INTERSECTIONS

The McGill Undergraduate Journal of Feminist and Social Justice Studies

Fall 2022 Edition

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Intersections: McGill's Undergraduate Journal of Feminist and Social Justice Studies is an undergraduate student journal developed, edited, written and published by students at McGill University. The pieces in this edition were chosen by both the editorial board and editing team.

Please note that the opinions expressed in this are those of the authors and contributors and do not necessarily reflect those of the editorial board.

Intersections is supported by the Dean of Arts Development Fund, the Institute for Gender, Sexuality and Feminist Studies (IGSF), and the Gender, Sexuality, Feminist and Social Justice Studies Student Association (GSFSSA). We also want to thank Dr. Alexandra Ketchum, Andrew Folco, Michael David-Miller and Si Yu Liu for their help with this edition's publication

Land Acknowledgement

Intersections wants to acknowledge that our work, meetings and production occurs out of McGill University, which is situated upon the unceded territories of the Kanien'kehá:ka and Anishinaabeg nations. McGill University rests on Tiotia:ke/Mooniyang, a site which has served as a meeting place for Indigenous nations. Intersections acknowledges that our work also takes place within these territories, and encourages readers to address the need for solidarity with Indigenous groups across Tiotia:ke/Mooniyang and Turtle Island.

We encourage readers to commit to going beyond land acknowledgements, and to support concrete actions for reparation. As such, we have gathered some resources for readers to learn more about Indigenous water and land protectors across Turtle Island, as well as Indigenous organizations in Tiotia:ke/Mooniyang. This list is non exhaustive, and we encourage you to look even beyond these resources.

Learn more about water and land defenders:

Stop Line 3: Land defenders organizing against a proposed pipeline expansion to bring nearly a million barrels of tar sands per day from Alberta, Canada to Superior, Wisconsin. Enbridge seeks to build a new pipeline corridor through untouched wetlands and the treaty territory of Anishinaabe peoples, through the Mississippi River headwaters to the shore of Lake Superior.

The Unist'ot'en (C'ihlts'ehkhyu / Big Frog Clan) are the original Wet'suwet'en Yintah Wewat Zenli distinct to the lands of the Wet'suwet'en. They are currently organizing against Enbridge's Northern Gateway Pipeline, Chevron's Pacific Trails Pipeline, and TransCanada's Costal Gaslink Pipeline. Find out more here: https://unistoten.camp/

Ada'itsx/Fairy Creek Blockade: The Fairy Creek Blockade is a volunteer driven, grassroots, non-violent direct action movement organizing on unceded Pacheedaht and Ditidaht territory. Find out more here: https://laststandforforests.com/

Indigenous Organizations in Tiotia:ke/Mooniyang:

Open Door Shelter: a drop-in centre providing services to homeless and low-income people in downtown Montreal, that is often looking for volunteers.

Native Women Shelter: the only shelter in Tiotia:ke/Mooniyang that provides services exclusively to Indigenous women and their children.

First Peoples Justice Center: a center which supports Indigenous people in their dealings with the justice systems, providing legal information and tools for clients, and alternatives to the justice system itself.

Resilience Montreál: a community-led project, initiated by the Native Women's Shelter, established to support the homeless population in the Cabot Square area

Mobilizing for Milton-Parc: a student-led group which supports Indigenous and non-Indigenous unsheltered population of Milton-Parc through food support, material support, community building and settler education projects.

Forward from the Editors in Chief

Welcome to the Fall 2022 edition of Intersections. We are a team of scholars, activists and learners who want to reimagine academia through radical publishing. At Intersections, we aim to bridge programs and research interests across spectrums to spotlight new authors and researchers. Growing from the GSFS (Gender, Sexuality, Feminist and Social Justice Studies) program, we aim to use values of anti-oppression and social justice to promote a vision of publishing that challenges dominant narratives, builds creative solutions, and prioritizes voices that are often silenced by traditional academic spheres.

The work we publish is feminist in nature; for us at Intersections, this means that the work challenges dominant patriarchal narratives and addresses the intersections of structural oppression. For us, intersectionality is not just a word, but a practice. The work we publish looks at the concepts, struggles, celebrations, and discoveries that are often ignored and replaced with white-washed, heteronormative stories of success. In bringing these accounts to light, Intersections reimagines academic publishing as a space that connects communities and writers with each other through lived experience, action, and learning. As such, we aim to connect with individuals not only within the university, but within the broader community as well. As we grow, Intersections hopes to join our vision of social change with action through community events, publishing grants, and other opportunities to build a new academic world through connection and imagination.

As the Editors in Chief of Intersections, we are incredibly excited to introduce you to our Fall 2022 edition. This publication represents hours of dedication—from choosing the pieces to include, to having editors work collaboratively with authors to putting the final layout together—this edition features incredible scholarship from a strong and committed team. At the same time as this print edition was being constructed, we launched our online site, featuring articles from staff writers and student contributors. This expansion has resulted in an incredible site populated with in-depth articles engaging with the varied field of feminist research.

We also officially launched the journal under a new name, moving from MJFS to Intersections. We chose this name to represent our commitment to Intersectionality—a feminist method of analysis that focuses on challenging oppressive structures of patriarchy, white supremacy, heterosexism, and colonialism. With this name change, we are also connecting back to the original founders of the journal, who started the journal in the mid-2010s under the same name. We know that those of you who have been following our work know how great this work can be, and we believe Intersections represents just that.

We are so excited to welcome you to the Fall 2022 edition of our print journal and look forward to seeing where the future of feminist and social justice studies takes you!

Laine McCrory & Catherine Plawutsky
Editors in Chief
Intersections McGill

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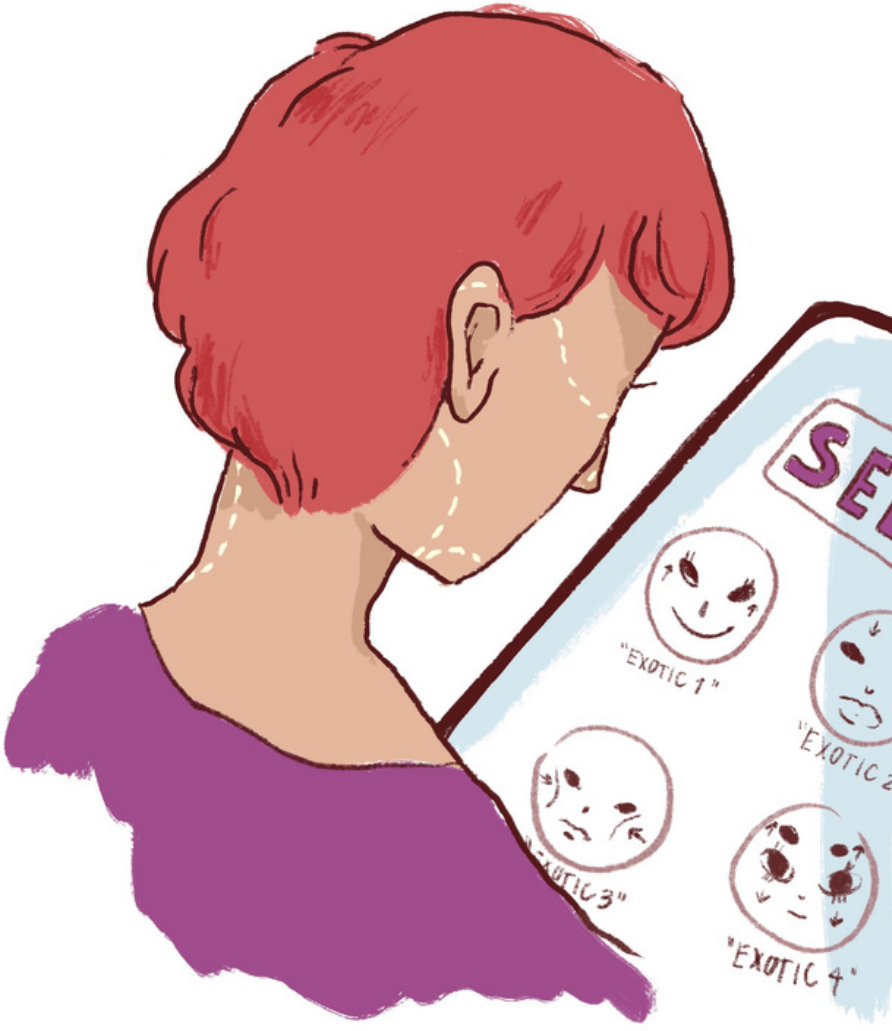
Ignorance Unfiltered: Representations of Beauty and Whiteness in the Social Media Age

Written by Lavinia Auhoma
Edited by Meghan Farbridge and Morgan Rachel Geyer



ABSTRACT

This paper discusses the prevalence of racial colour-blindness online, where identification of race has become obscured by the disavowal of race. Particularly, the pervasiveness of beauty enhancement features on social media has allowed for the appropriation of racialized facial features in a way that removes them from their ethnic context. This racial colour-blindness has led to a process of racial dysmorphia, creating an impossible beauty standard of "rootless exoticism." This "de-racialization" of racialized features and identity engenders epistemic ignorance that obscures the ability to truly understand racism and discrimination.

