

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[i] See bell hooks' "Talking Back" (1986) in *Discourse* Vol. 8, pp. 123–128, where she develops the idea of "talking back" as a means of resistance. As she argues, "moving from silence into speech is for the oppressed, the colonized, the exploited, and those who stand and struggle side by side, a gesture of defiance that heals, that makes new life, and new growth possible" (p. 128).

Between

NS?

Indominable Colour Schemes

Eric Goodchild

Abstract

This ten-page visual, poetic essay captures my disenfranchisement from my own art and poetry, as well as the continuous instability of my life. I start with parental expectations, symbolized by negative space or violent lines and shapes, pondering the cost of these expectations on the joys and freedom of youth. I move into encounters of transphobic and racist bullying at primary school, a time when it was impossible to bear the terms for such experiences. This is followed by representations of abuse, only retroactively understood throughout the subsequent exploration of it, as well as the chronic deprivation of opportunity that these kinds of injuries cause. The exponential costs, particularly the emotional ones, that incur from the practical losses that come with life are then considered, along with the re-traumatization of simply trying to survive them. Finally, there are discordant uses of space, cluttered and overlayered images and words, alongside isolating negative spaces, to represent the constant feeling of failure, including being broken even during instances of stability or minor success.

Keywords

arts-based research, visual essay, poetry, trauma, deviant

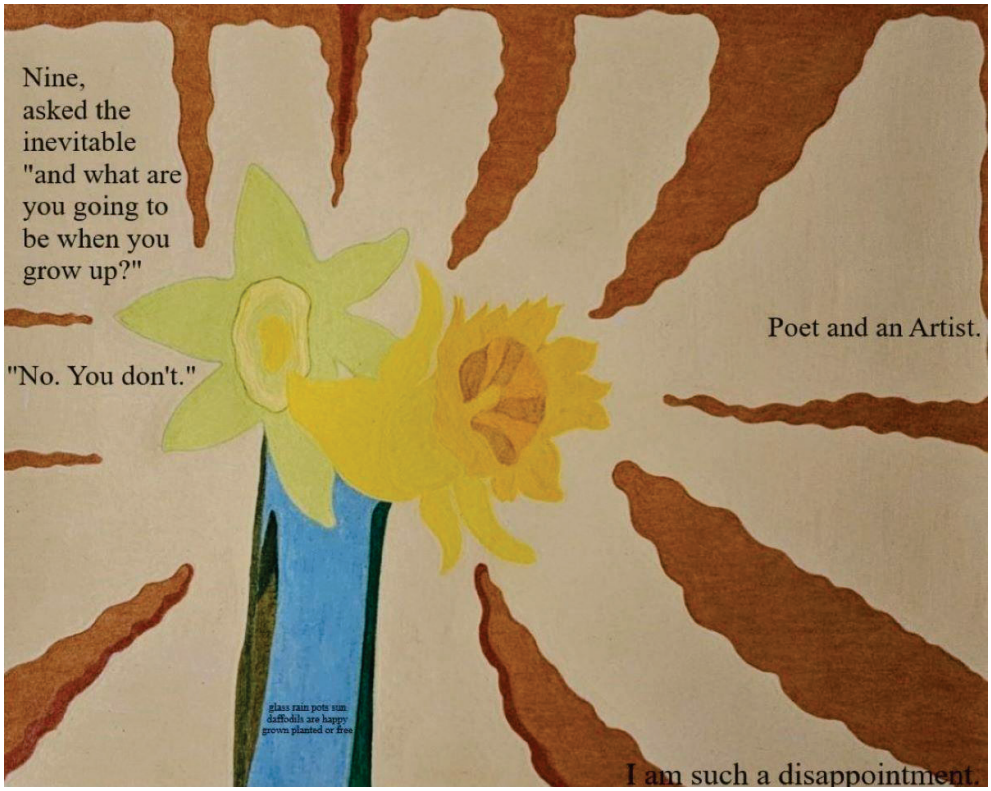


Figure 1. *Wild Daffodil, Cultivated Daffodil Similarly Falling Short*

A wild species of daffodil and a cultivated species of daffodil (symbolic of how I viewed myself when I was in Day School, due to being half Ojibwe and half white) stand together trying to be their own sun, and thus, their own source of light, and, in so doing, turn the reality of their existence upside down, with the sky under them and the earth radiating from above them. But it's all only breaking apart.

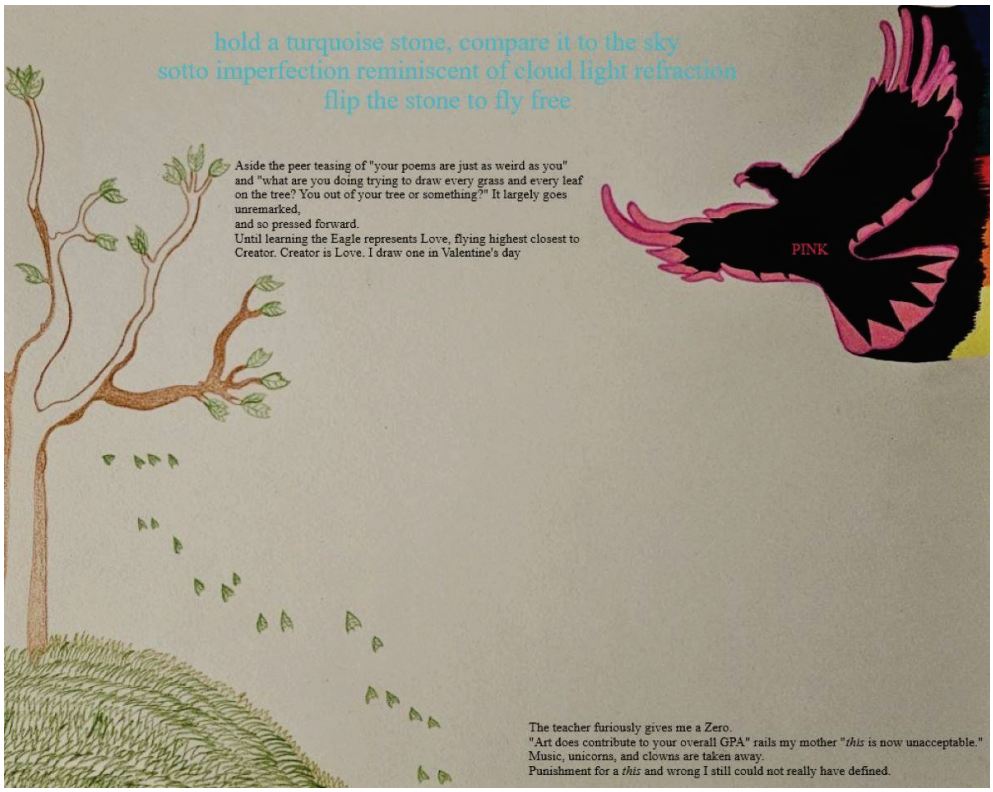


Figure 2. *My Abscission of Pink Feathers*.

On the left of the image, I have recreated the type of tree and field of grass I used to try drawing in art class. Each leaf and blade was individual and distinct. Except here the grass is sharp and ill-grown, more leaves are fallen than retained, and the trunk is internally weak (symbolized by its mid-way absence of colour). The eagle in the upper right, which would be a recreation of the pink eagle that landed me in so much trouble in art class, and trailing a rainbow, if not for its own shadows now. The eagle might have been hoping to land, but it is unlikely that the tree can support it. My bits of art and poetry only made my world more negative. The left to right flow leads to negative space, going off from them; off the narrative.

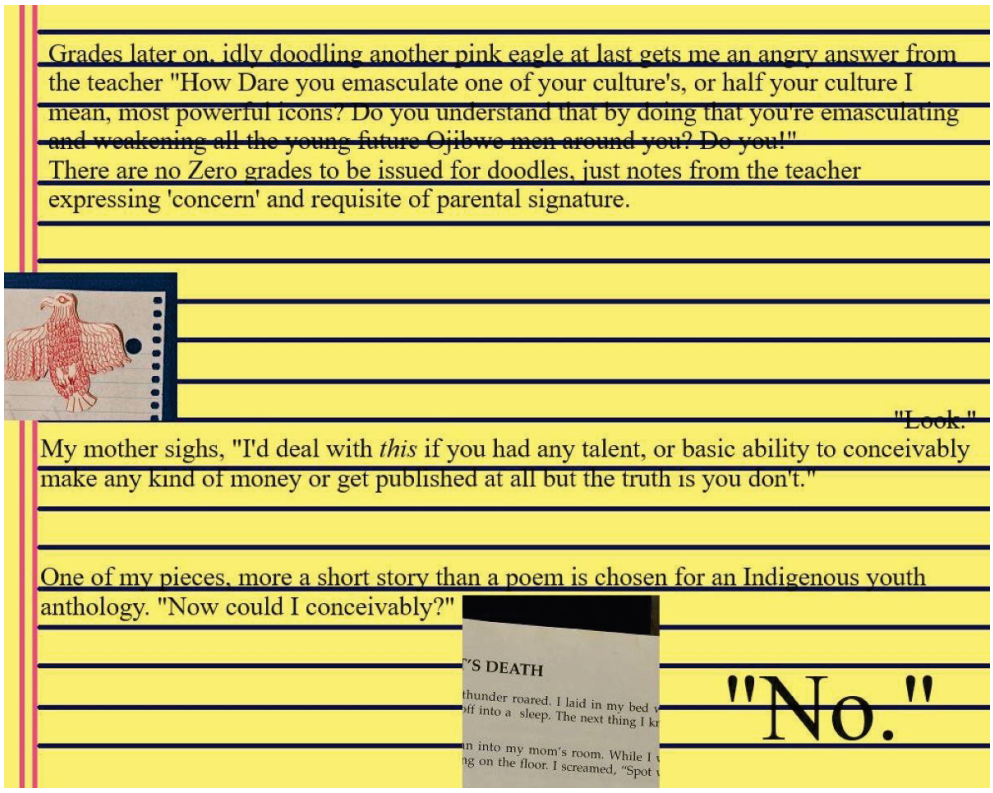


Figure 3. *Diminished Self-Perception by way of 'My Future,' scholastically*.

Against a colour scheme and line arrangement, reminiscent of the paper my Day School required assignments to be completed on, are descriptions of my experiences and feelings as a young artist and writer. Photos of my pink eagle doodle, and my short story are inserted, but they are tangentially located. Cropped as small as possible before the images and print become altogether indiscernible, yet their presence and placement still disharmonizes everything on the page.

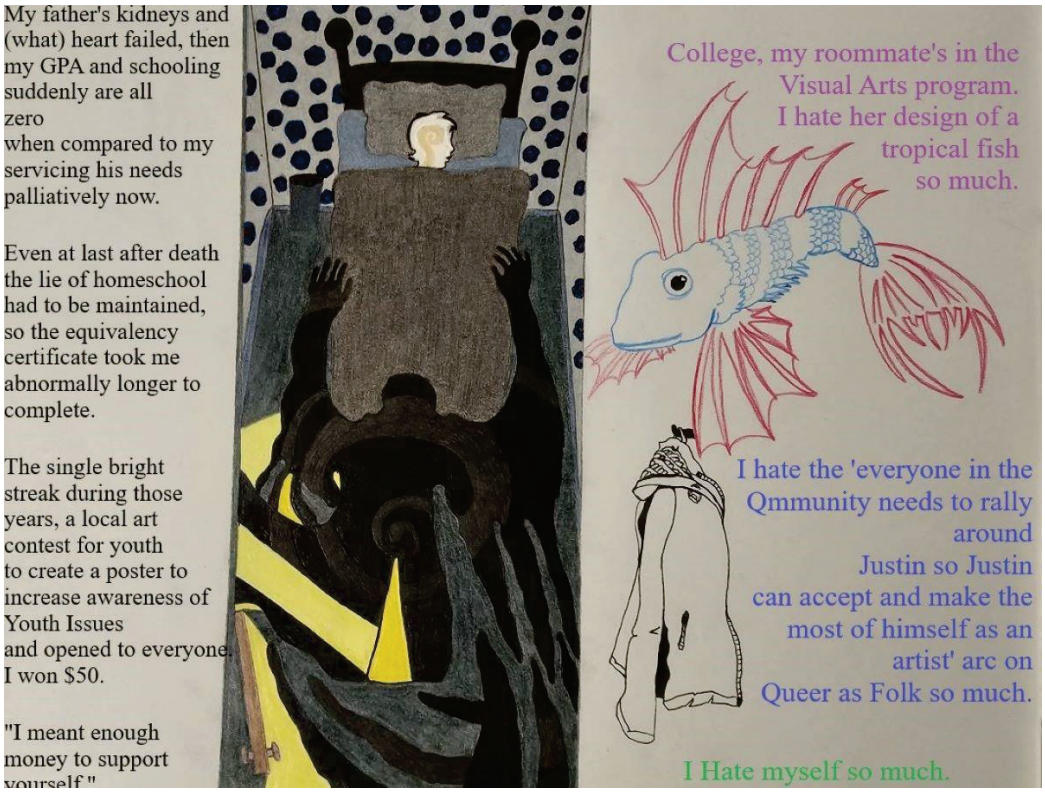


Figure 4. *Nightmares Swimming*.

In the center of the image is a recreation of the drawing I submitted for a poster contest on youth issues. The youth issue I wanted to increase awareness around was sexual abuse. A child is depicted in bed. Towards them, is a slightly darker question mark already spiralling internally within them, to symbolize the complete confusion of what is even being done to them, and *why*. The spriral, in darker shades of greys and blacks, originates from the adult abuser who reaches for the child, distorting all light from the hallway with their presence. To the right, is a tropical fish drawing reminiscent of the one drawn by my college roommate for her visual arts program. The fish holds a black and white ink drawing of a jacket, akin to the drawing Justin made of Brian's jacket in a sudden burst of artistic inspiration (re: Queer as Folk).

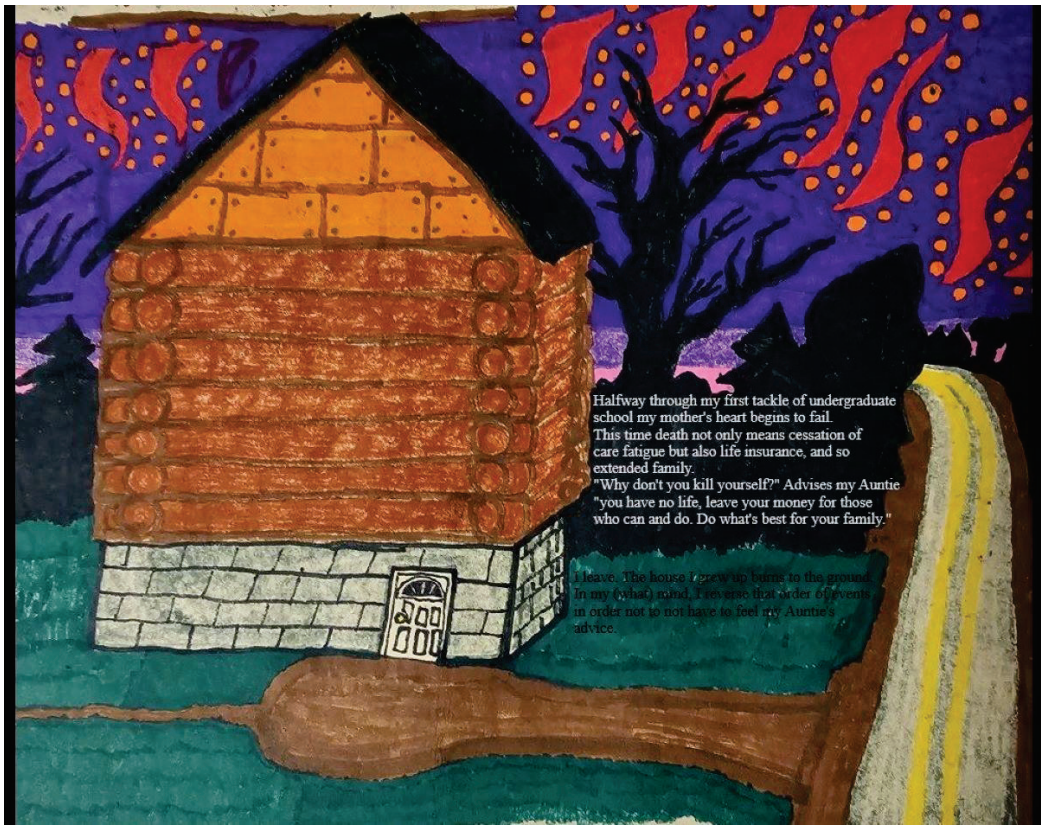


Figure 5. *Darkness Unrelatable*.

Six years. Where they went I have no idea. Art is all I can think of to keep myself from obeying Auntie's wishes. Except art is an ability like all others, if you don't use it, you lose it, and it was almost depressing enough to manifest the impulse to kill myself, when I saw how terrible the artwork I now created was. In this image, the landscape is completely off, the lines are wonky, and the ink runs together. The absence of windows or front door on the house and the flames in the sky were intentional. These were to symbolize the internal darkness and prison-like quality of the house I grew up in, and because I couldn't deal with the fire. This sketch was created shortly after I left my Reserve, with scented markers (my first art tools).