Racial colour-blindness is a form of ignorance that invisibilizes race in the guise of racial equity, removing race as a factor in discrimination. This aversion to acknowledging race in the technological age has led to a process of racial dysmorphia, where the identification of race has become obscured by the disavowal of race. Indeed, in the digital age, the consequences of racial colourblindness are seen through the popularization of beauty enhancement features on social media has obscured representations of race, particularly in terms of whiteness, in the digital age. In this essay, I suggest that racial colour-blindness in the technological age has led to a process of racial dysmorphia, a term to which I will return throughout this essay (Medina 2013, 39). Beauty standards that once reflected realistic – albeit racist and eurocentric standards of beauty – now uphold an impossible standard of beauty, one which manufactures a "rootless exoticism" (Tolentino 2019, 1). The modern standard of beauty engendered by beauty enhancement filters grafts racialized features onto white faces, by extension, blurring the meaning of whiteness. This engenders a new form of epistemic ignorance, which I refer to as the process of "de-racialization" (Stevens 2013, 1637). The consequence is an inability to accurately discern racism when whiteness is constructed through the appropriation of ethnic facial features.

Colour-blindness is a form of moral form of moral posturing where

self-proclaimed allies claim that they "do not see colour" as a rejection of racism. José Medina (2013) analyzes the affective and cognitive impacts of active ignorance within interpersonal relationships through colour-blindness. Medina (2013) describes the propagation of colour-blind ideology as epistemically dishonest, "a double epistemic failure" (10); it is "a failure in self-knowledge and a failure in the knowledge of others with whom one is intimately related" (Medina 2013, 10). Therefore, despite an awareness of social positionality and privilege and its significance, the supposedly colour-blind individual is willing to reject this in order to appear morally virtuous. By claiming to ignore racial stereotypes, such individuals ironically acknowledge their implicit racial biases.. For Medina, the active ignorance of colour-blindness is particularly insidious in that it is disguised as respect towards racialized subjects. His theory, however, does not assess how colour-blindness results in cognitive distortion. To draw Medina's theory into a digital context, I suggest that the cognitive distortion of race is most apparent within the lens of social media and its impact on evolving beauty standards, specifically through beauty enhancement filters.

The popularization of enhancement filters on Instagram has formulated a new aesthetic of beauty, one which mimics a "modern eugenics of sorts, practically eradicating racial variations in facial features to create a single type of beautiful face" (Misra-Miller 2020, 1). Facial features are morphed to match a universal standard of beauty that is ambiguous and unsettlingly perfect. In an article in The New Yorker, Jia Tolentino (2019) coined the term "Instagram Face" to define this type of beauty. She describes the "Instagram Face" as an amalgamation of ethnic features, characterized by "an overly tan skin tone, a South Asian influence with the brows and eye shape, an African-American influence with the lips, a Caucasian influence with the nose, a cheek structure that is predominantly Native American and Middle Eastern" (Tolentino 3). The evolving standard of beauty appears to have made ethnic features desirable, an ostensibly revolutionary change within beauty. The hidden stipulation, however, is that these features must appear on a white 'canvas.' Beauty enhancement filters which appropriate ethnic features allow for white subjects, motivated by racial colour blindness, to co-opt these features digitally. This leads to a process of what I will term "racial dysmorphia." I define racial dysmorphia as the obfuscation of the appearance of race, a phenomenon wherein racial ambiguity is the norm and the meaning of whiteness becomes obscured.

Racial dysmorphia is particularly evident in the built-in facial editing software on Instagram. An Instagram user can take a photo of their face and

use such software to distort their features. The platform has popularized the image of glamorous lifestyles and flawless photos. This has led to an increasing dependence on supplemental editing apps, such as FaceTune, to posture an envious lifestyle however false. Though photo editing was not invented by Instagram, the literal 'picture-perfect' lifestyle promoted by Instagram's culture, contributes to and reinforces the desire for individuals to use editing apps. And this desirability in the Western world derives from a eurocentric standard of beauty that values thinness, paleness, and smaller, sharper features. As a result, the casual acceptance of filtered beauty elevates the standard of beauty to an impossible degree, leading to racial dysmorphia. That is, through this process of racial dysmorphia, the subject becomes unintelligble as racialized, complicated by the social construction of race as the lines between whiteness and non-whiteness become blurred. The negative repercussions of racial dysmorphia, as perpetuated by beauty enhancement features, becomes the normalization of colour-blind racism by blurring of racial boundaries.

It is not, then, that ethnic features are suddenly deemed beautiful. Rather, it is the lack of ethnicity and the ambiguity of race that becomes desirable to the public eye.. The integration of seamless editing software makes it dangerously accessible for the average Instagram user to modify their appearance to their liking, which often adheres to an impossible standard. Beauty enhancement obscures facial features until the original face becomes unrecognizable, making the new ideal of perfection seemingly unnoticeable. When it is whiteness which is obscured, this racial ambiguity becomes a tool for epistemic ignorance. . Racial ambiguity is appropriated by white individuals to obscure their whiteness, becoming a tool for epistemic ignorance (Tuana 2006, 13; Polhaus 2021, 424). Obscuring whiteness contributes to a form of what Medina (2013) calls "epistemic hiding" – the process of physically distancing oneself from racist and sexist ideologies, and hiding privilege by obscuring the appearance of whiteness (11). As beauty standards shift, and trends fluctuate, whiteness is afforded the privilege of flexibility according to what is valuable at the time. For visibly racialized individuals, this is not possible; their race is invariably tied to their appearance. Thus, racial dysmorphia is a subtle, but deeply harmful form of epistemic ignorance that seeks to minimize whiteness and conflate it with racial ambiguity.

The emergence of racial dysmorphia enables both active ignorance, as Medina's theory suggests, and de-racialization. De-racialization can be understood as "an active disruption of the racialization process," which involves "a vision of a post-race society

… where 'race' is no longer imbued with the functions and meanings that often facilitate the regulation of uneven social relations" (Stevens 2013, 1638). If racialization as a phenomenon understands race to be entangled within social relations, then de-racialization reverses that phenomenon. Beauty enhancement filters and technology have contributed to a narrowing standard of beauty that seeks to realize an impossibility. It creates a new standard of beauty that exoticizes and appropriates ethnic features, and attempts to create a 'one-size-fits-all' face. This face is both racialized and de-racialized, due to its ambiguity. Characterized by "a canvas of poreless, light-reflecting skin, wide-set cat-like eyes behind huge eyelashes, sky-high cheekbones, an imperceptible nose, and pillowy voluptuous lips," the 'Instagram Face' has distorted our notion of race (Misra-Miller 2020, 2).

The rise of "Instagram Face" thrives off ambiguity. For this same reason, "Instagram Face" is most appealing on a white canvas, as visibly racialized minorities are unable to mask their racialized appearance. Beauty enhancement filters have created a standard of beauty that attempts to be colour-blind, presenting a cultural dilemma that is antithetical to a heavily gendered and racialized social reality. Medina (2013) notes how "even now that a culture of recognizing and celebrating differences seems to be flourishing, there are still those who congratulate themselves for their [colour-blindness] as an accomplishment others should aspire to achieve" (11). Ultimately, it distorts the appearance of racism, falling under the spectrum of double ignorance, where we cease to know what we do not know (Tuana 2006).

Many find that beauty can be a source of empowerment and liberation, whether through the art of makeup or alteration through plastic surgery. Such activities entail a conscious decision to engage with beauty. Perhaps the affirmative dimensions of transformational beauty standards might be argued for filters. Filters do not have a material effect on the body. Instead, its distortion is virtual and its impacts technological; the change only appears on a screen. Perhaps the beauty enhancement filters on apps such as Instagram can even offer an exposure to a diverse range of body types, face shapes, and skin tones to a wider audience.It could be suggested that this offers positive representation for people of colour, celebrating diversity and normalizing difference. As such, a positive perspective on the social media age could be that it has created an avenue for diversity, self-acceptance, and the freedom of choice to change or alter one's features, looks, and appearance without shame or discrimination. However, I contend that beauty standards continue to be oppressive due

to their pervasive nature and systemic dominance.

It is imperative to acknowledge the implicit gendered dimension of evolving standards of beauty. Certainly transformative beauty ideals typically apply to a feminine image of beauty. As Widdows (2018) writes in her seminal work Perfect Me that there is an ethical ideal of beauty driving the technological imperative to be beautiful due to consumerist and individualist social pressures. The text focuses on the element of choice within the beauty ideal. Widdows (2018) acknowledges the pervasive and dominant nature of beauty norms, which can work to corrupt one's sense of self. Failing to adhere to beauty standards can result in negative self-image, as empowerment can be found within being perceived as beautiful in Western society. Surprisingly, the body positivity movement, and "choice feminism" by extension, has emerged from those within the margins, outside of the beauty norm. Coined by Hirshman (2006), "choice feminism," initially used to distinguish the working woman from her domestic duties, has allowed feminists to reject former conceptions of beauty as oppressive (95; Iannello 2010, 75). Choices are coerced by standards of beauty. As Widdows (2018) writes: "choice cannot make an unjust or exploitative practice or act somehow, magically, just or non-exploitative" (201). Following this analysis, the coercive power of beauty standards cannot be distinguished from the realm of choice, as choices are implicitly and explicitly informed by social ideals.

As the subject who purports "colour-blind" ideology rejects seeing colour to appear less racist, the active rejection of beauty norms is simultaneously the active acceptance of them. The social cost of non-engagement with beauty standards, along with the harmful self-image it contributes to, shows that beauty standards are subconsciously at play. This can affect an individual's self-esteem and public performance, despite verbal rejections of beauty norms. To adopt the rhetoric of choice in relation to beauty standards, one neglects the historical, cultural, and colonial implications of beauty that inform our narratives for attractiveness. That is, eurocentric beauty norms are conditioned; they are not a choice. While one may feel more fulfilled on a surface level, if they adhere to eurocentric beauty norms their choice does not exist without implicit coercion. Individuals are implicitly and explicitly socialized to believe that a European nose, for example, is more beautiful. Thus, any surgical alterations do not appear to be separate from the social pressures to conform to normative beauty standards. Beauty enhancement filters have the same effect. While it is not a codified requirement to purse one's lips in a photograph to appear to have lip fillers, it has become a harmful

ttrend due to shifting beauty norms. As a result, the popularization of beauty enhancement filters and its dissent through "choice feminism" affirm the coercive power of beauty standards, reflecting the insidious nature of racial discrimination as embedded within social structure.

The argument put forward by "choice feminists" that beauty standards are not oppressive tends to centre on a white feminist critique. The notion that beauty enhancement filters afford an affirmative representation for people of colour is an insidious and even dangerous claim. Beauty filters tokenize and exoticize ethnic features, while delegitimizing the damaging social ramifications of being racialized (Tolentino 2019, 1). These features, severed from their cultural context and significance, are presented as palatable, but only on a white face. It fails to recognize the pitfalls of the body positivity movement and the effacement of ongoing challenges – notably, the enduring colourism, racism, and featurism among racialized communities. As Tolentino (2019) states: "it was as if the algorithmic tendency to flatten everything into a composite of greatest hits had resulted in a beauty ideal that favoured white women capable of manufacturing a look of rootless exoticism" (2). It is an extension of the Western fascination with exoticism and foreignness, posturing fetishization as acceptance.

The once prevailing narrative of "I do not see colour" has devolved into "I do not understand colour," then becoming "I do not know colour," throughout the social media age. The goal of colour-blind ideology is the eradication of racial boundaries through the appropriation of ethnic features blurring the lines between what is considered white and non-white. An innocuous and subtle process, the corruption of whiteness through digital beauty enhancement filters has obscured racial lines, contributing to a new wave of ignorance which employs strategic colour-blindness. Indeed, racial boundaries can only be crossed if the one crossing them is white. That is, the co-option of racialized features is only effective if on a white canvas. In an increasingly visual and virtual timeline, social media has created its own aesthetic image, marked by human aspiration. Ultimately, the distortion of race results in an obscured ability to truly understand racism and discrimination.

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Dedicated to the One I Couldn't Love

Written by Silvia Foute Nelong

Her touch, just one, grazes my spine.
Light,
Just enough to tickle.
Quivering air
kisses up my back to the nape of my neck
rather
her energy stimulates me.

Current free flow through me.
Record the invisible burns.
Let lips act as a cold glass of water; drink up clear
ecstasy.

Grey brick surrounds her outside around others
but tonight, she's heard, her colours seen.
I can hear how her heart beats, yearns
Hers sounds just like
mine.

Perhaps it hurts just like mine.

Her eyes secrete a sorrowed venom
that penetrates my flesh in sharp stings

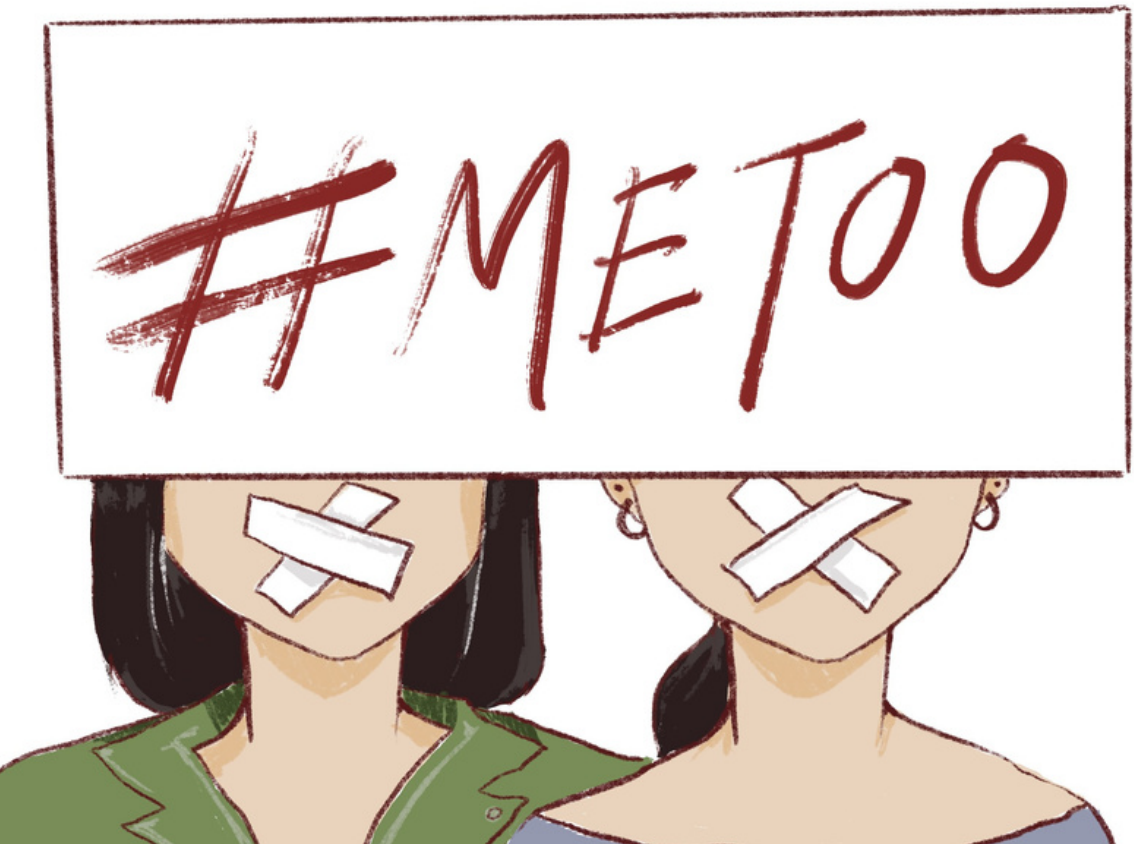
She mourns what can't be.