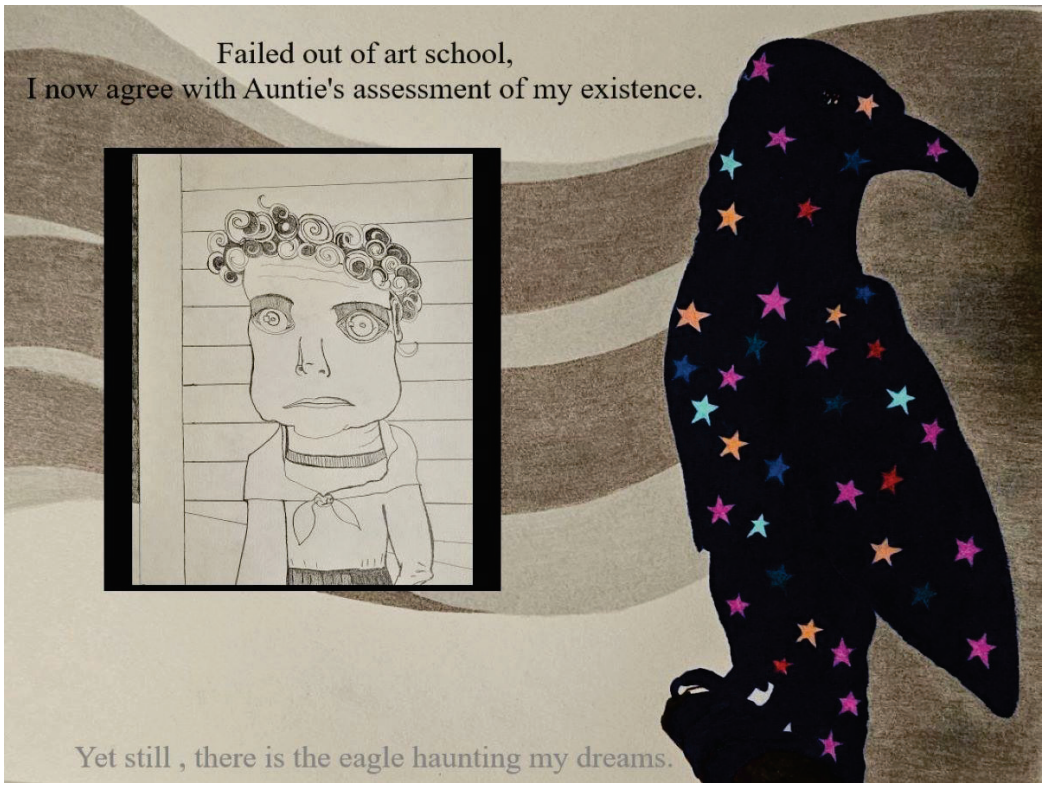


Figure 6. *Twilight Vision.*

Left is an insert of one page of a storyboard assignment I made while unable to hack it at an art and film college program. The image is backgrounded and seperated off. During this time and place in my life I lived nearby a lake trail, which I walked every evening. On one of these walks, an eagle landed on top of a tree right before me. Such instances are considered scared revealings to Indigenous people. Here I have tried to depict the spiritual dimension of the eagle, as well as being powerful enough to just smoke and drift my cross-eyed drawing away.

Figure 7. *Pacific Central Black and White, Pacific Central Colour, Bear Drinking on a Bus While Everyone Looks Away, Drawing of the Bad Motel's sign Upper Right Corner in My Journal, Toronto at Sunrise.*

This image contains five pieces, resized and inserted to compose and portray my crazed flight, from art school to Vancouver, Vancouver to Sault Ste. Marie–which was too close for comfort–to the motel that my mother and I tried to hide out in decades earlier (the words 'I Can't Maintain' crossed out and alternating in yellow and black meant to be evocative of police tape here), and Sault Ste-Marie to Toronto. The three works, collectively of Pacific Central's lawn; a literal bear in place of an Indigenous man who said his name was "Bear" and went on drinking on a city bus one day; a collective aversion and an orange downtown Toronto one morning, create the illusion of supporting blocks, but are uneven and likely soon to topple.

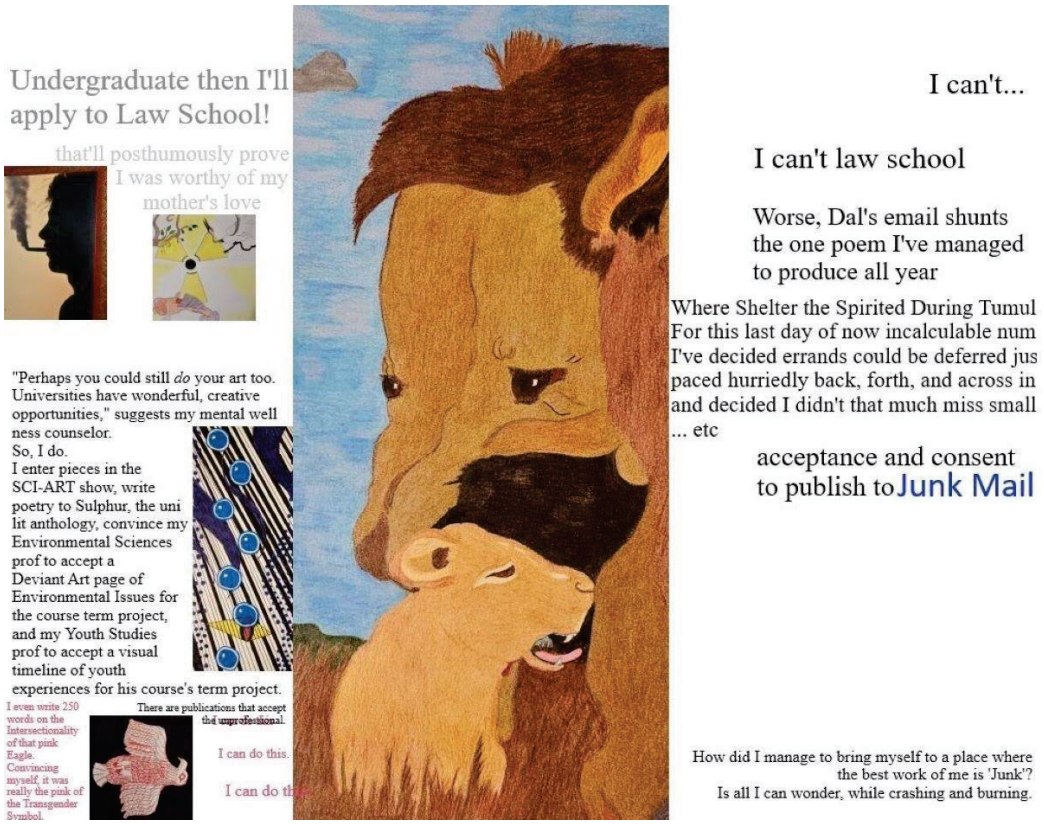


Figure 8. *Couldn't Sort It if I Tried*.

Top far left, the Sulphur Anthology VII issue that my poetry appeared in. Top left, one of the twenty pieces depicting environment issues from my Environmental Sciences term project (here nuclear pollution caused ecosystem collaspe). Mid-page left, a pen and ink drawing, conceptualizing the subconscious, that I did over summer break between grades six and seven. Later, I used this same drawing as part of my timeline project for my Youth Studies course. Bottome left, I inserted my pink eagle doodle as well for my timeline project. Though, the eagle here is on a black background and dispirited. Central, my 2019 Sci-Art show entry, depicting the phenomena of infanticide among lions in the natural world.

Figure 9. *Skeleton in Pinks and Blues, Eagle in Trans Symbol Colours, One Drunken Night, Potential in Process of Drowning, Walking Away, Two Spirit and Interracial Young Adult.*

Top left, the poem for the Summer Showcase I missed has a line of 'pink and blue bones of society', this skeleton drawing is a literal representation of that, a backdrop for an excerpt. Lower left, my first attempt at a full sized piece of my pink eagle, in the colours and shapes of the trans symbol. They were too vivid and clashing. It has been resized and inserted here, attacking the alcohol bottle of the other piece, foreshadowing the later second figure of the completed piece. Central, POV of an alcoholic looking down at their shaking hand, atop empty dropped bottles resting upon the angry orange carpet below, skin symbolic of how alcohol can make your own body hostile towards you. This piece was accepted as the Vol 24 Iss 3 Fall 2022 of the magazine Opens Minds Quarterly. Right, the resized pieces, from which the back cover (same issue) was selected, here circled in red.

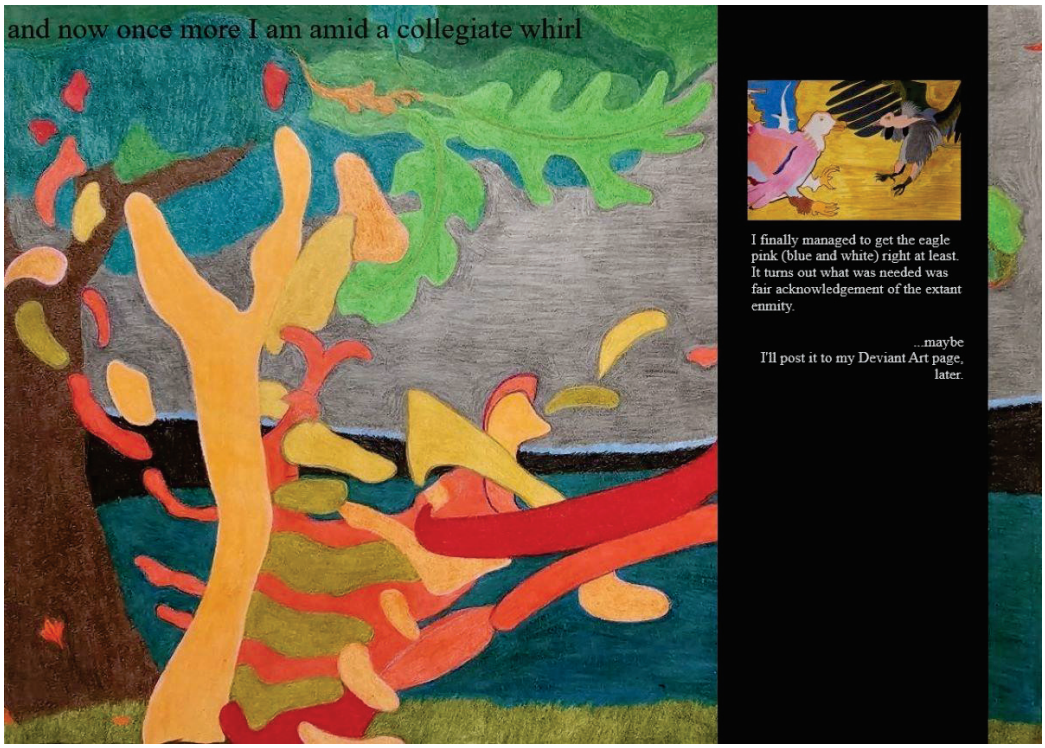


Figure 10. *Far Up Simultaneously Close Away, Two Spirit Aerial.*

This image is an attempt to capture the form and feel of fall leaves caught up in the small whirlwinds of the season. In the narrative of this visual essay it represents my reentry to postsecondary school, and how tumultuous that feels. Left is an inserted, resized completed piece of an eagle, with a full backdrop that is now grounded to the bottom, in the pinks, blues, white, and shapes of the trans symbol, facing down a vulture (here, the symbolic of death).

Acknowledgments

I would like to acknowledge my grandmother Bella Mandawigan, I lost you too soon. My mother Patricia Goodchild, I do believe she at times genuinely tried. Further, I would like to acknowledge and thank those who have given me encouragement and support at some of the harder moments in my life, Wendy Twance, Sabine Gorecki, Terry Ingram. Miigwech.

Author Biography

Eric Goodchild (They/Them) is an Interracial Ojibwe White, Two Spirit person. They were born and raised in Biigtigong Nishnaabeg First Nations reserve. They completed their BA at Laurentian University in April 2020, and are now working towards their Masters at York University, where they (occasionally find time to) vlog on YouTube (as Culturally Lost) about trying to keep true to their Ojibwe identity., while feeling so disenfranchised from it. Their latest work of poetry can be read in Wingless Dreamer, can be viewed at: https://www.deviantart.com/0cean20/art/Two-Spirit-Aerial-1015926388.

NS?

Leaving, Again.

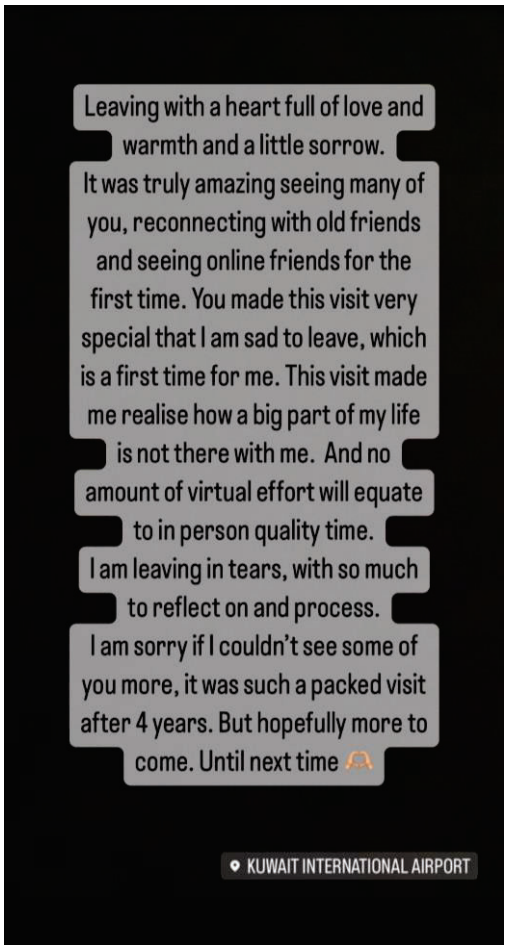
Areej Alshammiry

Abstract

This short reflection with a photo is based on an emotional moment I had during my last visit to Kuwait, where I was born a third-generation stateless person, and later emigrated from to Canada, where I currently reside. It is an expression of the emotional and social manifestations of living between two countries and experiencing the loss of time with family and friends. It is an expression of the yearning for social connections that I left behind. It is also an attempt to reconcile with the experiences of forced migration and distance, which are not always successful.

Keywords

forced migration, statelessness, emigration, family, community, transnationalism



A Post on my Instagram Story–January 3, 2024.

I was sitting by the gate, ready to board my flight from Kuwait to Toronto, when I suddenly burst into tears. I've been living in Canada for years now, on and off between here and Kuwait, where I was born a third-generation stateless person, and years later, forced to emigrate from, when my family and I were denied our right to belong, and our historical relationship to the land, by being deprived of nationality. After years of living between the two countries, I finally settled in Canada when I realized I don't have long term security in Kuwait, including a career potential. Although I say I settled here, often telling others that Canada is my permanent home now, I've never felt this to be the truth, not deep down, anyways. Yet, at the same time, I can't say that I can "return" home to Kuwait, either. Despite having ongoing social and emotional ties to the country, such as through my family and friends, I don't have a future there. Not one I can imagine at least. I belong to a marginalized community that faces systematic oppression. And no matter how many degrees I hold now, I don't have a chance to build the career I aspire to have in Kuwait. So, I remain here for now, but a big part of me is missing.

I used to visit Kuwait annually, but when COVID-19 hit, it interrupted these frequent visits. Until recently, it's been four years since my last trip. But I stayed connected with my family and friends virtually, through WhatsApp, Instagram, Twitter, and Zoom. When I finally went back this winter, I was filled with overwhelming emotions. It had been too long, and I felt as though things had changed. Part of this change was also in me. I am not the same person I was when I left, and neither are family and friends I left behind. When they said that migration is a one-way road, they meant that we never return to who we were at the first point of departure, even when we do physically return. But being away for such a long time created a gap that I am still trying to understand. At first, I didn't mind being so far away. In fact, I used to love it. It gave me the space to learn more about myself and explore the larger world. I thought I was okay with the distance for the longest time. But now I've learned how much I've been craving the warmth of close connections, the in-person quality time, the long night chats, the morning coffees, the brunches by the beach, and the hugs. I've learned that my distance from Kuwait meant missing out on making core memories with loved ones. The kind of memories that shape who you are and your relationship with others. Sweet and tangible. Like candy stuck between your teeth. I've lost so much time that can never be regained.

I know now that the reason I was glued to my phone every day, was because I wanted to stay connected, and to not be forgotten, because distance can do that. I have already felt so many friendships fade away because of the distance, and now I find myself trying to hold on to those who I have left behind. Yes, I made new friends

virtually. And I even had the chance to meet them in person this winter. And it was beautiful. But now, after leaving, again, I am more aware than ever of how the distance creeps into my relationships. This time, I was very sad to leave.

I wasn't ready to go. Not this time. I didn't get enough time with my loved ones. I was there for a month, but it felt so much shorter than that. I tried to squeeze in all the meetings I could. Squeeze out all the love I craved, to give and receive, to pack entire worlds into the short period of time I was home. But the love was much bigger than the time I had; it couldn't fit. I had to leave eventually, again, with a big part of my life staying behind without me, carrying fragments of it in my heart. A big part of my life is now away from me. And no matter what I do to stay connected, it's not the same. I know that now. That no matter what I choose, no matter where I choose to live, I cannot have it all. I will always be giving up something wherever I go. Oh, the luxury to have it all…

Acknowledgments

To friends and family who have kept me afloat all these years by staying virtually connected. Your love is a gift I cherish, and it is the reason I look forward to every visit. No matter the distance.