Absorb every last drop.
Dull her darted gaze.
Don't waste this moment.

Today she introduced me to her true self.
Tomorrow she'll be
a golden stitch
In the brocade of my past.

The #MeToo Movement in Japan: Feminist Backlash within a Conservative Patriarchal Culture

Written by Francesca Wright
Edited by Brock Nykoluk and Cindy He



Content Warning:
This paper discusses themes and incidences of sexual violence.

ABSTRACT

In this piece, Francesca Wright details the unique situation of the #MeToo movement in Japan. The author demonstrates Japan's unique position as a case study, with its high levels of economic growth amidst a strong patriarchal influence. Wright details how the #MeToo movement was critical in exposing high profile cases of sexual violence, while also encouraging survivors to share their stories. Overall, Wright demonstrates the challenges of addressing sexual violence within a culture grounded in patriarchal values.

1. Introduction

The #MeToo movement was sparked by Tarana Burke, an American activist who popularised the phrase to raise awareness of sexual violence in society. Initially, the hashtag was purposed to offer solidarity amongst sexual violence survivors, somewhat as a reminder that many others have had similar experiences. Sexual violence survivors often feel isolated after their assault, and the movement worked to combine their voices to provide survivors with a space to discuss their experiences in an empowered, rather than belittling, setting. Awareness of the movement then snowballed through the power of social media, and soon after, many survivors began coming forward against high-profile figures who had committed either isolated or repeated offences of sexual violence. The movement has successfully exposed hundreds of high-profile individuals, including Harvey Weinstein, John Hockenberry, and Kevin Spacey. The movement has transcended the borders of the United States, reaching the United Kingdom, South Korea, and the focus of this research paper, Japan.

Japan is an interesting case study for feminism: as one of the most advanced industrialised economies in East Asia, how have women's rights progressed over the last century, and where do they stand now? There is an established correlation between gender equality and economic growth. Yet, despite Japan marking one of the most advanced industrialised nations in East Asia, they

consistently rank poorly on gender equality indexes. In the most recent study, the World Economic Forum placed Japan 120th out of 152 countries in terms of gender equality (Elstrom 2022).

Tackling sexual violence remains a core societal problem across the world. The #MeToo movement is a critical mechanism for feminists as it spreads awareness for the largely unspoken sexual violence epidemic that ravages countless states across the world, Japan included. Given this, an analysis of how #MeToo materialised in Japan is warranted. Can we identify any trends between the #MeToo movement and previous feminist movements across Japan? Following analysis of how the movement erupted, what does this tell us about feminisms and women's activism in Japan?

I will conduct a literature review in seeking to answer these questions. The first section of this paper will examine sexual violence and gender equality in Japan, demonstrating how widespread the crime is in the absence of thorough legal mechanisms protecting survivors and situating women's place in contemporary Japanese society. The second section will scrutinize how the #MeToo movement materialised in Japan, following its take-off in the United States. This section will clarify how the media and citizens responded to the movement's proliferation. Third, in the context of Japan's extensive history with feminist movements, the penultimate section will seek to identify parallels between previous women's rights activism and the #MeToo movement as well as any similarities between anti-feminist backlash, again in the context of historic and contemporary Japan. Finally, the paper will reaffirm how the ultimate failure of #MeToo is rooted in the movement's top-down approach and interweaving of culture and the state in Japanese society.

2. Sexual Violence and Gender Equality in Japan

Sexual violence is somewhat normalised in Japan, and it is a substantially underreported crime. In 2005, there were 2,076 reported cases of rape (Suzuki 2016, 76). In 2014, this figure fell to just 1,250, marking an almost 50% decrease in reports. This is not because fewer people are being assaulted: one study found that almost 10% of women are rape victims at least once in their life, and critically, less than 20% of women report their assaulters (Suzuki 2016, 76). Moreover, public indecency crimes are widely common across Japan, particularly on public transport, where many men "engage in fondling in crowded trains or expose themselves in other public places" (Suzuki 2016, 76). Therefore, sexual violence marks a major societal problem in contemporary Japan.

There are several reasons why survivors might not report their assault. Firstly, survivors fear disrupting social

harmony, as there are many misconceptions about sexual violence and rape prevalent in Japan. Traditionally, rape has been perceived in a black-and-white context. It's overwhelmingly perceived as a violent act: a woman is forcefully held down by a man, who is usually equipped with some sort of weapon, and penetrated against her will. In reality, rape is far less concrete than this. Nevertheless, traditional concepts of rape are pertinent in Japan. This is reflected in Article 177 of Japan's Penal Code, which states that the perpetrator must have "used physical force or have threatened the victim" for it to be deemed rape (Larsen 2019). Similarly, survivors fear that publicity of the case might bring shame from family members, friends, and co-workers (Larsen 2019). There is also a lack of faith in the Japanese criminal justice system to arrest the perpetrator: one rape victim who reported her assault to the police was told by an officer that he was not "curable" and would repeat the act after release from prison, so formally arresting him now would make no difference, rendering any report redundant (Suzuki 2016, 77).

Moreover, patriarchal values regarding the purpose of women's bodies are noticeably present in Japanese discourse. In 2013, Hashimoto Tōru, Osaka's incumbent mayor, told a U.S. commanding officer to instruct his troops to "use Japan's sex industry more" (Dalton 2019, 5), reaffirming that the perception of women's bodies as objects is present in senior levels of government. Tōru later publicly supported the disgraced Japanese military 'comfort system' as it maintained "military discipline" (Dalton 2019, 5). Comments and views of women like these no doubt trickle down through society, and women are largely perceived as second-class citizens in Japan.

Japan has a rigidly patriarchal societal structure that has been heavily influenced by Buddhist and Confucian values (Villa 2019, 61). They have maintained a traditional view on the roles of men and women in society, enforcing the "notion of women as housewives and men as the breadwinners" (Villa 2019, 61). Beyond this, there are significant implicit obligations for women when they marry: these include childbearing, childrearing, and caring for the elderly (Villa 2019, 65). Whilst women remain in the private sphere, men assume their positions in the public sphere and often work long, demanding hours because of Japan's strong work culture and ethic. On the other hand, women are treated as second-class citizens and are subject to implicit and explicit biases within the home and outside it. Largely confined to the private sphere, their household and emotional labour is not valued nor considered, in any capacity, to match their husbands' work in the public sphere. In the 1990s, however, the

Japanese government began broadening their initiatives for gender equality, introducing various laws that aided gender equality goals (Yamaguchi 2014, 545). Namely, the 1992 Childcare Leave Law granted paid childcare leave, guaranteed for a year, for either the mother or father (Kano 2011, 45).

Later, in 1999, the Basic Law for a Gender-Equal Society and Basic Plan for a Gender-Equal Society were introduced (Yamaguchi 2014, 541). In these laws, the Japanese government maintained that a gender-equal society reflects one in which the human rights of both men and women "are respected and [can respond] to changes in socioeconomic situations" (Yamaguchi 2014, 545). Feminists criticised the specific wording they used: the Japanese phrase 'danjo kyōdō sankaku' officially translates to "male-female joint participation" in English (Kano 2011, 42). Some feminists argued this illustrates the lacklustre effort the Japanese government put into creating a gender-equal society, as much more than joint participation from the sexes is needed. This law fails to recognise metrics such as implicit biases against women, sexual violence, and other crucial barriers that need to be tackled before women can truly live an equal life compared to their male counterparts. Extending this, the phrase implies that "men and women have different qualities and capabilities and should be treated accordingly along different lines t[with equal respect]" (Kano 2011, 43). Again, this supports the idea that the law did not perpetuate a truly equal society, as it still maintains undertones of male superiority. Thus, a combination of patriarchal values and lack of legislation surrounding sexual violence has deepened the abuse women face and created an unwelcoming space for survivors to come forward. Given this, how did #MeToo initially travel to Japan, and what factors can we pinpoint to explain why the movement was not successful in the advanced industrialised nation?

3. #MeToo in Japan: Critical Discourse

As #MeToo took off throughout the United States and the United Kingdom, there were several early allegations made in Japan through Twitter and Buzzfeed. The earliest stories can be traced back to a blogger named Hachu, who exposed Yuki Kishi–a celebrated creative director at Japan's leading advertising agency Dentsu–for sexual harassment, using Facebook, Twitter, and Buzzfeed Japan to share her story in 2017 (Hasunuma and Shin 2019, 102). Although she remained anonymous and could only offer limited evidence, under media attention and pressure, Kishi publicly apologised to Hachu and resigned from his position at Dentsu. Despite Hachu's allegations being powerful enough to warrant an apology from Kishi, she still received significant backlash online. People demanded

evidence in support of her claims, and others told her to go to the police rather than just publish their stories on social media (Hasunuma and Shin 2019, 108). Initially, #MeToo was shown to be garnering some attention across Japan: Crimson Hexagon, a social media analytic company in Japan, reported that the use of the #MeToo hashtag on Japanese Twitter spiked following Hachu's public allegations (#MeToo 2017).

Hachu's case is less well-known than Shiori Ito's, which many consider the 'heart' of Japan's #MeToo movement. Ito, whilst interning as a journalist at Thomson Reuters in 2015, was raped by Noriyuki Yamaguchi, a prominent TV journalist. Initially, her name was not associated with the allegation as she chose to come forward anonymously. Yet, as the #MeToo movement gained traction in the United States, she published a book detailing her assault by Yamaguchi and publicly came forward. The media attention she received was positive, with many people standing in solidarity with her, particularly from Western states and in the international media arena. But attention from other outlets was overwhelmingly negative: The Japan Times called Ito a bad citizen for coming forward, supporting the idea that women are worried about disrupting social harmony when they report their assault (Starkey et al. 2019, 445). Outside of media publications, the regular citizen also contributed to public criticism of Ito: on social media, she was frequently criticised for "looking too seductive and ruining the life of a prominent figure" (Starkey et al. 2019, 447), feeding into the fundamentally incorrect idea that provocative clothing invites physical abuse. Many people also said that a "true Japanese woman wouldn't speak of such shameful things" (Starkey et al. 2019, 447), which connects to patriarchal ideas of a woman's place in society to remain silent and not disrupt social order. Ito formally filed a police report against Yamaguchi; however, prosecutors dropped the case due to insufficient evidence. There has been speculation regarding Yamaguchi's close relationship with Prime Minister Abe, and whether this influenced the decision to drop the charges (Hasunuma and Shin 2019, 104).

It is important to analyse comments made by public figures in Japanese politics as this allows us to frame powerful men's perceptions of the #MeToo movement. I have selected several comments below that reflect the facilitation of sexual harassment, disregard for the #MeToo movement, and general patriarchal values at the highest governmental level in Japan:

1. "Certainly, Deputy Secretary Fukuda may have said something appalling, but I think that for someone from a television station to secretly sell it to Shūkan Shinchō, that itself is a set-up. I

think that in some ways, it is a crime" (Dalton 2019, 5).

2. "For me [these women] are far from sexual harassment targets. This is my declaration to them all: I will definitely not sexually harass you" (LDP 2018).
3. "There is no such [crime] as a sexual harassment charge- [it's] not the same as charges of murder or sexual assault" (Neuman 2018).

4. "If you don't marry, you won't have any children so will end up in a nursing home funded by other people's children's taxes" (Dalton 2019, 3).

1. Lower House member Shimomura Hakuban publicly supported Deputy Secretary Fukuda, who had been accused of sexual harassment, by shifting the blame onto the woman who reported Fukuda, arguing that her secretly recording a conversation between her and Fukuda represents a larger crime than Fukuda's crime of sexual harassment (Dalton 2019, 5).

2. One member of the ruling Liberal Democratic Party, Takashi Nagao, implied that those who report their sexual harassment crimes are inherently unattractive because of their strength and courage to come forward. He stated he would never target them for sexual harassment anyway (LDP 2018).

3. Former Prime Minister Taro Iso publicly declared there is no such thing as sexual harassment, and that it is not comparable more 'serious' crimes such as murder or sexual assault.

4. Lower House Member Katō Kanji claims women are bad citizens by stealing other people's children's tax money if they do not bear children who, due to Japanese norms, have an obligation to care for their parents in old age.

These public comments from senior-level Japanese governmental officials reflect how ingrained the culture of sexual harassment is in society *and* the state. There is a blatant disregard for these survivors, and thus is it no surprise that momentum for #MeToo in Japan plateaued and never *fully* took off. In fact, in response to the significant backlash thatsexual violence survivors who spoke out received, the #MeToo movement developed in a different direction. Japanese feminists and other allies created a 'modified' movement through the hashtag #WeToo. Instead of empowering *survivors* to come forward, #WeToo shifted the focus from women sharing their stories to encouraging women to support other survivors who had already come forward (Hasunama and Shin 2019, 105). Allies of the movement have stated that, whilst being survivors of sexual violence, #MeToo had drawbacks as survivors were

unlikely to receive justice, but risked being cyberbullied and disrupting their careers by coming forward (Hasunama and Shin 2019, 107). #WeToo was Japanese feminists' method of displaying solidarity with survivors, and ultimately, garnered more traction than #MeToo in the nation (Hasunama and Shin 2019, 107). This reflects the inherent fear survivors have in reporting their assault in the face of a patriarchal societal structure. The next section will situate #MeToo amongst other feminist movements in Japan, namely the second wave of feminism in the post-war era and anti-feminist conservative backlash in the 2000s.

4. What does this tell us about feminisms in Japan?

To be able to answer this question, we must first situate feminism within Japan's recent history. Japan's second wave of feminism in the 1970s, which is often referred to as 'Women's lib,' emerged as "local women organised consciousness-raising groups at the grassroots level and opened women's space" (Ueno 2019, 77). The movement can be characterised by maternalism and pacifism. In the post-war era, second-wave feminists recognised the irony of being both the oppressor and the oppressed in the context of the Japanese military 'comfort system,' more appropriately named their sexual slavery system (Ueno 2019, 77-78). Married women and mothers were 'exempt' from becoming sexual slaves, marking a divide between the wives (in an inherently patriarchal society) and sex workers (Ueno 2019, 77-78). Secondly, regarding maternalism, second-wave feminists demanded autonomy over their bodies because "women's wombs did not belong to themselves under the patriarchy" (Ueno 2019, 78). At the time, Japan was one of the few countries to legalise abortion in certain circumstances, although for economic reasons: the Japanese economy would not survive a baby boom, and thus the country legalised abortions. To be clear, this decision was not guided by an interest in the protection of women's bodily autonomy. (Ueno 2019, 78).

Nonetheless, the movement achieved success and policy changes through the formation of women's groups and NGOs that fought for women's rights both in a local and national context. Some examples of these groups are the Women's Liberation Alliance against Anti-Abortion Law and the Asian Women's Association against Invasion and Discrimination (AWAAID) (Ueno 2019, 79). The AWAAID established a "Liberation from the Toilet" manifesto hich highlighted the "patriarchal sexual double standard" (Ueno, 2019, 77) dividing women between family roles and sex work. Wives and mothers were both the oppressed, being confined to the private sphere, but also the oppressor, as they discriminated against military 'comfort women.' AWAAID's manifesto was a first, as it was the first

women's lib movement to address the 'comfort women issue' (Ueno, 2019, 79). Successful legislation changes have also been a result of NGOs and women's activist groups acting at local and national levels. In 1985, during the UN women's conference in Nairobi, Japan ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (Hayashi 2013, 341). Following this, "grassroots women activists, as well as women's studies scholars, played active roles in promoting gender-equal policy" (Ueno 2019, 79). These same grassroots groups also pushed local governments to establish public women's centres across Japan, using the state's ratification of the CEDAW as a pushing mechanism. Given this, it seems that success in Japan's feminist movements can be traced to two instruments: existing legislation perpetuating women's rights and the activism of grassroots organisations.