Author Biography

Areej Alshammiry (she/her) is a Vanier doctoral fellow in Sociology at York University, Toronto, Canada. She is also a community-based researcher at the Centre for Community Based Research, a member in the Interim Core Group of the Global Movement Against Statelessness, and a graduate affiliate at the Centre for Refugee Studies at York University. Her research explores state violence and statelessness. She examines the coloniality of human rights and international law. Specifically, she looks at how colonial, capitalist, patriarchal and racial ontologies/epistemologies inform our understanding of sovereignty, rights, membership, and land. She is interested in anti/de-colonial epistemologies and alternative human rights models and social/political/economic organizations, particularly those inspired by indigenous / nomadic / southern / pluriveral paradigms, and how they inform social justice movements around the world. She is currently exploring hows 'stateless' people reckon with statist and international regimes of rights and membership and its politics of recognition, and how they access justice. She situates her inquiry within subaltern struggles against colonial modernity. Her work is informed by social justice and community-oriented goals and action. She has years of experience working as an interdisciplinary researcher and a grass-roots activist, and much of her thinking is informed by the interconnections between scholarship and activism, as well as her own experience of statelessness and forced migration.

NS?

A "Love" Letter to the U.S.

Mari Soberal

Abstract

In this love letter, I use archival materials and the founding documents of the United States to trace my personal journey with American disillusionment. The concept of the American Dream appears throughout as a symbol of dangerous nationalism that contorts the violence upon which American society depends. Using various materials to capture my misgivings with the American Dream in the form of a love letter, I call attention to the colonial fantasies and imperial violences that make possible American nationhood, and thus start the process of grieving the idea of America that I was taught to believe in.

Keywords

American Dream, nationalism, borders

Not like the brazen giant of Greek fame,
With conquering limbs astride from land to land;
Here at our sea-washed, sunset gates shall stand
A mighty woman with a torch, whose flame
Is the imprisoned lightning, and her name
Mother of Exiles. From her beacon-hand
Glows world-wide welcome; her mild eyes command
The air-bridged harbor that twin cities frame.
"Keep, ancient lands, your storied pomp!" cries she
With silent lips. "Give me your tired, your poor,
Your huddled masses yearning to breathe free,
The wretched refuse of your teeming shore.
Send these, the homeless, tempest-tost to me,
I lift my lamp beside the golden door!" [1]

On Ellis Island, there is a sonnet that stands at the foot of the Statue of Liberty. The plaque has been rubbed shiny, touched by millions of hands, and it reads in a way that represents a sense of boundless optimism that has become synonymous with America. The statue herself is a beacon on the New York City skyline; a mighty woman with a torch (Lazarus, 1883); a golden door to the American Dream and all who strive to make it a reality, whether they be the bootstrappers (the settlers) or the dreamers (the Others)–two iterations of the same story of a larger-than-life dream. But the similarities between these two groups end here, with each eyeing one another warily from the opposite side of a colonial border.

In some ways, we have come a long way since Emma Lazarus wrote "The New Colossus" in 1883; but in other ways, we haven't come far at all. Asylum seekers, refugees, and immigrants still come to this Island, moved by the American Dream and Lazarus's poem, but the revisionist blinders of American citizenry seem to have forgotten these same words on the Statue of Liberty. This isn't surprising. "The New Colossus" is rarely read in its entirety within the U.S. educational system and there is little focus on Emma Lazarus as a poet and historical figure. In the U.S. history books, there are the (white) men who sign the papers and the one (white) woman whose words inspired millions, but it is only the men that sign the papers who we study.

In the same year as Lazarus wrote "The New Colossus," she wrote another poem–a much lesser-known one, entitled "1492." This poem would not grace the entrance of any national park and it would certainly not be covered in classrooms across the United States. 1492 is a two-part description of the earliest days of colonization in the territory that would later be known as the United States. The year is known well enough by school children and adults alike, in the form of a nursery rhyme— "In 1492 Columbus sailed the ocean blue" (Marzollo, 1991). As children, we recited it in classrooms, but few educators and textbooks provided a historically accurate depiction of how America came to be–a well-documented epistemology of ignorance within the United States.

I know the nursery rhyme as well as I know the back of my own hand. We played "Pilgrims and Indians" in elementary school after our unit on early American history. Everyone thought I should be an Indian, but I wanted to be a pilgrim like my friends. In the year 1492, I know Columbus sailed the ocean blue, this two-faced year. The children of the prophets Lord, Prince, priest, and people. All spurned by zealot hate (Lazarus, 1883). I understand 1492. I just don't understand why I still remember that damn nursery rhyme.

Even in 1883, Lazarus and many others understood the deep hypocrisy of the United States–a wrench thrown into the arguments of those who say, "It was a different time." Even in 1883, Lazarus hinted at the kind of dissonance that requires continued effort to uphold the American nation. On one hand, you have the words of Emma Lazarus; Libertas, a mighty woman with a torch (Lazarus, 1883); the American Dream and its siren song, forever pulling us back instead of propelling us forward. On the other hand, you have the unresolved fate of the children at the border, an unending opioid crisis targeting underserved agricultural and mining communities, police brutality against Black, Brown, Asian, and Indigenous people,

[1] Lazarus, 1883.

legal precedent to take Indigenous children from their cultures and communities, and children shot to death with AR-15's before they can even learn that, in 1492, Columbus sailed the ocean blue. Holding these contrasting truths together feels like balancing on razor wire. I believe in the ideals that Emma Lazarus wrote, but I cannot make them right with the reality I know.

I need to know,
I need to know,
mother of exiles,

Is a dream still a dream if it is founded on a nightmare?

Before Emma Lazarus wrote beautiful words, and after Columbus sailed the ocean blue, a gathering occurred, the first of its kind. On July 4th, 1776, the Declaration of Independence was written by the men who signed the papers and would go down in history as the founders of American society. They wrote to us:

> We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness. – That to secure these rights, Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed.[2]

I know these words. We learn them in fourth grade, memorize them, automatons of patriotism, our hands over our hearts, pledging our allegiance to a flag. A symbol of an idea, but what do children understand of what it means to pledge allegiance? I'm older now, an adult; but the older I get, the less I understand. I try to trace the map of US history—where did the lies start? Were these truths self-evident, or did someone assure me that they were? Does it matter? The state derives its power from us, the people, the dreamers, the bootstrappers, the huddled, weary masses. The men who signed the papers told me that their truths were universal, so they must be.

These men set the scene, they lit the lights and raised the curtain for us all to see what could be with an American dream. But how can that be? When Langston Hughes wrote so eloquently:

> I am the poor white, fooled and pushed apart,
> I am the Negro bearing slavery's scars,
> I am the red man driven from the land,
> I am the immigrant clutching the hope I seek-
> And finding only the same old stupid plan
> Of dog eat dog, of mighty crush the weak.[3]

Who should I believe? The men who signed the papers or the man who assured me that America was never mine. Maybe it doesn't matter who's right, but I read the history and find no clarity or comfort. Perhaps it is my mistake; to look for comfort in the dusty repositories of national archives.

This amnesia, American amnesia, is disorientating. I can't find the thread of its beginning. A nesting doll of national shame. I visited my childhood home, an unassuming suburban street in Michigan like so many others. I found all my old books, dusty picture books, and Junie B. Jones. Among them is an old social studies book, for elementary school-aged children to learn United States history. In a chapter about slavery, this textbook, designed to *teach*, calls enslaved Africans "workers." This company supplies textbooks all over the United States. I imagine the route of each textbook crisscrossing all over the map of the country, creating a new generation of learned ignorance. I venture to the website of the publishing company, to voice my concerns, and am greeted by a professional landing page "Sorry. We seem to be having some difficulty finding this page."

It seems so benign, sorry.

I went looking for clarity in national archives, but I found it in my childhood bedroom. Maybe this is the beginning thread I was looking for.
Sorry.

In my childhood bedroom, I am reminded of Renée Bergland (2000), who speaks of a national

[2] U.S. Const. Preamble.

[3] Hughes, 1994, p. 189.

amnesia that works within the American identity. She invokes Freud to describe this strange ability to look the other way in the face of hypocrisy, genocide, and oppression: it is uncanny (Bergland, 2000, p. 5). She also speaks of a haunting, the ghost of conquest, the ugliness of it, written plainly on the page (p. 6). I open the textbook again and hope that the ghosts can escape off the page and out of the open window, but perhaps this is my privilege. Ghosts are not here to be liberated; they are a solemn reminder that history is never past. Instead of ushering the ghosts out the window, I sit with them, touching the worn spine of the textbook. For the U.S. patriotism machine to continue, we must willfully bury the conquest, deep inside the earth, so we no longer have to gaze upon the horror that has been wrought, all for that damned dream. Instead of looking the other way, I want to look it in the face. So, I sent an email to the publisher.

I still haven't heard back from them.

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Adams (1931) was the first author to write about the American Dream. That damned dream. An idea of a thing made real by bootstrappers, whispering a gentle seduction in our ears, that all of this could be ours!

If we simply defy the laws of gravity and
Pull.
Ourselves.
Up.

But I cannot defy the laws of gravity. I am a mere mortal. But Adams writes so convincingly, of "a dream of a social order in which each man and each woman shall be able to attain to the fullest stature of which they are innately capable, and be recognized by others for what they are, regardless of the fortuitous circumstances of birth or position" (p. 404). It is indeed fortuitous that Adams was born into a wealthy Brooklyn family of stockbrokers.

It is usually the fortuitous,
the men who sign the papers, and write the textbooks,
who tell us that everything is within our grasp.
After all,
All you have to do is defy gravity.
But what do they know of gravity?

They were born suspended in the air, by money, luck, and a good name.

Back in my childhood bedroom, I continue to consider haunting in all its iterations. Not necessarily the things that go bump in the night but keep you up all the same. Ghaddar (2016) describes this in their article, "A Spectre in the Archive." They explain that the spectres of America's colonial past are embedded in the American consciousness, our collective psyche; thoroughly haunted (p. 20). We are surely haunted, but I cannot know to what degree every American feels as such. This is perhaps the greatest problem, urging people to look at the wretched ghosts that are a part of our national history and fight the urge to look away.

In Gordon's (2008) "Ghostly Matters," they make one such distinction. They say that "haunting, unlike trauma, is distinctive for producing a something-to-be-done" (p. XVI). If the U.S. were well and truly haunted, something would be changed, producing something to be done. What will be the haunted straw that breaks the camel's back of American apathy? Something that thrusts the American conscience out of neutral? But we have had no shortage of such events already, events that have haunted us so profoundly that they must have prompted some sort of change. Perhaps this is a user error, but I'm looking for systemic change, policy amendment, something tangible–that feels alive. Instead, I'm greeted by "thoughts and prayers."

Yellow prayer hands emojis
on social media posts of school shootings
while on a 15-minute break before clocking
back in for another shift
put on your customer service face, and keep
smiling, keep smiling, keep smiling!
for another shift, and another shift,
people are dead, this is true,
but the rent is still due.

I'm homesick for the idea of a place that never existed. It has nothing to do with geography, proximity, or fond memories. But it has everything to do with the idealism of a dream. The natural inclination when one experiences homesickness is to return to the place that you're missing. I don't know how you return to an idea of a place, there's nowhere to return to and you can't visit the conceptualization of the United States. There is no such place on any map, so I made my own. It's not a place, but a complicated spiderweb of memories that only exists in my mind's eye. A soybean field planted as far as the eye can see. Sweet corn and cherries 2/$8 on the side of the road. A regional love of superman ice cream and Vernors soda. But these moments are supremely overshadowed by the hypocrisy of it all. The U.S., The United States, The States; I love you, I love you, I love you; it feels more like a threat than a promise. To pledge allegiance, or else. This kind of love is a one-way street, and like most affairs of the heart, it's extraordinarily painful. You can love the U.S. all you want, but it might not love you back. It's like loving an abuser; throwing a punch with one hand and caressing you with the other.

I hate you, I hate you, I hate you
But I can't leave,
Because no matter where I go,
I am still of you.
Wherever you go, there you are.
Red, White, and Blue.

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I leave my dusty childhood bedroom to go back to school. The bus that goes from Detroit to Toronto is large and spacious. It's usually empty and I am usually the only passenger who rides the bus from end to end. The bus takes the tunnel instead of the Ambassador Bridge, bringing me deep under the Detroit River. I watch the gray tile whizz by, waiting for my favorite part–the demarcation between the U.S. and Canada. There is a dotted line, on the left side, the Canadian flag, and on the right side, the American flag. The dotted line makes me think that there might be some fluidity between the two countries, but I know this isn't true.

Under the water of the Detroit River, I consider that colonial borders are subaltern in a whole myriad of ways, but they are also a solid living thing. The bus comes out of the tunnel, and I am thrust into Windsor for Customs and ushered back onto the bus. As we move through Windsor to the highway, there is a street where you can perfectly see the Detroit skyline, dotted with American and Canadian flags, a nod to our neighbors to the North on the other side of the Detroit River, and I get it– "the feeling." It's difficult to describe it, but I feel it, a heaviness in my chest, just under my throat.

Leaving the U.S. is always bittersweet, it feels nostalgic and painful, like rereading old love letters, or the first taste of a candy you haven't eaten since your youth. This paper is not academic writing, it is a love letter to someone who deeply hurt me, and I want them to know exactly how. This isn't a heat of the moment love letter that you pen in the minutes after the breakup, with tears dotting the page. This is the calculated letter that you write after time has allowed you to know exactly what you want to say. There is emotion, but not sentiment. It's sharp and fully realized. It took me two years outside the U.S. to write this letter, while I had the privilege of pursuing my Ph.D. in Toronto, ON.

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NS?

A Sudden Epiphany

Joddi Alden

Abstract

This creative work, featuring a poem and two photographs integrated into the text, details a queer relationship in Vienna, Austria, against the backdrop of global and historical violence. In the poem, a queer couple walks in downtown Vienna, noticing how stoplights in the capital city seem to depict same-sex relationships, thereby demonstrating an acceptance that was only just legalized in 2019. Initially overjoyed, given the country's historical legacy of intolerance (Austria was the birthplace of Adolf Hitler, early 20th century fascism, and is still well-known for its traditional and conservative values), the couple realizes that their happiness is overshadowed by the epiphany that Austria is one of the few countries to have voted against a ceasefire in Gaza. Stunned by this realization, the couple looks on at the stoplights, aghast, considering the complexities of violence in today's social context.

Keywords

queer, Austria, genocide, violence, persecution, homonationalism

At night in Vienna, surrounded by

Ornate buildings which catch the eye.

You walk beside me, hands entwined,

Reflecting on the past–let's rewind.

The birthplace of music, wondrous sound

Caressing the ear, a silver flute found.

A place of tranquility, snow abounds,

Visions of white, the mountains gowned.

The birthplace of hate in years gone past,

A frightening dictator, the world aghast.

Speeches from balconies, flags adorned,

The violence of difference, acceptance scorned.

And then,

We see,

Them:

Standing together, side by side.

The red showing us,

STOP!

In the name of love!

The green showing us,

GO!

Don't be afraid to love!

Walking together, side by side.

I turn to you, my face overjoyed,

Small steps forward, past hate destroyed.

The tiny heart, it reflects mine

Shining in the night, our love combined.

2019 in Austria wasn't so long ago,

And now we have this–love aglow.

We smile at each other, confident now,

Us together, confirmed somehow.

And then,

We remember

It:

The war.

The apartheid.

The genocide.

And then,

We know,

That:

This country said no, no to the ceasefire,

We stroll safe while others die in raucous gunfire.

An unacceptable exchange: our suffering for yours.

An eerie echo of the times before.

I turn to you, our smiles diminished–

A victory here when others are finished…

It's too much, or not enough, now we don't know.

We stare as the stoplights flicker, fire aglow.

Author Biography

Joddi Alden (she/her) is a PhD candidate in the Department of Sociology at York University. She previously obtained her SSHRC-funded Master of Arts degree at Queen's University, where she examined Philippine migration to Canada and transnational chains of care extending from the Global South to the Global North. Her current research interests include gendered migration, transnational capitalism, and the effects of the beauty and fashion industries on mobility in Southeast Asia. A veteran of the fashion industry in both North American and Asia, Joddi has lived, studied, and worked in various countries in the Asia-Pacific region, including South Korea, Singapore, the Philippines, Thailand, Taiwan, and China.

Beyond

NS?

Purple Basil Lemonade: Community Rituals for Crip Pasts/Presents/Futures

Calvin Prowse

Abstract

This piece is a collection of stories and reflections on community, loss, memory, access, rest, and dream(ing), developed through the process of making and sharing purple basil lemonade. This practice serves as a method of re-turning (to) the past, refusing the present, and dreaming alternative futures–a re-mixing of temporalities, always grounded in relation, always in an ongoing process of rebecoming. It is a ritual for storytelling, community, memory work, and dreamwork in the era of COVID-19, a time marked by the normalization of eugenic discourses and the erasure of disabled people from the public sphere.

Keywords

COVID-19, storytelling, dream, disability justice, accessibility, memory, peer support

During the first pandemic summer (2020), isolation crept in and made itself a home. But my cats and plants make for good company, reminders that life goes on. Almost every day that summer, my friend, Stacey, and I talk on the phone. Being surrounded by life and love keeps me alive, helps me survive.

Winter comes and goes; my
doctor prescribes a more
powerful immunosuppressant–
what excellent timing.

During the second pandemic summer (2021), I ride a blue bike-share bike to the garden centre to buy some basil. My attention strays, pulled away from the green, drawn to another plant beside–a plant with purple leaves: purple basil.

Over the years, purple has become a colour I associate strongly with community–Mad community, in particular. Years ago, during a meeting of the Hamilton Mad Students' Collective (HMSC)[1] –originally a local branch of the Mad Students' Society (MSS)–we got on the topic of favourite colours. An informal poll revealed that purple was the beloved colour of many Mad folx in the room.

I hold this group, this temporary community, dear to my heart. It was where I found my way to the fields of Mad studies, disability studies, and peer support, and began to unlearn the sanism and ableism I had internalized over the years. It was here that I came to terms with my Mad and crip (disabled) identities and finally started to believe, deep in my bodymind, that *I was not broken*; that *there was nothing wrong with me*–in a world always insisting otherwise.