Japan's #MeToo movement did not benefit from either of these instruments. In terms of women's rights, given the lack of legislation regarding rape and sexual assault in Japan, #MeToo supporters cannot leverage this to force the Japanese government to amend existing legislation, nor to critically examine the issue of sexual harassment. Secondly, Japan's #MeToo movement manifested in a top-down approach. It used the power of social media to call out high-profile individuals for sexual harassment and assault. Whilst, considering the bigger picture, this is hugely impactful as it exposes how widespread the issue is and conveys how even respected Japanese figures are guilty of sexual violence, the lack of decentralisation present in #MeToo makes it exceedingly difficult for the movement to gain traction or produce any meaningful change.

Third, the backlash observed during #MeToo has noticeable similarities with the "backlash faction" conflict that began in the early 2000s. In response to new gender equality legislation, anti-feminist conservatives launched a campaign denoting the new gender-free laws as a "total erasure of the biological difference between the sexes [and] an extreme Communist attack" (Yamaguchi 2014, 559). The backlash faction grew to not only incorporate conservatives, but also housewives, middle-aged men, and young men (Kano 2011, 47). Again, this backlash came from a bottom-up approach, with leadership from small-scale organisations banding together to dismantle feminists' efforts. Their tactics centred around spreading pamphlets and rhetoric that twisted the feminist agenda, painting it as an attack on Japanese society (Yamaguchi 2014, 548). Notably, Conservative politicians criticised gender equality education, feminist writings and talks, and the content of the Second Basic Plan for Gender Equality(Yamaguchi,2014, 568).

This is homogenous to much of the backlash #MeToo survivors experience: they are frequently slandered for 'disrupting' social harmony in Japan, and the rhetoric has been directed at survivors who are painted to be liars seeking to destroy reputable Japanese men. Hence, the backlash observed in Japanese feminist history is parallel with the #MeToo movement, and partially explains its ultimate failure in i) gaining traction and ii) improving sexual violence laws in Japan.

From both these dynamics–how the movement materialised in a top-down approach and the backlash observed in society–we can infer several characteristics of feminisms and women's rights activism in Japan. Most evidently, it seems feminist movements or campaigns will struggle to be successful within Japan's heavily patriarchal society until higher-level government officials dismantle their fundamentally incorrect and misogynistic perceptions of women in society. Certainly, this is a bold claim to make in any arena, but especially in Japan, given how ingrained societal values are and the fact that Japanese citizens take pride in abiding by them. Nonetheless, the backlash present at the highest level of government represents a major barrier to feminists' success: citizens in Japan are very much conformists in that they will follow established practices, and beyond this, follow the opinions of important Japanese government officials.

The #MeToo movement was doomed to fail in the presence of government officials' misogyny towards survivors due to the top-down approach the movement exhibited. This reflects how Japanese culture and the state are intertwined, which is largely problematic as it often means culture precedes pragmatics in policy formation. Secondly, the adaptation of #MeToo into #WeToo demonstrates the fear still present amongst many women (survivors included). Critically, the degree of victim-blaming in Japanese society has forced women to protect their identities when even showing support for a movement like #MeToo. Again, this is a major barrier to women's rights in Japan: without women banding together as a collective, the likelihood of achieving actual change (in terms of equality) dramatically decreases. Faceless claims, although certainly still relevant, lack credibility in Japan as citizens question why survivors have not attached their names to their accusations. Essentially, feminisms and women's rights activism in Japan has lagged behind both the West, with which Japan has close ties, and its neighbouring states, such as South Korea, who observed much higher degrees of success with their respective #MeToo movements (Hasunama and Shin 2019, 106). Notably, the intersection between culture and the state hinders feminists' attempts to

promote equality. The despicable comments made by Japanese politicians reaffirms the prioritisation of societal values and cultural conformity over rights for women.

Conclusion

This paper has situated sexual violence within Japan in the context of the #MeToo movement. The movement has been critical in exposing high profile individuals for incidences of sexual violence, empowering survivors to own their experiences, and creating an embracing space to come forward. Yet, as reaffirmed throughout this paper, the movement led to little progress in terms of women's rights in Japan. This has largely been due to rigid patriarchal values within society and the negative perceptions held against women at every level of Japan's hierarchical structure, especially those held by senior-level government officials. Moreover, the significant backlash survivors, such as Shiori Ito, experienced coming forward during the #MeToo movement is structurally discouraging for survivors to publicly come forward. It is thus not surprising that in response to this, feminists created the #WeToo movement that allowed individuals to support other survivors who had already come forward without attaching their name or identity to it, out of fear of social isolation and familial disapproval The reaction to the #MeToo movement has marked similarities with Japan's history of feminist movements and previous backlash observed during the anti-feminist conservative backlash campaign in the 2000s. Misogynists take gratification in twisting the movement and painting a negative picture of everything the #MeToo movement hopes to achieve. Ultimately, the case of Japan's failed #MeToo movement and Japanese feminist history shows that movements have little success when they materialise in a top-down fashion; indeed, feminists have found success through grassroots activism starting in local politics. Secondly, it is apparent that the state and culture are so intertwined thatJapanese feminists must work to dismantle several resultant barriers before they can enter another era of successful feminist and women's rights activism. Ultimately, studying Japan's #MeToo movement unveils many contemporary feminist issues facing this advanced industrialised state which has strong patriarchal values embedded at the core of society. Dismantling these values, and working toward a truly equal society, is, I have argued, dependent on grassroots activism and collectivising the voices of the oppressed.

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Graduation Hair

Written by Silvia Foute Nelong

Stars emitting gold and blue blind me, but his gaze brings back my vision. The smell of congratulatory chocolate cake radiates the gymnasium, yet my senses are fixated on my crush. He is coming in my direction. His eyes are planted on my head.

"I like your hair" are his first words to me.

I blurt: "It's fake!"

After years of seeing my classmates with their perfect naturally straight hair, I decided I wanted to be pretty too. What was once a beautiful bundle of coils has become a burden stuck on my head. After my mom told me Beyonce's hair is merely straight hair attached, I became so excited. I can finally be like everyone else, but as the compliment roll in, I can't accept them.

I'm sure he doesn't think I grew 16 inches of straight hair overnight, they can't really think it's my natural hair, but It feels necessary to come clean. The dark brown draped beauty is only mine through purchase.

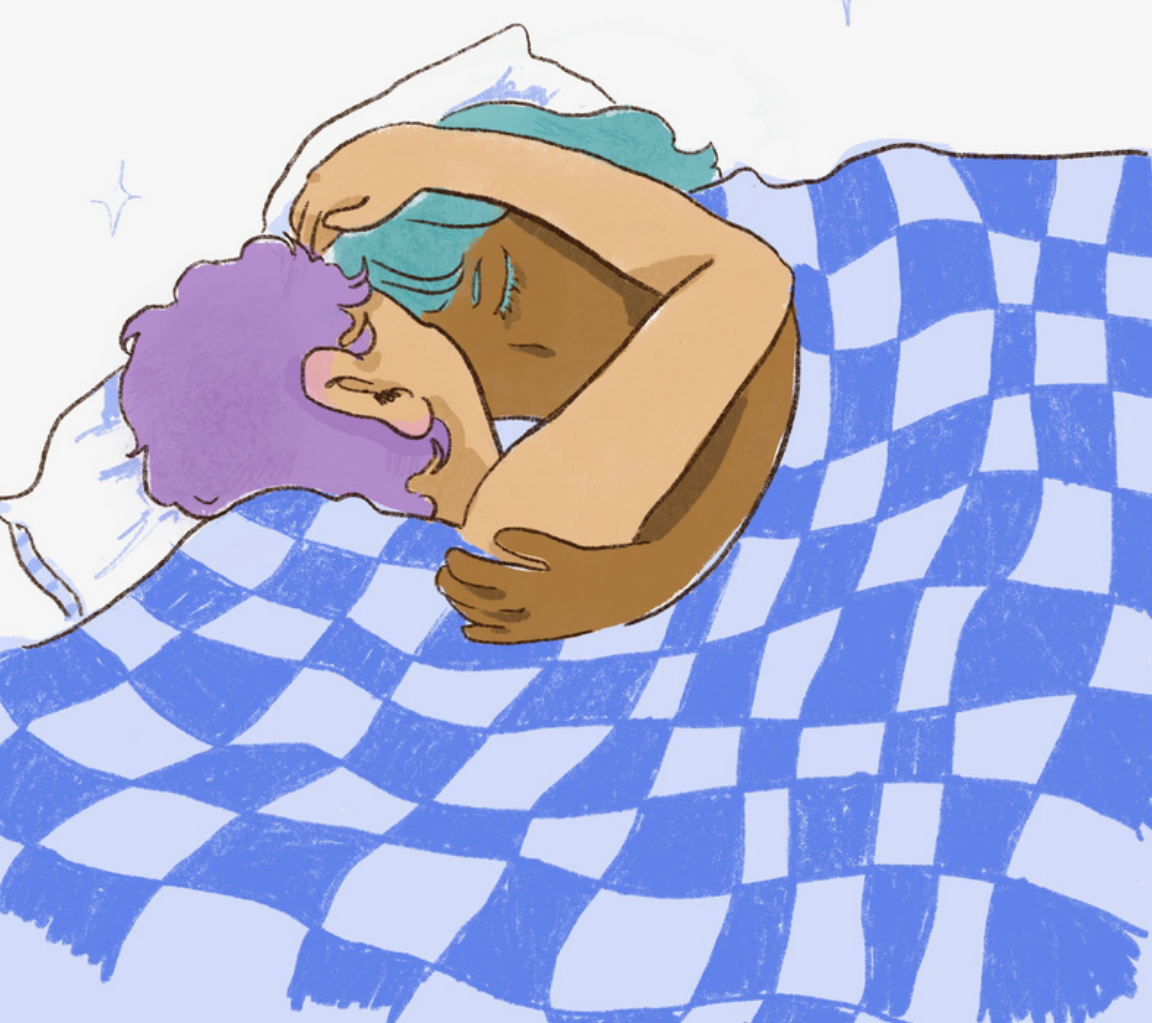
I spend most of the night beside the silver and purple food table explaining the process. By the cups, I help them pour their grape crush while I describe the difficulty but true beauty of my hair type. By the time we get to the veggie platters, I retell the agony of cornrowing: how she pulled too hard, how my natural hair was hurting. At the chip bowls, while they focus on picking Doritos or Cheetos, I yell about how they sew the fake hair into my natural hair and the absurdity of putting on new hair when gorgeous hair is already there. At the cake table, I iterate how it's a leave-out weave, and it's still partly me beyond the perfect shine and sleek straightness. They need to know it's still me under this length.

But they say back:

"I love your hair."

Let's Talk About Sex Baby: Exploring the Trans*Feminist Nature of Jaye Simpson's Poetry

Written by Bailey Bird
Edited by Taneeshaa Pradhan and Rachel Jaworski



ABSTRACT

This paper discusses how jaye simpson's poem "bedroom hymns" embodies decolonial trans*feminist ideologies, because it explores the relationship between 2S/Indigenous trans pleasure and decolonization. This paper employs a desire-based framework to bring a pleasure centered perspective on decolonial trans*feminist scholarship and poetics. Further, it illustrates how simpson's use of metaphors and unabashed erotic language counters colonial narratives and skillfully centres 2S/Indigenous trans pleasure.

Two-Spirit Indigenous people have existed since long before colonizers set foot on what is now called Canada. Colonizers sought to exterminate Two-Spirit people as the queerness of their (erotic) lives defied colonial ideals of heterosexuality, the gender binary, and the nuclear family (Driskill 2004, 53; 53). As such, I intend to investigate the links between Two-Spirit/Indigenous trans pleasure and decolonization through the lens of jaye simpson's poem "bedroom hymns" from their work it was never going to be okay. simpson is Oji-Cree Saulteaux and "[identifies] as a Two-Spirit non-binary queer trans woman" (Driscoll 2021). I argue that their poetry embodies decolonial trans*feminist ideologies because it explores the relationship between 2S/Indigenous trans pleasure and decolonization. I will demonstrate that, through the poetry's invitations for 2S/Indigenous trans pleasure, it is inherently decolonial and enacts decolonial trans*feminist principles such as a Sovereign Erotic, desire-based frameworks, and Community of Care (CoC) methodologies (Driskill 2004; Tuck 2009, 416;). My analysis aims to employ a desire-based framework to bring a pleasure centered perspective on decolonial trans*feminist scholarship and poetics. Further, I illustrate how simpson's use of metaphors and unabashed erotic language counters colonial narratives and skillfully centres 2S/Indigenous trans pleasure.

As a non-binary lesbian and white settler currently residing in Tiohtià:ka, I understand that my unique subject position biases my research. Although I am non-binary and have the lived realities to speak to the experience of being gender-diverse, my positionality as a white settler differentiates my experience of being trans from simpson and other 2S/Indigenous trans people. Thus, while writing about 2S/Indigenous trans pleasures and simpson's poetics, I aim to forefront Indigenous knowledges and modes of thinking rather than my own. For example, my work on simpson's poems employs a desire-based framework, a term coined by Indigenous scholar Eve Tuck (2009, 416). My research is desire-based insofar as I seek to highlight Indigenous desire, self-determination, and empowerment as opposed to positioning Indigenous people as "defeated and broken" (Tuck 2009, 412) Aside from employing a desire-based framework to center Indigenous modes of knowledge, Further, I want to focus on simpson's lived realities and experiences that they share within their poetry. As noted in Indigenous scholar, Qwo'Li Driskill's (2004) piece, Stolen From Our Bodies: First Nations Two-Spirits/Queers and the Journey to a Sovereign Erotic, "Two-Spirit erotics are often ignored" (58); thus, I intend to centre simpson's 2S erotics throughout this paper. Before diving into the poem, it is important to understand a general history of 2S people and the term in relation to colonization. 2S people have existed since time immemorial despite not always having the language to describe themselves. simpson (2020c) themselves specifically recognizes this fact in their poem "waterways" when they write "trans woman bodies are the ones speckled across the mixed-blood lands / colonially unnamed but ancestrally aplenty" (68). These lines demonstrate that 2S people have existed since the dawn of humankind in Indigenous communities, unnamed or not. Further, the term "Two-Spirit" defies colonial conceptions of sexuality and gender identity by being neither solely a gender identity nor a sexuality (Driskill 2004, 52). However, 2S was not created to be a monolithic term for understanding the gender and sexualities of Indigenous people across all Indigenous communities (Boellstorff et al. 2014, 434; Driskill 2004, 52). Thus, a lot of Indigenous people still don't feel the term applies to them because it carries with it restrictive colonial conceptions of gender and sexuality and is not a word in their own language–simpson is one such person (Driscoll 2021). They do not resonate with the terms currently used to define their sexuality and view such identifiers as "colonial language imposed onto [them]" (Driscoll 2021). Thus, simpson feels stuck in the "trans sphere" until adequate terms are available in their own language (Morgan 2021). Evidently, as Indigenous scholar,

Qwo'Li Driskill (2004), says, "[Indigenous people's] erotic lives and identities have been colonized along with [their] homelands" (52). I will, therefore, go on to show how simpson's poetry is decolonial by rewriting, and therefore reclaiming, the erotic lives of 2S/Indigenous trans people.