HMSC faded away in 2016, right after I finished my first degree at McMaster University. During the first pandemic summer, and into the fall, I had an opportunity to gather with some other former members, to mourn the loss of HMSC and explore what this community had meant to us (de Bie et al., 2022). One of the things I took away from this experience was an ethical responsibility for storytelling. Having been eight years now since the group faded away, its existence has almost entirely disappeared from the university's institutional memory. But telling these stories–re-turning them over and over and over–keeps them alive, breathes new life and meaning into them.

These little purple plants felt like a calling: I took a few home and began researching their culinary potential. One recipe in particular caught my eye: purple basil lemonade (Weir, 2009).

Over the past three summers, I have been making and sharing purple basil lemonade as a ritual for memory work, storytelling, community, and world-building. During the intense isolation of an ongoing pandemic, with no end in sight, these plants have helped me feel and find and form community. These plants hold memory:[2] they help me remember; to re-turn these memories; to dream something new within the echoes of the old.

On the process of re-turning–not (just) returning to the past, but continuously turning it over and over and over–Barad (2014) writes:

> We might imagine re-turning as a multiplicity of processes, such as the kinds earthworms revel in while helping to make compost or otherwise being busy at work and at play: turning the soil over and over — ingesting and excreting it, tunnelling through it, burrowing, all means of aerating the soil, allowing oxygen in, opening it up and breathing new life into it. (p. 168)

The very fact that disabled people are "figured as threats to futurity" (Kafer, 2013, p. 31) implies our agency and power to breathe new worlds into being. What futures do we want to threaten, prevent, disrupt, dismantle?

[1] The Hamilton Mad Students' Collective (HMSC) was a peer support and advocacy community for students with experiences of madness, mental health concerns, and/or psychiatrization that met regularly in Hamilton, ON between the years of 2012 and 2016.

[2] While writing my major research paper on peer support futures (Prowse, 2023), I began thinking about how plants hold memories and share stories, especially of and through relationship and community: stories of ancestry and displacement (Ameil Joseph, personal communication, 2023), of home (Vis, 2022), of world-making (Myers, 2021), of "network[s] of caring relations" (de Bie, 2019, p. 1170). Attending to plant life draws us toward storytelling practices of and in relation (Myers, 2021).

> If we are dangerous, then capitalism and patriarchy are in danger. When we cast spells against capitalism, what alternatives are we building? How do we dream of living? Where? With whom? What alternatives have we created in the meantime? (Elizabeth, 2019, p. 26)

During the second and third pandemic summers (2021 and 2022), I meet with a group of friends, outside, every weekend, as a safer way to be in community. We gather in the park,[3] across the ways from a suspiciously tree-like tree, as if crafted from our collective recollection of what a tree "should" look like, from which any and all deviations are measured: a tree which we might understand as an impossibly material manifestation of the arboreal standard.[4]

Arboreal Standard, 2023. A photograph of a tree standing alone in a field, isolated and cut off from community, its foliage lush and suspiciously spherical. Pink clouds linger in the background.

We sit away, just as we purposefully position ourselves outside and in opposition to normality, turning away from a "new normal" that is neither new nor in need of normalization: a "new normal" marked by the reverberations of eugenic futures (Kafer, 2013) through the present, enacted in the everyday by both the collective and individual, through the indoctrination of individuality and white supremacy (Okun, 2021), in the pursuit of a "freedom" founded on (and defined by) the domination and debilitation of anything Other.

And yet, in this space of potentiality, I feel echoes of utopia, of the not-yet-here (Bloch, 1995, as cited in Muñoz, 2009/2019, p. 12): an elsewhere, an *elsewhen* (Kafer, 2013, p. 3). I remember what it feels like to be in community, grounded in principles of liberatory access, described by Mingus (2017) as: "access for the sake of connection, justice, community, love and liberation" (para, 31). I am reminded that another way is possible: that community and safety are not mutually exclusive–an easy thing to forget when the world insists on our indefinite isolation as the price to pay for the illusion of normality.

During the third pandemic summer (2022), I spend my days much like any other pandemic graduate student: thinking, reading, writing, transcribing–all day, everyday, my research always at the back of my mind. It becomes the air I breathe: it becomes inescapable.

And yet, for me, these park days become an escape, a way out from the unrelenting and all-consuming demands of capitalist academia. The weekends once again become a time for rest: a time that feels like falling out of time entirely, past/present/future slipping past one another. I close my computer; I make my lemonade and my way to the park, and once again remember what it feels like to be human, to feel love and care and community. We read books together, share snacks, and chat, switching between speaking and signing[5]–and I feel myself coming alive again, like a parched purple basil restored by rain. And with each sip of lemonade, I become purple once again.

The purple leaves of the purple basil plant are

[3] In this same park, during the first pandemic fall (2020), Stacey meets me in the park to celebrate my birthday. She brings pizza and home-baked cherry cheesecake, and for a second the world around us seems to fade away.

[4] This is a play on the concept of the "corporeal standard," described by Campbell (2001) as "a particular kind of self and body [produced by ableism] … that is projected as the perfect, species-typical and therefore essential and fully human. Disability, then, is cast as a diminished state of being human" (p. 44).

[5] During the pandemic, a few of us began taking American Sign Language classes online through Queer ASL, "a 2SLGBTQQIA+ positive environment that focuses on creating a more accessible, affordable, and safer space for folks who want to learn ASL" (Queer ASL, n.d., para, 1).

due to the effects of anthocyanins, a class of pigments responsible for red, purple, and blue hues in a variety of plant life, depending on the pH of their environment (Khoo et al., 2017). When anthocyanins from purple basil mix with the acidity of lemon juice, they interact: purple becomes pink.

If "green leaves are engineered to optimise productivity" (Gould, 2004, p. 314)–to increase a plant's absorption of the sun's rays–what, then, are purple leaves engineered for? Instead of being designed for productivity like their chlorophyll cousins, anthocyanins prioritize protection, rest, and repair (Gould, 2004). They protect plants from bugs and UV-B radiation; increase their tolerance to freezing, drought, and heavy metal contamination; and minimize photooxidative injury by scavenging free radicals (Gould, 2004).

To be clear, my analysis of anthocyanins here is not about neoliberal notions of "resilience," but rather, radical anti-capitalist resistance. Anthocyanins recognize the dangers of unchecked productivity: they are a reminder to slow down and rest, a form of refusal that is crucial to our very survival (Hersey, 2022). And, just like rest, connection, community, and dream[6] in a late-stage capitalist society, so too, have anthocyanins "long been considered an extravagant waste of a plant's resources" (Gould, 2004, p. 314).

In *Rest is Resistance: A Manifesto*, Hersey (2022) reminds us that "rest is a divine right" (p. 60), not a reward to be earned through productivity. Rest is a powerful act of refusal against the collaboration of capitalism and white supremacy known as grind culture; rest is a tool for liberation: it opens a portal in our minds–a DreamSpace (p. 11)–through which imagining and crafting alternative worlds becomes possible.

Rest nourishes dreams, allowing them to flourish–just as dreams, too, are "food for the human spirit" (Chamberlin, 1998, p. 52). In this temporal opening, this time outside of time itself, my friends and I dream: of a space for community building; for peer support; for consciousness-raising and politicization; for activism and co-conspiracy; for art shows and poetry readings; for gay dancing, for sober crips with bad knees, early bedtimes, and cats at home to feed.

And yet, as I look back on this dream now, I am reminded of the need to keep dreaming. I know now that I was dreaming of this space–a physical place–as a return to a pre-pandemic world. This dream rests on the assumption that the pandemic will eventually end, a future I no longer have faith in. This dream is a dream of what Inayatullah (2008) refers to as a "used future" (p. 5)–a future shaped in the image of the past, a vision which no longer serves us, a dream which we might be better off abandoning completely.

In my musings on futurity, I have typically turned away from calls for realism, believing instead that "utopian fantasies" (Wright, 2010, as cited by Levitas, 2013, p. 45) are exactly what we need to dream new worlds beyond the barriers of colonial, capitalist, and carceral presents. And yet, I find a glimmer of hope in pandemic realism: the assumption and acceptance that there is no post-pandemic "after"; that there is no way out, no escape–but perhaps we can build a home here.

I know am not the only disabled person who has felt like our futures have been stolen away, placed on indefinite hold: that is, after all, our current public health policy. This loss–the loss of our imagined futures–is important to honour, mourn, grieve.

And yet, equating pandemic presents with an inherent lack of futurity is in need of troubling. It leads to the assumption that if we pretend the pandemic isn't here anymore, we can reclaim our futures–a tempting argument that clearly doesn't quite work. This discourse leads to pressures to return to "normal"–a "normal" which Barbarin (2022) reminds us was always ever "a lie meant to pacify us and discourage challenging a society built around racism, ableism and white supremacy" (para, 5).

We must resist the seduction of a post-pandemic world that is neither here nor there. I

[6] Haiven (2023) notes that "dominant Western epistemology frames dreams and dreaming as largely meaningless noise produced by the unproductive brain at rest" (p. 41).

need us to accept that pandemics are here to stay–and choose to see them as a time of possibility: as "a portal, a gateway between one world and the next" (Roy, 2020, para, 4). Dreaming from this place allows us to explore our ethical responsibilities to one another, opening up new possibilities for being(and becoming)-in-relation. We can dream new worlds in this space. We can remake the world to thrive in dystopia.

During the third pandemic summer, I become engulfed in flowers. Every week or two, I dutifully prune the flowers of my purple basil away, to concentrate the plant's energies into their leaves, enhancing their flavour. I learn to make tea with the flowers and start adding it into my lemonade.

That summer, Stacey comes over to my apartment, twice, for the first time since the pandemic began. She brings me a bouquet of flowers, to celebrate a scholarship I had won. We drink purple basil flower tea together. A few weeks later, she died.

Over the next few weeks, I watch the flowers wilt, their lifeforce slowly draining. I consider drying the flowers but cannot find the strength, as if doing so would somehow be the thing to make this nightmare real. I tell our mutual friend, Britt, about these flowers, this final gift, as we sit eating lunch together after saying our goodbyes. Her encouragement gives me the strength to finally take action, and I hang the flowers upside down in my window–simultaneously accepting mortality while refusing to let go.

There is something quite Mad about refusing to let die (Poole & Ward, 2013). I know that Stacey is still with us: somehow, somewhere, somewhen. I refuse to relegate her to the past, instead holding onto her in the present, as if captured in an eternity of her embrace, bringing her with me into the future.

Emunah brings me pasta and we
sit outside my apartment not-
talking about grief.

My purple basil plants only grow in the summer. The temporality of purple basil reminds me that everything is seasonal, that everything is temporary, that life cannot exist without loss.

When the weather grew cold and classes resumed, our gatherings at the park paused. During the fourth pandemic summer (2023), we met only once, fewer of us than usual–on the last weekend in August, as my purple basil plants were already beginning to wither. It rained. Perhaps the sky, like us, was mourning a loss we knew had already happened, but refused to accept. Perhaps the sky was nourishing another purple basil plant, preparing to emerge, elsewhere and elsewhen.

Purple basil lemonade is a ritual for re-turning (to) the past, turning it over and over and over again; it is a reminder that nothing lasts forever and nothing ever truly ends. When I make my lemonade, I am transported back to my queer and trans and Mad and crip communities, past and present; and all that I have lost along the way is here with me, once again. When I share my lemonade, I share these stories; I pass them along, just as I share them today with you. These memories mix together, like anthocyanins and acid: shifting, moving through one another, changing each other in the process. They become entangled and intertwined, new meanings laid overtop and through the old.

Purple basil lemonade is a ritual for refusing capitalist, ableist, and eugenic presents; for crafting alternative temporalities and relationalities outside the false dichotomy of isolation and endangerment; for simultaneously centering the dangers of pandemic life while offering momentary escape.

Purple basil lemonade is a ritual for world-building, for dreaming new futures. The recipe for utopia does not shy away from past and present, but rather, is actively shaped by it: a utopian methodology of mourning incorporates memory and loss as one of its key ingredients, digging into the grief behind the dream, re-turning it over and over and over as new meanings, new futures emerge.

This story, like this recipe, like our dreams for the future, is alive: always shifting, always in flux, always in a process of re-vision and rebecoming.

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Acknowledgments

I want to acknowledge that this work was not done in isolation; rather, these reflections have taken shape in relationship with myriad lifeforms. So I want to send my Mad love to all of my "park pals"–Dea Rylott, Emunah, Jules Koncovy, m luvisa, Talia Widrich, and the tree that watched over us–as well as Stacey Skalko, Britt, my purple basil and cat co-habitants, and all the former members of HMSC and MSU Maccess (through which I found Mad/disabled community following the loss of HMSC). Thank you for your friendship, companionship, love, care, and the memories you have left behind. This piece is dedicated to you. Thank you as well to Dr. Ameil Joseph, who encouraged me to continue my thinking with plant life. An earlier version of this paper was presented at the Disability Arts & Crip Futurities Conference at Trent University on October 28, 2023. Thank you to the organizers and attendees–joining both in-person and remotely–for holding space for our stories and co-creating a community grounded in liberatory access through which we could dream together.

Author Biography

Calvin Prowse (they/them) is a queer, Mad, disabled, and chronically ill white settler living in Hamilton, Ontario, on lands protected by the Dish With One Spoon Wampum. For the past decade, they have been a peer worker and community organizer within Mad, disability, and queer/trans communities, primarily within grassroots and student contexts. Calvin is a recent graduate of the Critical Disability Studies MA program at York University, where their research focused on (re)imagining the possible futures of peer support.

NS?

The Limbo Party

Giuliana Racco, with Tivoli Föreningen

Abstract

This piece is comprised of video stills from *The Limbo Party*, an audio-visual collaborative project cumulated through a long-term creative and dialogical process that explored representations of human mobility, archaeology, and landscape between 2017 and 2019. *The Limbo Party* features a group of "limbo experts," Tivoli Föreningen, a self-organized association of refugees in southern Sweden. Initially, members of this group came together to learn Swedish, but then later expanded to include a wide range of practical and leisure activities. This led to the development of *The Limbo Party*, an arts-based investigation that considers how spatio-temporal concepts, such as limbo and twilight, can be metaphorically connected to the state(s) of waiting for asylum or other such permits. In so doing, the project explores the relationship between middle states, potential states, and suspended states in relation to migration.

Keywords

migration, participatory art, social practice, border aesthetics, desire, temporality

Figure 1. *Video still from The Limbo Party. Copyright Giuliana Racco, 2020, single-channel, video, HD, colour, sound, 20', based on workshops held in July 2019, Blekinge, Sweden.*

In 2016, I was invited to southern Sweden to create artwork for an exhibition on photography, landscape, and archaeology about the iron-age cult site and its findings in the region.[1] Just a year before, the area had reached the highest ratio of asylum seekers per capita in Europe, following Sweden's decision to allow Syrian refugees into the country. There, I met Tivoli Föreningen, a self-organized group of refugees from Syria, Iran, Belarus, and Georgia; together we developed a project called "The Limbo Party," and over the course of a year we held theoretical and practical workshops and discussion sessions both online and in person. We worked on interpreting and materializing the concept of "limbo," specifically investigating its limits and potentialities as a fertile, subversive, and creative space of suspension and possible freedom. We created material objects and a 25-minute video formalizing our findings. The images throughout this piece feature various stills from this video.

[1] Between 2012 and 2013, a group of archaeologists working in Västra Vång, Blekinge, unearthed a series of 2 cm tall gold figurines, "guldgubbar", dating back to the sixth century. It appears that these figurines were produced by melting down gold coins used as payment for service in the Roman Army. According to archaeologist Björn Nilsson, the socio-political significance of these findings lies in the revelation that the iron-age inhabits of this peripheral region were in fact connected to the greater world and participated in what we would now consider "global affairs."

Phase One

Figure 2. *Video still from The Limbo Party. Copyright Giuliana Racco, 2020, single-channel, video, HD, colour, sound, 20', based on workshops held in July 2019, Blekinge, Sweden.*

The first part of the process connected the contemporary reality of refugees living in Blekinge with a nearby iron-age pagan cult site. We created banners that we then placed on the Dansbana (a typical space for dancing during social gatherings) of the local social center. This was followed by a party and twilight walks through the area of significant archaeological importance.

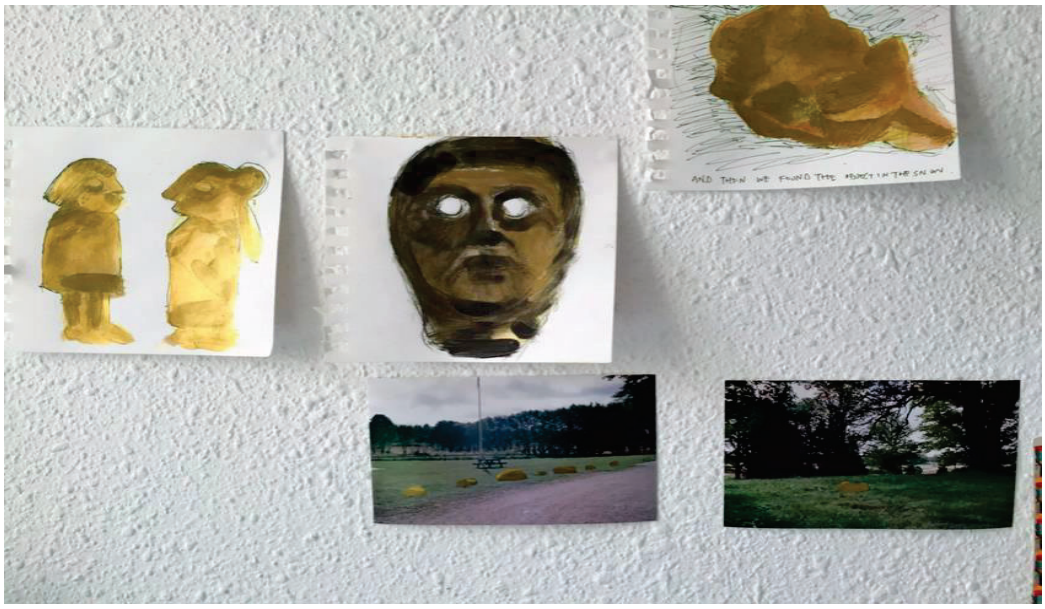

Figure 3. *Research drawings and images from The Limbo Party. Copyright Giuliana Racco, 2020.*

Figure 4. *Video still from The Limbo Party. Copyright Giuliana Racco, 2020, single-channel, video, HD, colour, sound, 20', based on workshops held in July 2019, Blekinge, Sweden.*

Figure 5. *Video still from The Limbo Party. Copyright Giuliana Racco, 2020, single-channel, video, HD, colour, sound, 20', based on workshops held in July 2019, Blekinge, Sweden.*

Figure 6. *Video still from The Limbo Party. Copyright Giuliana Racco, 2020, single-channel, video, HD, colour, sound, 20', based on workshops held in July 2019, Blekinge, Sweden.*

Figure 7. *Video still from The Limbo Party. Copyright Giuliana Racco, 2020, single-channel, video, HD, colour, sound, 20', based on workshops held in July 2019, Blekinge, Sweden.*

Figure 8. *Video still from The Limbo Party. Copyright Giuliana Racco, 2020, single-channel, video, HD, colour, sound, 20', based on workshops held in July 2019, Blekinge, Sweden.*

Figure 9. *Video still from The Limbo Party. Copyright Giuliana Racco, 2020, single-channel, video, HD, colour, sound, 20', based on workshops held in July 2019, Blekinge, Sweden.*

Figure 10. *Video still from The Limbo Party. Copyright Giuliana Racco, 2020, single-channel, video, HD, colour, sound, 20', based on workshops held in July 2019, Blekinge, Sweden.*

Phase Two

The second phase involved the creation of a messenger-object from limbo, and its "finding" in the local landscape along with the message/gift it was sent to communicate.

Figure 11. *[To the right]. Video still from The Limbo Party. Copyright Giuliana Racco, 2020, single-channel, video, HD, colour, sound, 20', based on workshops held in July 2019, Blekinge, Sweden.*

Figure 12. *[To the left]. Video still from The Limbo Party. Copyright Giuliana Racco, 2020, single-channel, video, HD, colour, sound, 20', based on workshops held in July 2019, Blekinge, Sweden.*

Figure 13. *Video still from The Limbo Party. Copyright Giuliana Racco, 2020, single-channel, video, HD, colour, sound, 20', based on workshops held in July 2019, Blekinge, Sweden.*

Acknowledgements

The Limbo Party involved the participation of Tivoli Föreningen, a self-organized group of refugees in Blekinge, and was supported by the Canada Council for the Arts. Special thanks to Abir, Ahmad Daneal, Karim, Ksenia, Noora, Rana, Sara, Sepehr, Sabina, Sebastian, Annika, Alice and Nuria.

Author Biography

Born in Tkaronto and currently based in the Mediterranean area, I, Giuliana Racco, am an artist that has worked in universities and experimental programs across Europe and the Near East. Through fieldwork, archival research, material production, and experimentation, I (co)generate art that questions the cultural definitions of boundaries, identity, in/exclusion, and desire. My videos, photography, installations, and drawings have been featured in international museums and foundations. Currently, I am a PhD candidate at York University, studying Border Aesthetics.

Author Biography

Tivoli Föreningen was founded in 2017 by asylum seekers who had previously been meeting for self-organized Swedish language study sessions. The majority of members are new arrivals, and the association is open to everyone in advance. With equality and democracy as our watchwords, Tivoli acts as a platform for carrying out innovative cultural events and activities. Our motto – "We take your identity and your crazy ideas seriously"–best summarizes our entire operation.

NS?

The Sex Work Historian

Evania Pietrangelo-Porco

Abstract

The Sex Work Historian is a multi-media collaborative effort that utilizes the author's skills and experiences as a trained historian to highlight the many struggles and resistances of sex worker communities. As a collaborative effort, *The Sex Work Historian* is both living and ongoing, prioritizing and working alongside those already combatting whorephobia. Often operating outside the bounds of traditional academia, *The Sex Work Historian* consists of a blog, its own Twitter/X, Instagram, and Bluesky social media accounts, and a Discord and Twitch channel, all of which focus on sex work and sex workers. Through these various modes of engagement, *The Sex Work Historian* offers one more voice, comprised of various stories, experiences, and realities, in the fight against the endless cycles of erasure sex workers and their histories face.

Keywords

activism, whorephobia, blogging, history, multimedia

Introduction

> At the core of *The Sex Work Historian* is the belief that the legal and social treatment of sex workers reflects broader issues. It reveals that many places, ideas, and practices are deeply discriminatory, corrupt, intolerant, and cruel. It showcases how the past impacts the present and how the present reflects the past- not just for sex workers but **everyone**.
>
> - Evania Pietrangelo-Porco, 2023 b, para. 2

The above quotation, taken from *The Sex Work Historian's* mission statement, is just that: a statement. It speaks to the multiple truths that sex workers have already made clear. The legal and social treatment of sex workers **does** reflect broader issues both on international and local scales. It **does** showcase how history is nebulous. "History" has neither a clear beginning nor end because systems of domination, such as colonialism, classism, white supremacy, and patriarchy, **still** govern many countries in both the global north and south. Historical oppressions have only evolved rather than dissipated with time. This evolution has resulted in, for example, harmful legislation in the contemporary world, such as Canada's *Protection of Communities and Exploited Persons Act* (PCEPA). The PCEPA, also known as Bill C-36, is a violation of both sex workers' labour and human rights, as it prohibits sex workers from safely conducting their business. It is also being challenged, currently to no avail, in the Ontario court system. As a result, many sex workers, not just within Canada but globally, live in states of constant flux. Yet, at the same time, the wider systems that condition and constrain their lives remain fixed.

The pervasiveness of anti-sex worker stigma, or whorephobia, forces sex workers to always be learning new ways to love, survive, and resist. It is consistently inconsistent-creating states of transitional being where sex workers push against false notions, narratives, and beliefs, into seemingly endless and predictable sociocultural voids. Most importantly, these continued fluctuations are not new. *The Sex Work Historian* is but one of many parts of this ebb and flow.

In this piece, I try to capture parts of *The Sex Work Historian*-depicted using images from its blog. These parts are shown word for word. Line by line. Doing so shows my own praxis as well as those of my contributors and collaborators. Such praxis includes land acknowledgements, clickable links and resources embedded in each post, and naming practices where some individuals remain unnamed because of the violence they have caused to people in and outside of the sex working community.[1] This piece only features *The Sex Work Historian* blog, as it is the original and primary source of my activism. Since its creation in August of 2022, the blog has expanded to include a Twitter/X, Instagram, and Bluesky account, as well as a Discord and Twitch channel. However, I have added a "Further Reading/Viewing" section at the end of this piece for those wanting to engage the other components of *The Sex Work Historian*.

Background

The Sex Work Historian is a multi-media collaborative effort that utilizes my skills as a trained historian to highlight whorephobia in all its forms. It is an effort because it is living and ongoing. It is ever evolving and changing thanks to those who are always formally and informally shaping it. It prioritizes, works alongside, and is informed by, those already combatting whorephobia. It treats those at its centre as fully dimensional persons rather than "research" to be conducted, or "projects" to be undertaken. Often operating outside the bounds of traditional academia (a site of both liberation and violence for marginalized/otherized folks).

The purpose of *The Sex Work Historian* is twofold: reiteration and critical reexamination. Through archiving and dialoging the realities and knowledges of sex workers, this project reiterates, and thus amplifies, the many struggles and resistances they face. Central to such reiteration

[1] Naming is power. It gives people, and things, an identity. While certain people's behaviours deserve both acknowledgment and accountability, their names do not.

are the practices of accreditation, compensation, and tangibility. Sex workers' physical, emotional, and intellectual labour often goes unaccredited because of the false assumption that their work can go uncompensated. *The Sex Work Historian* combats this by compensating sex workers for their time. This effort compensates its contributors through monetary reimbursement, mutual promotion, and the sharing of their materials (see "Contributors/Collaborators" section). This effort likewise engages in tangibility by crediting, promoting, and sharing the work already being undertaken by others. Additionally, most posts on the blog have further reading and resource sections. Not only is this a part of this effort's practice of tangibility, as it credits and highlights the work of others, but it also provides a guide for further exploration of various issues and topics discussed in the blog.

With reiteration comes reexamination. It makes lawmakers, politicians, and "normative" community members consider why so many people, me included, must repeat the same calls for decriminalization and abolition, and thus urges them to do something about the multiple factors fueling these calls. Sex workers are people's professors, doctors, neighbours, friends, family, and persons deserving of respect. This piece and *The Sex Work Historian* as a whole, argues for a world where this respect is a given and where it and similar efforts become few and far between.

The Sex Work Historian is not the only effort, past or present, that exists concerning the history of sex work. Activists, community members, academics, sex workers, and allies/accomplices have discussed sex work and its histories at length. They have done so in books, journals, magazines, blogs, and newspapers. Sex workers speak for themselves on podcasts, social media, television, radio, and streaming platforms. Lastly, sex workers attest to their experiences in their daily lives and through their presence in various legal and sociocultural spaces. *Thne Sex Work Historian* does not overshadow, appropriate, or commodify the longstanding work of sex workers and their allies/accomplices. Instead, it acts as another voice in the fight against the continued cycles of erasure that sex workers and their histories face. It reiterates the calls of other advocates for global decriminalization and the total abolition of whorephobia.

The Blog

The Sex Work Historian emerged as a blog in the Spring of 2022 and launched through Squarespace[2] in August of the same year. However, due to the website fees, I had to delete the website a year later. I have since relaunched the blog through WordPress.com–maintaining (as best I could) the original layout and content of the blog. Much like the original website, the new blog includes a homepage that features all the blog's content. Such content includes a Land Acknowledgement, mission statement, and an about and contact page (Pietrangelo-Porco, 2023a, para 139). The original blog did not have a subscription page, whereas the new blog does. It also included a collaborations page and an art gallery (see Appendix 1). I have since integrated the collaborations page into the blog's main posts. However, I removed the art gallery. I will bring it back at a later date, featuring art made by sex workers. Where applicable, each section of the blog has links and notes outlining my additional thoughts, resources, and praxis.

Land Acknowledgements

Land acknowledgements play a significant role in my praxis. They appear on the blog as a primary webpage and in relevant posts and collaborations. *The Sex Work Historian* Twitch channel also has a land acknowledgement spoken before each broadcast. When done meaningfully and followed by tangible action, land acknowledgements are a time for settlers to "recognize their position on stolen land(s) and what being on this land means for Indigenous Peoples" (Pietrangelo-Porco, 2023c, para 3). I use Land acknowledgements

[2] Squarespace is a website for building and hosting webpages. It allows users to use pre-built templates and drag-and-drop elements to create customizable websites.

because my work exists due to my residing on stolen land. From "the food I eat to the roof over my head to my access to electricity, I have (as a cis white woman) benefitted the most from the displacement of the Indigenous Peoples of what some call Turtle Island" (para. 5). So called Canada is built on the stolen lands of Indigenous Peoples, and especially, Indigenous sex workers. The unsafety of their bodies is the foundation of this nation. I make this clear, in overt and covert ways, in my Land Acknowledgement. No more; it is "time for Land Back" (para. 10).

Content Warnings

> This review discusses misogyny, the sexualization of underage girls, sexual assault, sex trafficking, murder, MMIW2S, gender-based and FBI/police violence, domestic abuse/violence…anti-Black racism…fatphobia…, gender-based discrimination, and violence against sex workers. – Belle Blake and Evania Pietrangelo-Porco, 2023b, para. 5

Content warnings are also a substantial part of my praxis. While all parts of *The Sex Work Historian* reflect the bubbly personalities of both me and my collaborators, it also educates people on the continued mistreatment of sex workers. My collaborators and I often tackle numerous interlocking systems of oppression–especially as they relate to whorephobia. These oppressions include, for example, racism(s), classism, misogyny, colonialism, fatphobia, and ableism. Content Warnings inform readers about the content of each post. They give folks the ability to prepare themselves for reading or viewing this often emotionally onerous content.

Collaborations

Interview with Steph Sia. Steph Sia (she/her) is a stripper, digital content creator, and pole dance instructor in Vancouver, BC (Pietrangelo-Porco, 2023a, para. 139). Steph was the first person I collaborated with for the blog. Our collaboration was joint. I interviewed Steph for *The Sex Work Historian* blog, and Steph interviewed me for her podcast *Stripped by SIA*. Steph's blog interview is entitled "Supporting SWers Responsibly in Academia with The Sex Work Historian." In it, she speaks with "... Evania from The Sex Work Historian…A PHD candidate herself, Evania has been impassioned to support SWers responsibly within her field" (Sia, 2022). As I wrote in the description for Steph's interview: "This interview is a stripping down (as it were) of Steph and her work" (Pietrangelo-Porco, 2023a, para. 4).

Fig 1: *An image of Stripped Down: An Interview with Steph Sia.*

An Interview with Belle Blake: Righting the Wrongs. Belle Blake (she/her) is a former Clip Artist, Cam Model, and author, and has a BA Combination Degree in Film Studies and Journalism (Blake and Pietrangelo-Porco, 2023b, para. 61). Belle was my third and final collaboration for the previous blog and her review was the fifth blog for the old website. In her review, Belle thought-provokingly asks readers to consider Megan Fox as a feminist, argues for the merits of one of her latest films, *Midnight in the Switchgrass* (2021), and asserts that the film is ultimately a story of redemption (para. 6). It's for the "'slasher girl turned hero, a succubus, the resurrected, an FBI agent, and a wife.' If that's not feminist, nothing is" (para. 33). The post's tagline is "The thrills, chills, and feminist ills of *Midnight in the Switchgrass* (2021)–a film review by Belle Blake." (para. 1). Both the original and relaunched posts were accompanied by promotional posts and streams across our many platforms.

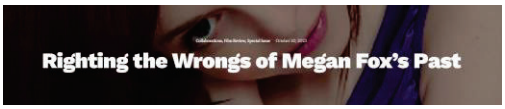

Fig 2: *An image of Righting the Wrongs of Megan Fox's Past.*

Blog Posts: Barbie Gets a W

"Barbie Gets a W" was not on the original blog. I wrote it to accompany Belle Blake's reuploaded film review of *Midnight in the Switchgrass* (2021). In this review, I argue that Greta Gerwig's

Barbie (2023) revolves around fear–of sex workers, its feminist parentage, men, and itself (Pietrangelo-Porco, 2023c, para. 5). I also did an accompanying promotional campaign for this post (see Appendix 2 for additional materials).

Fig 3: *An image of Barbie Gets a W.*

Blog Posts: Red Umbrella Day

"Red Umbrella Day: A Retrospective" is a commemorative post for a joint charity Twitch livestream between *The Sex Work Historian*, the British Columbia Coalition of Experiential Communities (BCCEC), and Sex Workers Outreach Project Los Angeles (SWOP LA). The 8-hour livestream took place in December 2022 and was the largest collaboration for *The Sex Wok Historian*, collectively raising $1000 USD divided amongst the BCCEC and SWOP LA. (Pietrangelo-Porco, 2023d, para. 11). "Red Umbrella Day"– the blog post– celebrates/documents this livestream and its many accomplishments (See Appendix 3).

Fig. 4: *An image of Red Umbrella Day: A Retrospective.*

Check My Notes

> In the foundational *Decolonizing Methodologies* (1999), Linda Tuhiwai Smith argues that "research" is a dirty word for many Indigenous Peoples. The idea of research being "dirty" applies to many (and often intersecting) marginalized folks and communities-including sex workers.
>
> –Pietrangelo-Porco, 2023a, para. 138

In addition to collaborations and blog posts, *The Sex Work Historian* provides what I call "Notes." Aside from the knowledge contributions of our collaborators, notes are this effort's most meaningful element. Some notes act as general pieces of information. Other notes outline the blog's praxis, such as its stance on naming. However, the majority of the notes are where most of the sex work history can be found in *The Sex Work Historian*.

Further Reading/Viewing

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[3] As part a *The Sex Work Historian's* practice of tangibility, this section highlights the voices of my contributors and collaborators, the necessary work they are doing, and ways they can be supported (monetarily or otherwise).

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Acknowledgments

The Sex Work Historian, in all its components, would not exist without sex workers. Sex workers have been speaking for themselves long before this effort's conception and will do so long after. My collaborators and contributors are no exception. They have fundamentally shaped this effort and me in countless ways. Their contributions cannot go unacknowledged. Thank you, Steph Sia, for being the blog's first contributor. Your guidance throughout this process informed our collaboration and guided me as I navigated the online landscape. You are skilled, wise, beautiful, talented, and the most hardworking person I've ever known. Thank you, Belle Blake, for being the blog's first guest post. Your film review is by far my favourite piece to date. Not only are you a skilled and clever writer, but you are an intelligent and thoughtful human being. I'm grateful to have worked with you and to call you my friend. In 2022, I was honoured to join the fight against whorephobia alongside the British Columbia Coalition of Experiential Communities (BCCEC) and Sex Worker Outreach Project Los Angeles (SWOP LA) in a joint Red Umbrella Day Livestream. This livestream was my largest collaboration and one of the most rewarding. Thank you to the folks at the BCCEC for putting up with my emails, taking early meetings, providing honorariums, and being pillars of Canadian sex work activism. Thank you to the folks at SWOP LA for helping with event organizing and money management, social media promotion, for taking part in the stream, for the incredible work you do, and for having smiles that light up a room. You all hold a special place in my heart. Thank you.

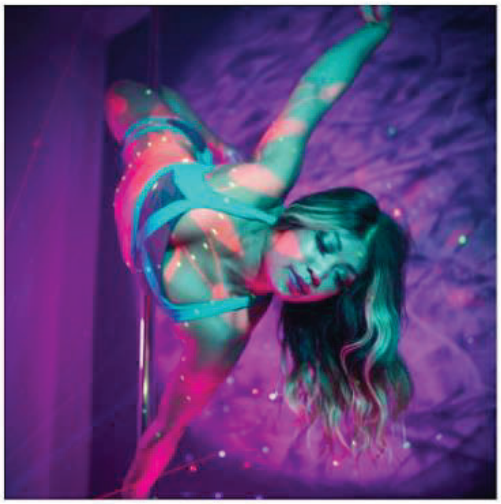
Author Biography

Evania Pietrangelo-Porco (she/her) is a sex worker ally/accomplice, trained historian, blogger, abolitionist, and, as she likes to say, an opinionated feminist harpy. She is getting her doctorate in History–focusing on 20th-century Canadian, 19th and 20th-century feminist, 20th-century North American Indigenous, and contemporary sex work history. Evania won the Joseph-Armand Bombardier CGS-Master's Scholarship (2019) and the Social Sciences and Humanities Research

Council of Canada Doctoral Grant (2022). She has published works in the *Journal of International Women's Studie*s, *Canada Watch Magazine*, and the *Canadian Historical Association's Teaching and Learning Blog*. She has presented at conferences hosted by the University of Guelph, York University, the University of Buffalo, and the University of Calgary. Evania also holds various professional affiliations with the Critical Trafficking and Sex Work Studies Cluster, Centre for Feminist Studies, Robarts Centre, and the History of Indigenous Peoples Network. Lastly, and perhaps more importantly, she has worked with many members of the sex worker/working community, including the British Columbia Coalition of Experiential Communities (BCCEC) and Sex Workers Outreach Project Los Angeles (SWOP LA).

Appendix 1: Collaborations page and Art gallery

2022 Red Umbrella Day Charity Livestream!



Stripped-Down: A Collaboration with Stripped by SIA

Figure 5: An image of the collaborator's page for the original website.

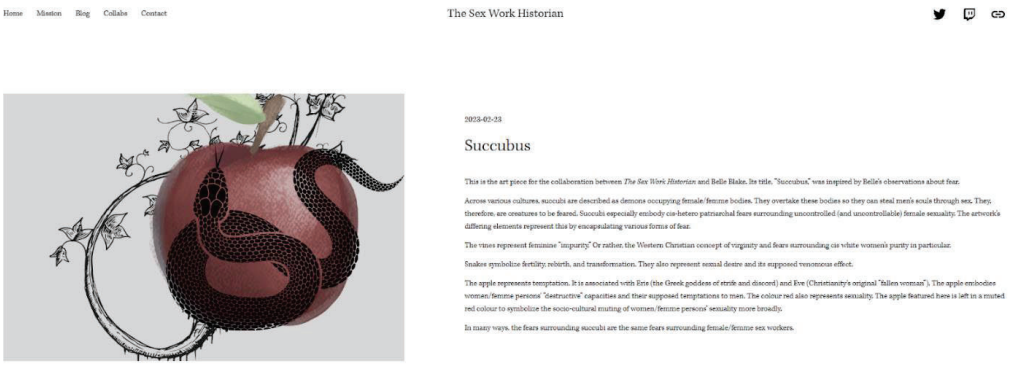


Figure 6: An image taken from *The Sex Work Historian's* art gallery. The artwork accompanied the original release of Belle's film review.

Appendix 2: Righting the Wrongs and Barbie Gets a W

Figure 7: An image of the blog's Femtober campaign taken from my Instagram. Femtober promoted both the relaunch of "Righting the Wrongs" and the release of "Barbie Gets a W."

Figure 8: The promotional image for the relaunched "Righting the Wrongs" taken from my Instagram.

Appendix 3: Red Umbrella Day

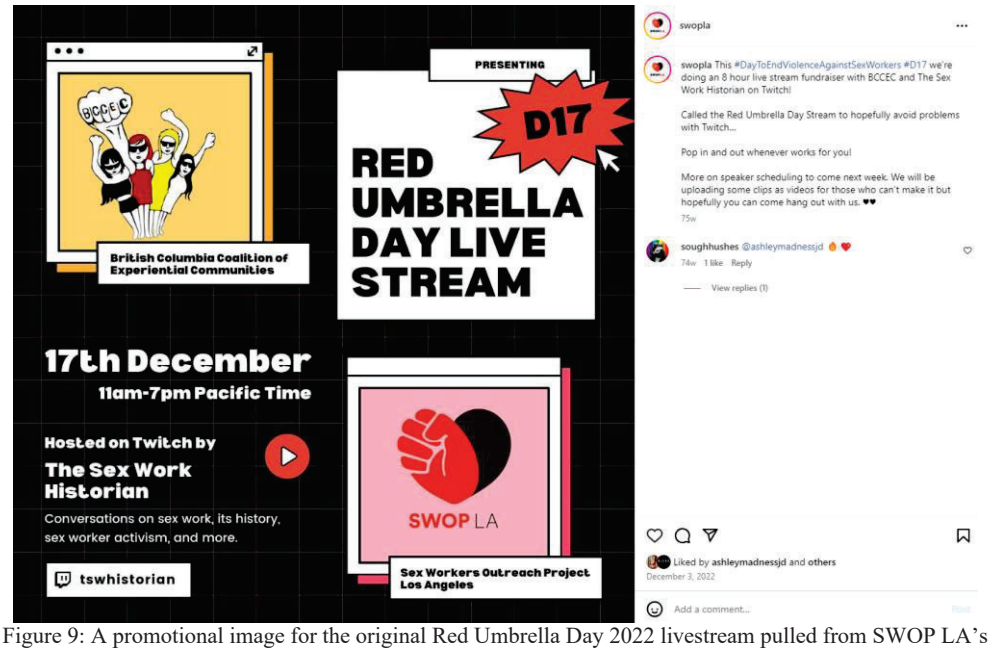


Figure 9: A promotional image for the original Red Umbrella Day 2022 livestream pulled from SWOP LA's Instagram.

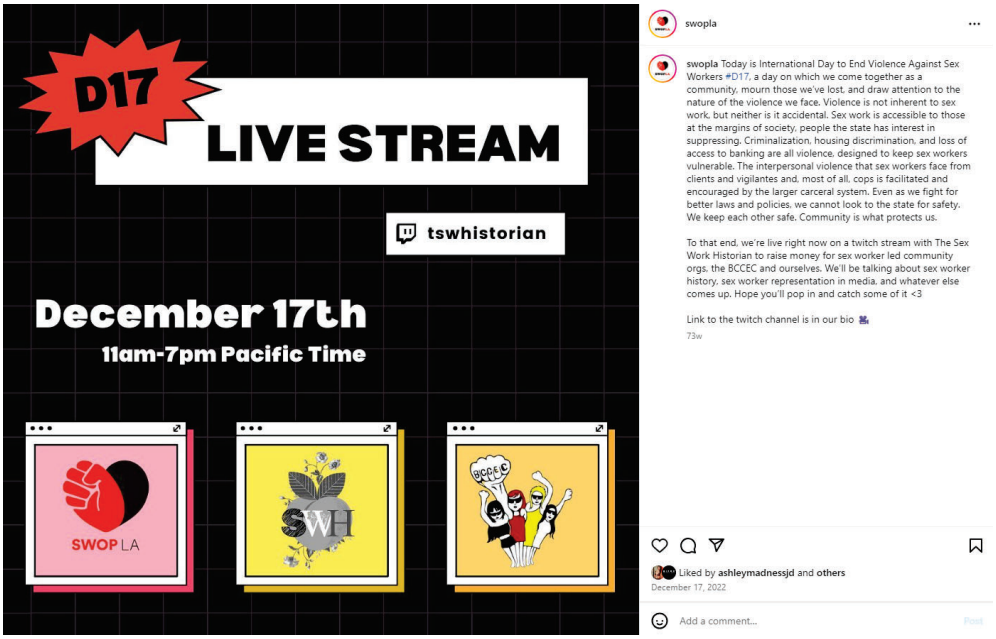


Figure 10: A post discussing the significance of The International Day to End Violence Against Sex Workers (Red Umbrella Day) and the joint livestream pulled from SWOP LA's Instagram.

NS?

Dawn

Erik Brownrigg

Abstract

This poem captures the utopian state of dawn, and the potential of becoming, imagination, and possibility therein. As Nietzsche (2003) argues in his chapter "Before Sunrise" in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, the moment before sunrise suggests an amplifying utopian and poetic relation of the poet with the world as dialogue, one that exists in between the earth and sky; day and night (also see Bachelard, 1988). This moment of flux, as highlighted in the action of the sky, namely the sky's paling, exemplifies the oscillation between macrocosm and microcosm, mirroring the ebb and flow of the utopian spirit. Every morning is possibility itself; the becoming of heights. The rising blue sky is the friend that keeps you company as you climb the mountains of your life. The following piece inhabits and animates this liminal space, operating as a literary image and state of becoming for both the influx self and the rising sun in its state of betweenness.

Keywords

utopia, sunrise, daybreak, Nietzsche, futurity, poetry

‘Dawn’

A sunrise starts in the black night

And pales into the blue haze,

And in the blue,

Arises the golden colour,

And in the paling blue haze,

The sky brightens and lightens

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Acknowledgments

I want to thank Dr. S. D. Chrostowska for introducing me to the works of Bachelard. I am very grateful for her persistent support and kindness. I thank my friends and family for their love and support. I would also like to extend a thank you to Dr. Jade Crimson Rose Da Costa and to the editors of *New Sociology* for all their help and encouragement in publishing this poem.

Author Biography

Erik Brownrigg (he/him) is a PhD candidate (ABD) in Social and Political Thought at York University. His current work focuses on the intersections of metaphysics, social theory, and utopianism in literature and philosophy. As an educator, he empowers social science students to develop their own critical thinking skills and encourages them to cultivate the blue sky, and potential of dawn, in their own lives. He will be defending his PhD dissertation, “A History of the Concept of Synthesis: Self, Worldview, Utopia”, in the Summer of 2024.

Against

NS?

I Am Myself

Sasha Askarian

Abstract

This reflective narrative takes childhood mistreatments as analogous to that of the insidious ways institutionalized power subjugates marginalized peoples. It centers the voice of a young girl who is yet to be proficient in English and thus uses her body as a key source of knowing, activating her embodied rage to articulate the fullness of her humanity. The narrative locates the body as a matrix of cultural-historical-self-knowledge that recognizes its own sovereignty; as that which reminds us of our sacred place within the world; and therefore, acts as a spiritual gateway for collective liberation. As we look through our multiple screens and witness the current state-sanctioned atrocities and many genocides unfolding, this piece asks: what does the body do? What does it do when children are killed, and people are actively erased? Does it feel sick? Numb? Outraged? Shocked? The intellectual mind alone cannot recognize the depths of such complex abjection. It requires a corporeal awakening to remind us of our sacred existence.

Keywords

body, sovereignty, collective, liberation, sacred, narrative

I am myself

When I was a child, a boy grabbed me and locked my limbs with the strength of his newly pubescent body. I remember shaking and yelling, “I am myself, don’t!”

I did not have the same way with words back then.

Teachers often told me that I had my own “special” language—a clever way of letting me know I was grammatically and positionally wrong.

The Othering process begins young and is implemented by multiple sources of power.

Though my tongue could not label it at the time, I recognized grammatical tyranny; tyranny wielded by a teacher emboldened by my overly apologetic immigrant parents.

Those with power crush those who appear too grateful for safety.

“I am myself” is a verbal response to a bodily injustice. A corporeal objection that is yet to be understood intellectually.

Being immobilized by a boy practicing unruly masculinity shocked me to my core. I demanded he recognize my bodily sovereignty, and the uncivility of breaking such a sacred law through the brute force of his body.

With nothing but my awkward phrases and incoherent sounds, I tapped into an anger unconstrained by grammar. But anger, especially unfiltered, is shamed.

Rage is not in the arsenal of the articulate.

As I now move through the highest channels of education, I recognize that my grammar was on point. “I am myself” is a declaration of self-governance. Of the autonomy of the anatomy. Of the captain ushering the sails of their own soul.

The world presents confused gazes, furrowed brows, and shrugged shoulders. But myself I am.

Even as they occupy our bodies. Clamp down our tongues. Bite into our beauty with dry decaying mouths. Squat on our lush lands. Claim ownership of our knowledges and attempt to erase traces of our existence and richness.

We must continue to know that we are our own.

First, they hold down your body. Then they cut off your tongue. Finally, they exercise your spirit. They hold us down until the weight of their cruelty sets each of our limbs into a dreamless sleep, numb, and seemingly weightless. We must not deny the body and being's inherent sovereign power. We are for the giving; we are not for the taking.

Figure 1. My Body in Place. Image directed and captured by photographer Akhila Appadurai.

Author Biography

Sasha Askarian is an Iranian-Canadian PhD candidate in York University's political science department who specializes in exploring how artificial intelligence shapes the politics of carcerality. Sasha also engages in innovative arts-based research at the University of British Columbia's Centre for Gender & Sexual Health Equity in Indigenous Health. As a Senior Policy Analyst at the First Nations Health Authority (FNHA), she supports the advancement of health and social equity. Sasha's work strives to bridge research, community, and art. Most recently, she co-curated gallery exhibitions that amplify Indigenous knowledges through art. Beyond her scholarly and advocacy roles, Sasha is a poet who utilizes art to deepen cultural and spiritual connections while also reflecting on contemporary social and political realities.

NS?

Becoming Unapologetically Métis: A Reflection on *In Search of April Raintree*

Jolene Heida

Abstract

As a mixed Métis (Scots-Cree) grandmother and PhD student, I constantly find myself navigating colonial waters while living in, and writing from, a space of resistance and change. Reflecting on Beatrice Mosionier's novel, *In Search of April Raintree*, I reflect on my own experiences of overcoming encounters with identity, inheritance, and violence. Using poetry and critical reflection, I illustrate the power of remembering as a way of challenging social and political narratives of identity and belonging.

Keywords

Indigenous, anti-colonial, Métis women, poetry

Awina kiya?
I come from nothin' they said
Dirt floors, empty cupboards, split lips don't tell secrets
Broken windows a gathering of spirits
The cold comes in like an enemy ghost
Its hand around my throat until I can't breathe
Sisters never forget
Ripped pants sewn to wear again
Dutiful hands tried to mend and didn't ask questions
But you can't heal a wound you ignore
Flies buzz at plastic sealed windows
Tap tap tap
Like your secrets they want to escape too
Little sister cried when you kill them
No more witnesses.
Atishipweeteew
Dirty hair dirty clothes dirty
I'm a good girl, not good enough though
You still looked the other way
We told you what he did
Liar. Traitor. Stupid Girl.
I come from nothin' they said
But look at me now
Not bad for a girl they said
Ni kiskisin
You come from everything *Ma fii*
Scraps of cloth make the most beautiful blankets
Weaving them together makes them strong
Like the stories Granny wrapped you in for protection
You are the earth you work with your hands
And the seeds that feed us all winter
Mind quick like a rabbit
Heart like uncle's traps, always full
You come from wild blueberries warm in the sun
Following the seasons like a forest spirit
Gitchi Manidoo welcomes you there
You come from medicine women
From secrets Spirit whispered in your ear
Held in your blood and your bones until it was time
Ni kihceyihten niya Mechif
Ni kiskisin

I recently revisited Beatrice Mosionier's novel, *In Search of April Raintree*. While reading the narratives of the two Métis sisters, Cheryl and April, I was reminded of things I have long tried to forget. Like April and Cheryl, my connection to my Métis heritage is deeply influenced by processes of settler colonialism and acts of reclamation. In my family, themes of dislocation, addiction, colonial violence, forced assimilation, interpersonal trauma, and poverty are combined with resistance, love, hope, and deep connection to land, family, and the spirit world. My identity continues to be interrupted and reclaimed.

I grew up in an isolated, rural area in Northwestern Ontario located on the Kaministiquia River, outside of what is now known as Kakabeka Falls–the traditional territory of the Anishinaabe peoples and part of Treaty 60 (Robinson-Superior Treaty). The Kaministiquia River, as well as the Albany River and Lake Superior (Gitchee Goomi), were important waterways for the Métis people, and my ancestors would have travelled along the rivers trading furs and following the seasons with their kin My family is a mix of Métis (Scots-Cree)–Ukrainian on my maternal side, and mixed European on my paternal side. Perhaps this is why I am so comfortable on the water, canoeing or kayaking, getting lost along the shoreline.

Such ease must be a blood memory, as growing up, I was disconnected from my culture and history. My family history was comprised of whispered stories told with raised eyebrows, whenever my mother was out of earshot. Teachings about the land and the spirit world were passed down from my grandmother, and in recent years, ancestral research conducted by my cousins. Interestingly, growing up I knew more about my biological father's family history, even though my siblings and I are now estranged from him. In terms of my maternal side, I was told that we were 'Indians,' but received no further context or information about what that meant. I assumed that I was Ojibway like most of the Indigenous people I knew in Thunder Bay. It was not until I was a teenager that I discovered I was Cree/Métis.

This secrecy, disconnection from, and shaming of, who I was–who I *am*–was meant to protect me. But all it did was hurt me, manifesting as sites of pain and loss throughout my life. No matter how hard we try, our secrets have a way of unearthing themselves from the graves that

they're buried in. I have decided to treat my secrets like medicine and weave them back into my soul. If life has taught me anything, it's that all of our stories have a place in our medicine bundles. It's knowing what to do with them that's the real challenge.

I found these struggles mirrored back to me in the pages of *In Search of April Raintree*. I feel the characters of both April and Cheryl living inside me as a mixed blood woman struggling to belong and exist. The crisis of identity this causes speaks to a deeper knowing of Indigeneity within me and of my ability to truly love this part of myself. Yet, at the same time, there is a feeling of shame. That I can never let people know who I am. And if I do, I will not belong.

At times in my life I have felt like a ghost, unseen and insignificant. I have questioned how I could be perceived by others if I, myself, did not know who I was. This was exacerbated by the knowledge that my family has kept our Indigeneity a secret for generations. But as a young person, I was not able to articulate these troubles in any way. What I could name, however, was that I felt dirty, deserving of the abuse that I was enduring, and that aside from when I was with my Gran, I neither belonged nor mattered.

I felt a strong sense of shame for much of my life. I was only liked and accepted when performing whiteness. I believed that if people knew me and got close to me, they would discard me. This led to years of anxiety, hiding, masking, and passing. In this way, I connect to April from the novel, who denies parts of herself in an attempt to fit into mainstream culture. As April tries on her false identity, she is aware that it's a thin disguise, but she is also taught to believe that it is her only option. Indeed, at times, our identity becomes a performative survival and occurs within the backdrop of internal and external colonization (Tuck & Yang, 2012).

While colonization has impacted all Indigenous people, women and girls experience higher rates of violence, not only within their own communities, but by men writ large. A broader historical context marred by colonialism and discriminatory government practices, in addition to gendered experiences of child welfare and the residential school system, has created conditions for violence against Indigenous women and girls to thrive. For Indigenous women, the experiences of violence on the body and through gendered racist constructions of our identity is both personal and public, connected to the ongoing context of domination and subordination.

According to research by Downe (2005), constructions of the Indigenous female body through gendered practices of colonization have marked this identity as "dirty, unkempt, and inherently rape-able" (p. 4). According to Weaver (2009), these stereotypes "have severely undermined traditional ways of life and have also contributed to the rise of domestic violence [and]…continue to deny the personhood and sacredness of First Nations women" (p. 1556). Constructing the Indigenous female identity as worthy of harm and misuse is one of the long-standing acts of colonial practice that continue to affect our women today.

I am a survivor of physical abuse and sexualized violence; however, it was not due to my race. It was due to my father. He did not target me (to my knowledge) as an Indigenous woman. But it is possible that my Indigeneity contributed to the silence around my abuse. And to its pretense. I've long wondered: was my father aware that we, his children, his wife, were Indigenous? In his mind, did this afford him additional rights to our bodies? I do recall several white uncles and cousins calling us derogatory slurs, so it is possible. My mother continues to deny the abuse to this day. It remains, for now, another conversation we will not have. I suppose I will have to leave her to tend to her own secret graves, as I attend to mine.

Dominant discourses about Indigenous women remain a site of social injustice. They further marginalize our roles and entrench our lives with colonial sexist narratives. Most often, our lives are framed in terms of damage. Tuck (2009) explains that damage-centered accounts focus on hardships experienced by Indigenous communities and mobilize narratives of pain and loss. Although sharing experiences of

exploitation and violence are necessary, damage-centered narratives make it difficult for women and girls to think of themselves as anything other than broken. Tuck states that "without the context of racism and colonization, all we're left with is the damage, and this makes our stories vulnerable to pathologizing analyses" (p. 415).

Damage-centered discourses naturalize the effects of settler colonialism and not only support the idea that Indigenous people are deserving of the exploitation and violence that we experience, but that we are ultimately void of the agency, ingenuity, and strength required to demand social change. Mosionier (2008) resists such thinking in her novel. She situates her experiences directly in the context of settler colonial policy and provides deeper understanding of the systemic issues that mobilize the pain, loss, and abuse of her life. This is a brave and significant contribution to understanding both her own experience and the experiences of so many other Indigenous women, me included. This is a gift I am grateful for.

As I reflect on the story medicine Mosionier (2008) has provided, I am humbled by her bravery and wisdom in sharing. It's an affirmation that our experiences are teachers, and that our culture is a source of strength, unity, and connectivity, as well as an ever-present force in our lives–as long as we choose to honour it. As I move forward and collectively heal with my family and community, I will continue to challenge myself to authentically show up, both in my work and for myself. To make medicine of my secrets.

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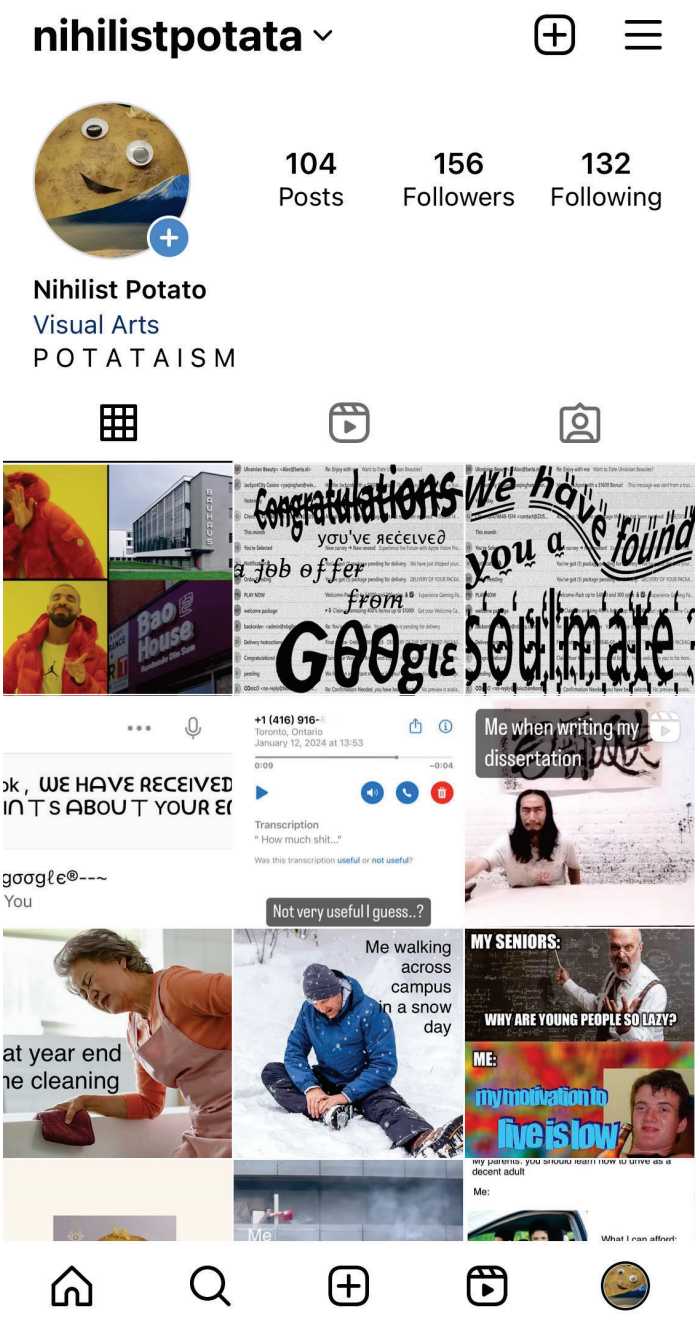
Acknowledgments

I would like to thank Jade Da Costa for their patience, guidance, and eloquence elevating this work. For my sisters and cousins who join me on this journey, I am grateful for your support and proud to widen the path with you.

Author Biography

Jolene Heida is a mixed Métis (Scots-Cree) Auntie, mother, and grandmother from Kakabeka Falls, Ontario and a Registered Social Worker and practicing trauma therapist. She is currently a PhD Candidate with the School of Social Work at York University in Toronto, Ontario. Her doctoral research explores the connections between sexualized violence of Indigenous women, girls, and 2-Spirited people and land theft and exploitation in settler colonial societies.



Selected Posts/Memes from @Nihilistpotata

The following memes have been selected from my Instagram account @nihilistpotata. In this account, I combine the image of a nihilist potato with the artistic concept of Dadaism to challenge conventional tastes in art and traditional methods of visual creation. @Nihilistpotata documents my graphic design experiments using memes. The themes of these memes delve into my general life troubles and aspirations, as well as my more particular experiences navigating graduate school. It aims to strike a balance between my online persona as a humorous potato and my embodied identity as a nerdy Asian woman who is considered to be conventionally unattractive. Through the act of meme-making, I aspire to empower not just myself but oppressed people writ large— LGBTQ2S folx, racialized and Indigenous communities, the poor, the disabled, the bullied, those suffering from mental illness, and many more; all who seek to resist, survive, laugh, and heal.

Figure 1.
Untitled,
A screenshot of @Nihilistpotata on Instagram

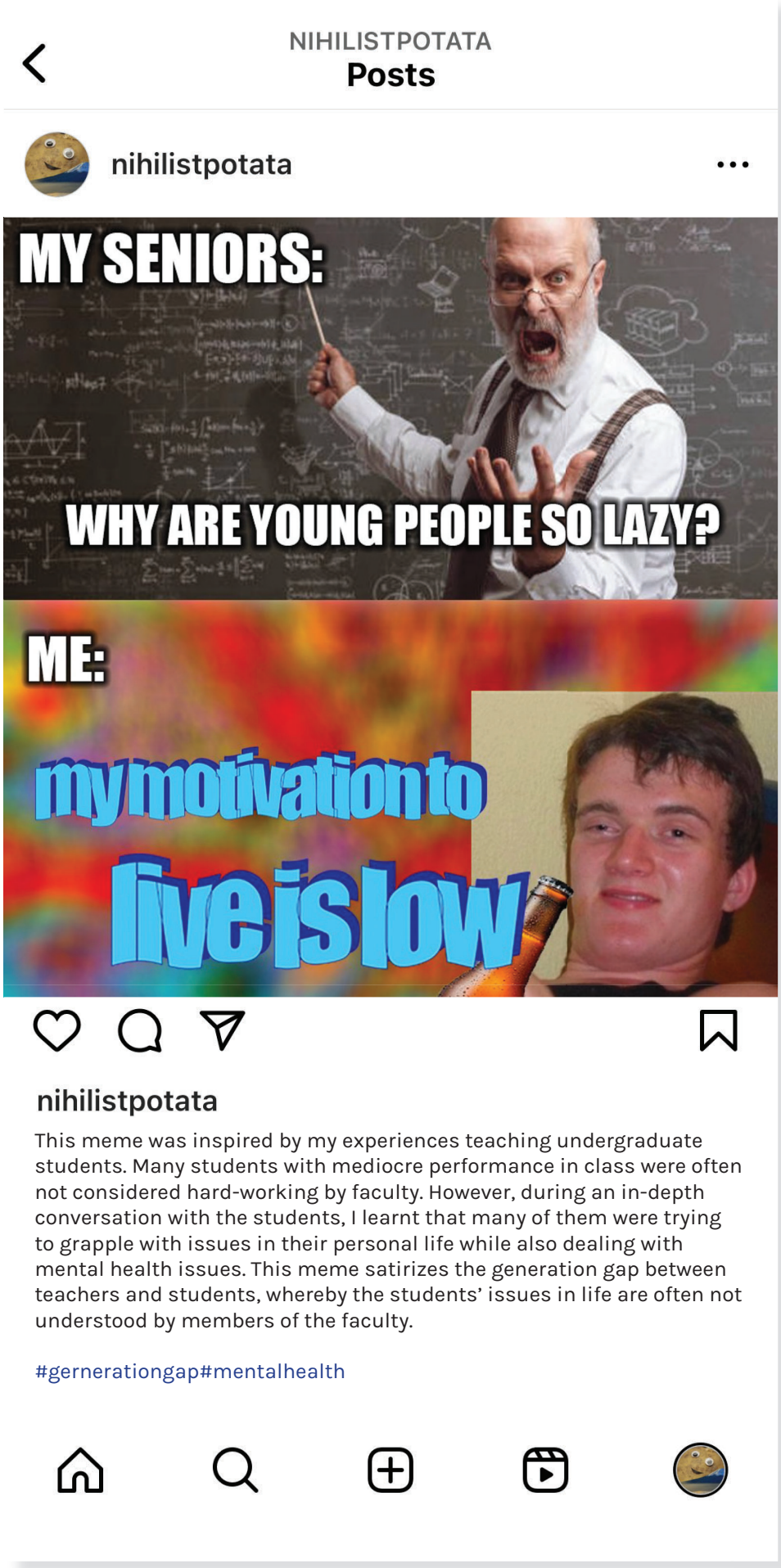


Figure 2.
Where Am I Here?
Meme,
by Ins @Nihilistpotata

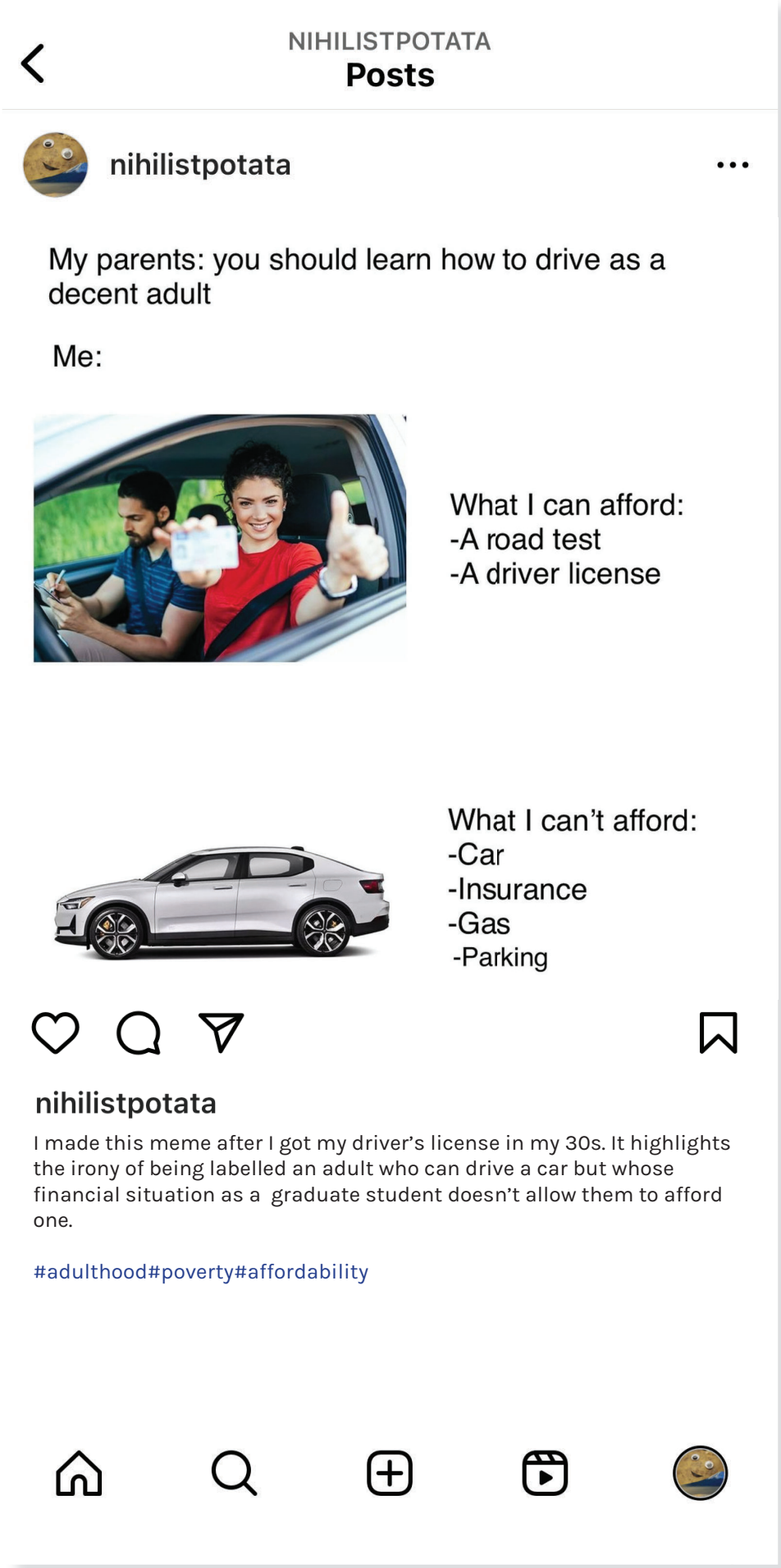


Figure 3.
Decent Adult
Meme,
by Ins @Nihilistpotata

Figure 4.
Egg Me
Meme,
by Ins @Nihilistpotata

Figure 5.
A Dream From Last Night
Meme,
by Ins @Nihilistpotata

Figure 6.
I Am Trash
Meme,
by Ins @Nihilistpotata

Figure 7.
Middle Finger Ornament Meme,
by Ins @Nihilistpotata

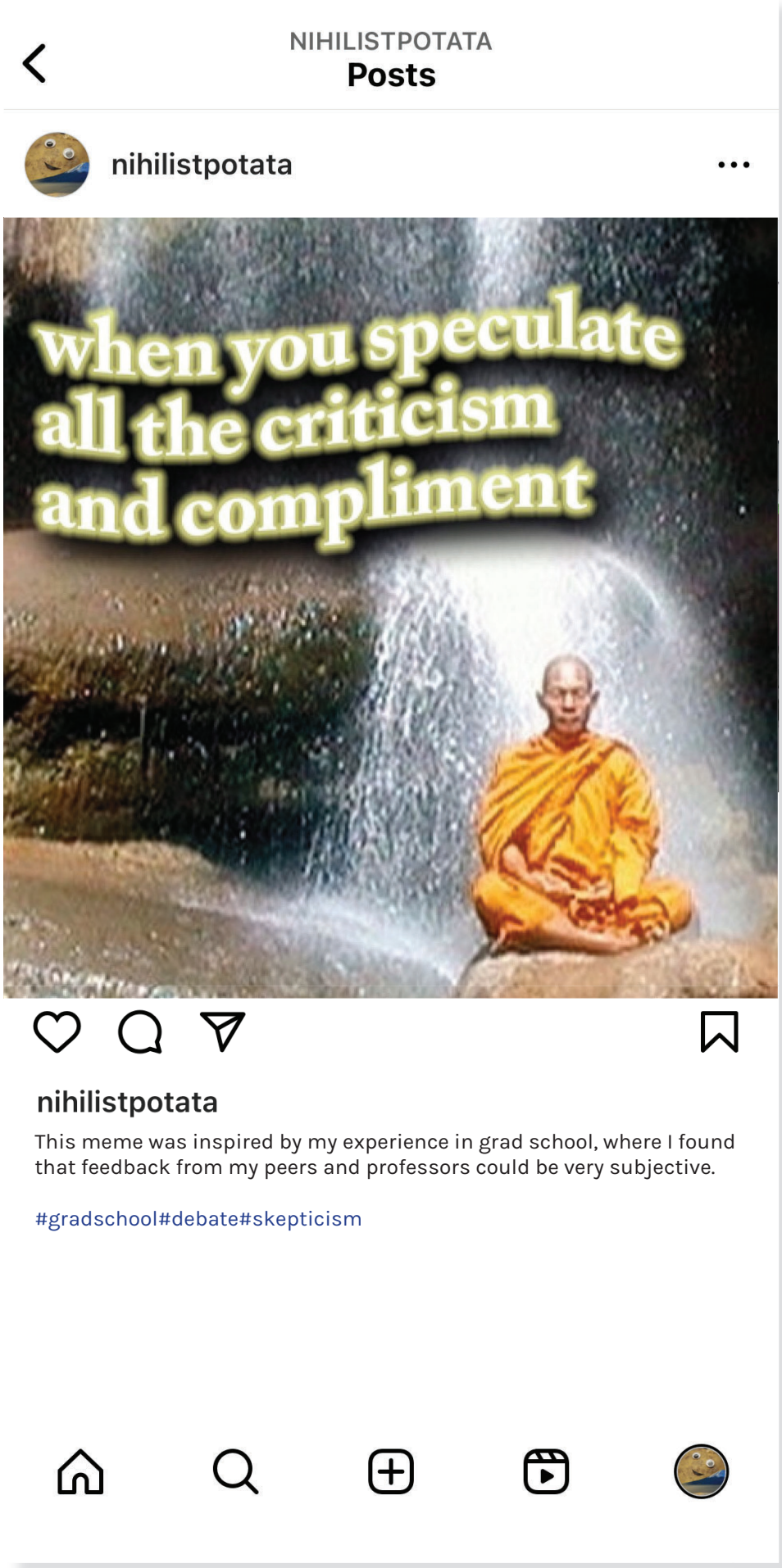


Figure 8.
Grad School Motto Meme,
by Ins @Nihilistpotata

Figure 9.
Happy Anniversary
Meme,
by Ins @Nihilistpotata

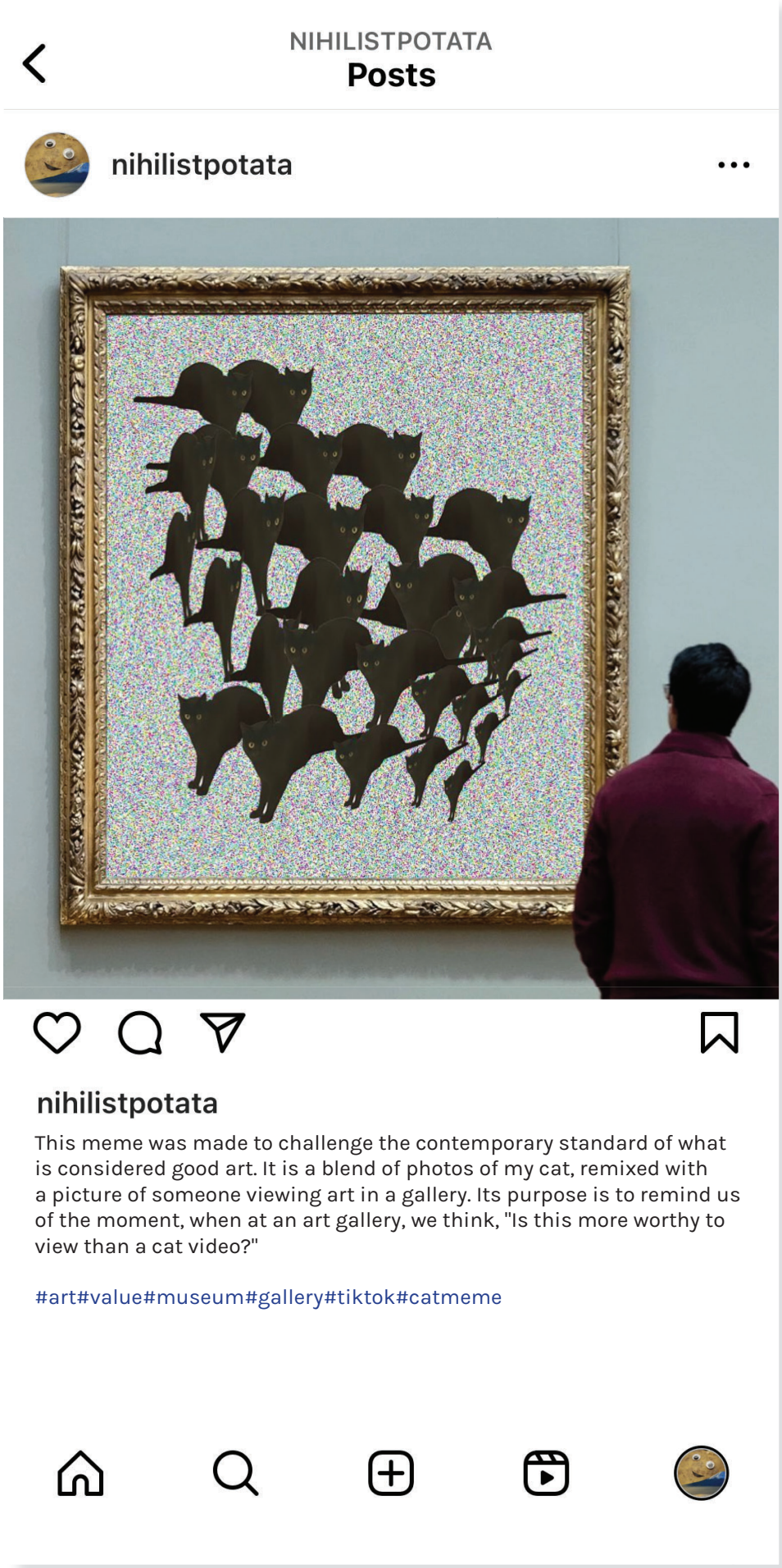
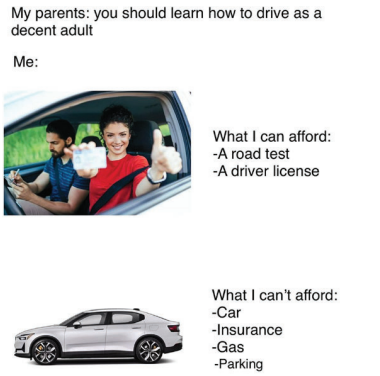
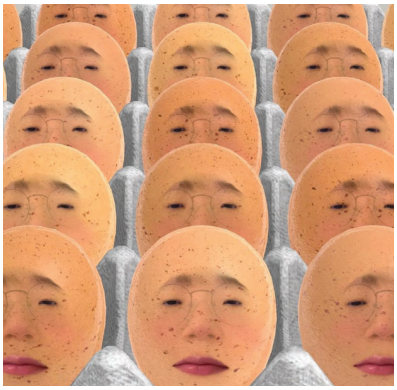
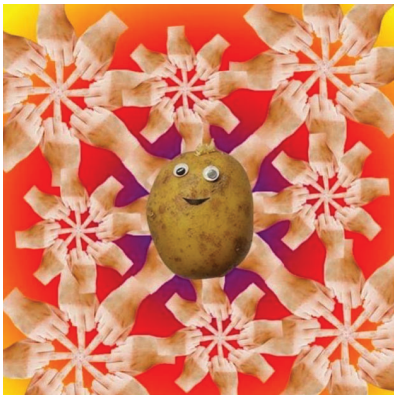
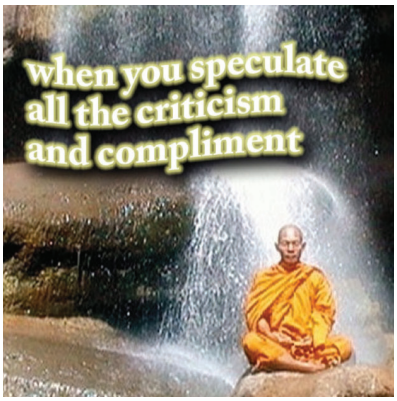


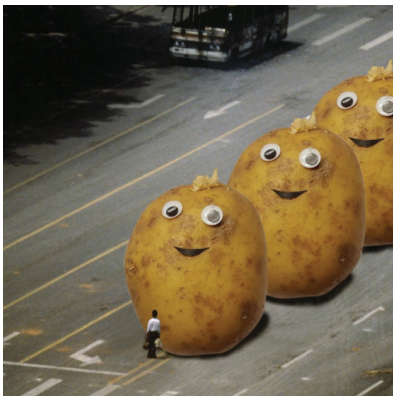
Figure 10.
The Art of Cat
Meme,
by Ins @Nihilistpotata











Selected Posts/Memes from @Nihilistpotata

Author Biography

Helen Yaqing Han (she/her) is a graphic designer currently in her fourth year pursuing a Ph.D. in education at York University. She completed her master's and bachelor's degrees in graphic design and worked for several years as a designer in different countries. Helen's current research focuses on experimental pedagogy, specifically exploring meme-making as a method to encourage experimental graphic design, foster creativity among non-professional creators, and build communities based on creative making using emerging digital tools and social media platforms. Meanwhile, she has also been curious about emerging technologies such as artificial intelligence and algorithms, which are heavily influencing how people produce and perceive cultural productions now and in the future.

NS?

African Mother Scholar

Runeni R. Mangwiza Zvemhara

Abstract

African Mother Scholar is a poem born out of my disillusionment with life, love, and womanhood. As an African woman, immigrant, mother, and scholar, I am forced to come to terms with conflicting identities, a colonial past, and present patriarchal structures. In search of both who I am and who I want to become, I find myself questioning long held cultural beliefs on my role as a wife and mother and how these beliefs align with my desire for intellectual growth. It is in this state of ontological flux that I find a newfound sense of freedom, power, and control. My search for knowledge–for truth, healing, and identity–both unravels and remakes me. In these halls of knowledge, I experience never ending conversations, community, and laughter, as if returning from a distant homeland. I find myself dreaming of the impossible. I am finally the author of my own story.

Keywords

decolonize, patriarchy, womanhood, motherhood, Indigeneity, knowledge

Like a lioness roaming the plains,

She is courageous.

She is strong and yet vulnerable.

She emerges at dawn,

Half dreaming, half awake,

As her children drift in the realm of dreams.

What shall we eat today? What shall I learn today?

Research paradigms, questions, methods galore.

She is thinking, scribbling, journaling away,

Never a second to spare, or to lose.

She is born and bred in patriarchy,

Once one of its most excellent students.

Don't ask why?

Clean, cook, nurture, breathe, repeat!

You are the pillar that holds it all together.

At last, beneath that dark and smothering cloud,

She finds her own brand of womanhood.

One that blurs the lines,

Between the radical and the liberal.

Letting go of those old wives' tales.

Hopes and dreams surround her,

Boundlessly buzzing like a swarm of bees.

Like a shield of armor, her hopes, and dreams,

For her children, students, and community,

Give her strength and courage to do the impossible.

The strength to decolonize, deconstruct,

Colonial legacies, and ways of thinking.

The courage to reject, reclaim and reimagine,

Embracing reciprocity, Indigeneity, new ways of thinking.

To be an African Mother Scholar,

Is to have endless possibilities.

The ivory tower is ripe with knowledge and opportunity,

A foreign land next to her humble home.

It is where domesticity meets elasticity and innovation,

Critical paradigms, challenging, interrogating.

Through narrative inquiries,

Humanity's story comes to life.

Revealing the tensions and struggles,

Engraved in the heart of power and knowledge.[1]

[1] Foucault, M., & Gordon, C., 1980.

To decolonize her research,

She must first decolonize the mind.

Pruning once held beliefs, values, and attitudes,

Towards new ontologies and ways of knowing.

As her mind sails along the sea of self-doubt,

Waves of inadequacy crushing down her ideas, dreams, and ambitions.

Reflecting on all her conflicting subject position,

Colonized, free, mother, scholar.

Who is she to occupy this space?

At long last it is I,

African Mother Scholar.

References

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Acknowledgments

Behind every African Mother Scholar is someone who diligently watches over her children as she learns. Allowing her the freedom to dream, to sail uncharted waters and break through barriers. Ellah, my dearest sister, you are the reason I can do it all.

Author Biography

My name is Runeni Ruth Mangwiza Zvemhara (She/Her). I am a mother of four wonderful human beings who are my greatest gift, and the reason why I write. My formative years were spent in Harare, Zimbabwe where I was born and raised. As a young 22-year-old woman, I immigrated to Canada in search of freedom, safety, economic and political stability. I began my undergraduate studies At Rhodes University in South Africa and completed my studies at the University of Toronto, graduating with a Bachelor of Arts degree in Psychology and Sociology. I am an Ontario Certified Teacher and Registered Early Childhood Educator. My research areas include special education and inclusive learning. I am currently completing my Master of Education degree at York University.

Book Review

NS?

Laboring Women: Reproduction and Gender in New World Slavery

Kamilah Clayton

Abstract

In this book review, I reflect on a selection from Jennifer L. Morgan's (2004) book, *Laboring Women: Reproduction and Gender in New World Slavery*. I have returned to this selection several times to process its applicability, not only to the time in which it was written about, but to my existence as a Black woman in the world today. Throughout modern history, Black women's lives have been marked by contradiction and nuance, in large part because our physical, sexual, and reproductive labour figured prominently in shaping the plantation structure and economy, a central tenant of modern society. In what follows, I share my thoughts about how Morgan engages these insights in her book, giving focus to her introductory chapter.

Keywords

Black women, labour, plantation life, book review

I want to reflect briefly on Jennifer L. Morgan's (2004) introductory chapter to *Labouring Women: Reproduction and Gender in New World Slavery*. This chapter explores the extraction of Black women's labour, the importance of the labour of the Black woman and its ideological function, and the disconnect between the invisibility of Black women's labour and the centrality of their labour as an organizing principle of plantation life (p. 1, 3, 6-7).

I appreciated Morgan's analysis of the importance of Black women's real and imagined reproductive labour as one of the most significant factors in the flow of bodies across the Atlantic and within the plantation state. Black women's ability to continue to produce free labour rendered them highly valuable, even as they were subjected to the most dehumanizing violence (Morgan, 2004, p. 3; also see Hartman, 2016; James, 2016).

For example, Morgan writes that Black women's ability to reproduce was central to the system of racial slavery (p. 4). In fact, enslavers included the speculative value of Black women's reproductive capacity in their cost benefit analysis (p. 3). Black women's presence on the plantation had a direct impact on the importation rate of Africans to sustain the enslaved population (p. 6). The high value of enslaved Black women's physical and reproductive labour was reinforced through manipulated images depicting them as prioritizing hard work and experiencing pain free reproduction, thus giving the false impression that they had the ability to give birth and work the land simultaneously (p. 8).

Morgan's chapter highlights how Black women were, in some ways, more important to the preservation of the plantation economy than Black men, and yet their experiences have not been held to the same level of significance in mainstream scholarship (p. 3, 8). I also appreciate that Morgan invites the reader to consider how Black women's sense of agency and resistance to plantation violence needs further exploration, as it is often absent from dominant narratives on Black women's existence in plantation life.

One interesting contradiction that Morgan (2004) highlights is that "for the enslaved, the possibility of intimacy at the heart of creolization challenged the narrow and contradictory racialized categories to which early modern slaveholders confined them" (p. 6). Morgan complicates the narrow scripts that have existed in the literature about the nature of plantation life.

All these intimate experiences were nuanced, which becomes most disturbing when one considers the brutality of slavery and the reduction of the Black body to a dollar amount on a ledger. Morgan's first chapter of *Labouring Women: Reproduction and Gender in New World Slavery*, and work writ large, makes clear that a deeper exploration of Black women's narratives and experiences of the plantation will further complicate our understanding of this period in our history, and I am here for that!

Author Biography

Kamilah Clayton (she/her) is a PhD student in Social Work at York University. She completed a Bachelor of Social Work at Toronto Metropolitan University in 2009 and a Master of Social Work at York University in 2015. Her dissertation focuses on experiences of belonging among Black students in Ontario secondary schools, and how school social workers support these experiences of belonging and/or collude with educational systems in the perpetuation of anti-Black racism. Her research is supported by a Social Science and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC) Doctoral Fellowship Award. Kamilah has over fifteen years of experience in various areas of social work, including child welfare, mental health, and African Centered Rites of Passage work with adults and youth.

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