To begin, the settler-colonial project actively colonized 2S people's (erotic) lives through mass elimination and assimilation attempts and as such, given that "bedroom hymns" showcases and invites 2S/Indigenous trans pleasure, the poem is inherently decolonial. The lives of pre- and post-contact 2S/queer Indigenous people differed dramatically. Pre-contact 2SQ Indigenous people were, for the most part, accepted (Driskill 2004, 53). However, post-contact 2SQ Indigenous people were persecuted at the hands of settlers, especially soldiers and clergy (54). simpson (2020a) themselves touches on violence towards 2S/Indigenous trans people in "bedroom hymns" when they write "another trans woman warns / there may be a chance / that a cis man will hurt me" (45). Cis men have been at the head of colonial violence towards 2SQ Indigenous people and, thus, these lines allude to the ongoing colonial violence enacted by men towards 2S/Indigenous trans people. simpson (2020b) points out violence towards 2S people explicitly in their poem "this woman//nookum" when they write, "… burying two-spirit cousin after two-spirit cousin" (32). Yet, despite simpson's engagement with colonial violence towards 2SQ people, they directly reject colonial attempts at the assimilation of 2S people through writing poetry that embraces their erotic lives and lived experiences. For example, when they write, "you turn me into moonlight / whilst we grapple / to get closer to each other" (simpson 2020a, 46) they are being inherently decolonial by showcasing that erotic wholeness and love overtly defies colonial violence and extermination attempts. This invitation to experience 2S/Indigenous trans pleasure through simpson's poetry actively dismantles harmful colonial narratives that devalue the lives of 2S people and is a decolonial move.

Additionally, simpson's poetry also rejects the colonial assimilation of 2S/Indigenous trans people into the colonially constructed male/female gender binary system. The colonial project attempted to assimilate 2S/Indigenous trans people by pushing for the Victorian family ideal, consisting of a cis/het, head-of-the-house husband and a cis/het wife to bear children and look after the home (Driskill 2004, 53; 55). This ideal was heavily influenced by the Christian Church and thus, sex for reproduction and to consummate marriages was enforced while queer sex was condemned (Boellstorff et al. 2014, 437; Driskill 2004, 54). By existing in direct opposition to the gender binary, 2S/Indigenous trans people challenge

the colonial project through having sex for pleasure rather than reproduction and defying what the ideal family should look like. As such, one of the ways simpson's "bedroom hymns" is inherently decolonial is because it embraces and celebrates 2S/Indigenous trans erotics and lives when they have been a colonial target for so long. Further, the poem actively dismantles colonial narratives about who should be having sex and for what reasons. Namely, simpson promotes the idea that sex should be for anyone—in particular 2S/Indigenous trans people—and can be for pleasure rather than reproduction or marriage consummation. They do this by making space for the unashamed and uncensored discussion of 2S/Indigenous trans sexual lives, specifically the pleasure obtained through such experiences. This is evident when they refer to a sexual experience as "a cacophony of ecstasy," explaining that "i am a holy rite / a body&love" (simpson 2020a, 45-46). In writing this, they counter colonial beliefs that sex should be for reproduction or heterosexual marriage, rather than purely for pleasure or love among any two (or more) consenting individuals. Experiencing pleasures as a 2S/Indigenous trans person is a form of colonial resistance as the goal of colonization is to eliminate and assimilate these populations, thus, their thriving is in direct opposition to the colonial goal of assimilation.

Relatedly, "bedroom hymns" employs Driskill's decolonial trans*feminist concept of the Sovereign Erotic and is, thus, decolonial. In Driskill's piece entitled, Stolen From Our Bodies: First Nations Two-Spirits/Queers and the Journey to a Sovereign Erotic, they introduce the concept of Sovereign Erotic: a form of decolonial healing embraced by Indigenous people and scholars through erotic wholeness and healing. This involves embracing gender identities and sexualities that were targets of colonial erasure (Driskill 2004, 51-52). Driskill recognizes that colonization has targeted the erotic lives of 2S/Indigenous trans people and thus, Sovereign Erotics are needed to "[heal their] sexualities as [Indigenous] people … and [aid in] the ongoing process of decolonization" (51). "bedroom hymns" acts as a Sovereign Erotic because, as a sex poem that highlights 2S/Indigenous trans sexual pleasures, it rewrites colonial narratives about 2S/Indigenous erotics being forbidden and shameful and instead empowers such erotics. The poem does so by centering consensual, pleasurable, and respectful sex that respects simpson's desires. simpson (2020a) does this when they write "i can't get enough" and "i ache out onto him" (45) in reference to a sexual encounter that simspon immerses themself in. These lines are important for highlighting that the sexual lives of 2S/Indigenous trans people should be embraced and recognized. Furthermore,

the poem is sexually empowering as it demonstrates consent and self-directed autonomy over 2S/Indigenous trans bodies. For instance, when simpson's partner "lowers himself / asks if he can try something"41 and they say no, "he stops" (46). T his demonstrates how good sex is an ongoing conversation and communication about consent, respect, and desires. "bedroom hymns" reinforces this even further when simpson writes "[he] tells me / this is my body, / my choice: he raises himself / asks if i was okay, / if i wanted to keep going, / asks again if i'm okay, / tells me this is my alter first, / his last" (46). Notably, alter is being used here as a metaphor for simpson's sexual being and body. This metaphor points to the idea that simpson is the only person in control of and displaying autonomy over their own body. When "he" tells simpson it is their alter first, he is directly respecting their body and ensuring consent and comfortability. Therefore, this metaphor and excerpt from the poem directly showcase consent and communication. Evidently, the poem is inherently decolonial and acts as a Sovereign Erotic by healing wounds of colonization through rewriting sexual histories of 2S/Indigenous trans people in respectful and empowering ways.

As a rejection of a damage-centered framework, simpson's poetry employs a decolonial desire-based framework and a CoC methodology. A damage-centered framework is "research that intends to document people's pain and brokenness to hold those in power accountable for their oppression" (Tuck 2009, 409). Driskill (2004) argues that it is decolonial to move away from this narrative and showcase caring and consensual 2S/Indigenous trans sex, dismantling colonial discourse that disempowers 2S/Indigenous trans people (58). This can be done through desire-based frameworks which "stop[] and counteract[] … frameworks that position [Indigenous] communities as damaged" (Tuck 2009, 416). Thus, desire-based frameworks are important for subverting the harmful colonial rhetoric that disempowers Indigenous peoples by centering trauma and suffering rather than autonomy and care. In simpson's "bedroom hymns," they employ a decolonial desire-based framework by allowing themselves to embrace their erotic self and sexual agency in a caring space and with a respectful partner, rather than being villainized for having and enjoying sex as a 2S non-binary queer trans woman. Additionally, the poem avoids perpetuating traumas surrounding 2S/Indigenous trans sexual lives and instead "celebrates Indigenous sexuality, gender, and bodily autonomy, … [and] centralize[s] Indigenous pleasure [which] mov[es] away from the harmful representations that place Indigenous people as disempowered" (Huard 2020, 66). This is done throughout the poem

by centralizing of 2S/Indigenous trans pleasure through consensual and respectful sex and thereby combating damage-centered frameworks that highlight suffering and trauma. The explicit move simpson makes to end the poem with an overt and enthusiastic discussion of consent between them and their partner demonstrates desire-based ideologies of forefronting bodily autonomy and pleasure. Similarly, the poem also employs Communities of Care methodologies, a concept coined by bell hooks (Huard 2020, 61). CoC methodologies center community and relations that prioritize "respect, consent, honesty (truth telling), and most importantly, love" (Huard 2020, 72). simpson's "bedroom hymns" accomplishes this by articulating a consensual and respectful sexual encounter shaped by a caring relationship between simpson and their partner. This is seen in the stanzas that discuss simpson's partner asking if they're okay and if they want to continue having sex. CoC methodologies are closely tied to desire-based frameworks as both seek to centre pleasure and care. simpson does this throughout their poetry by focusing on joyful moments in the lives of 2S/Indigenous trans people, such as a positive sexual experience in "bedroom hymns," rather than focusing on their trauma. Both the desire-based framework and CoC methodology that "bedroom hymns" employs counteract the disenfranchising and oppressive colonial agenda, inevitably making the poem decolonial.

Furthermore, "bedroom hymns" showcases how erotic pleasure can be an avenue for embracing one's gender identity and sexuality as a 2S/Indigenous trans person—identities colonialism has sought to eradicate. It is not uncommon for trans people to feel dysphoric about their genitals, appearance, and secondary sex characteristics (such as breasts). These discomforts may lead to uneasiness around sex and a fear that their body, sexuality, and/or gender identity may not be respected. "bedroom hymns" may point to this when simpson (2020a) calls their breast "confusing" (45). In trans scholar, Susan Stryker's piece, Dungeon Intimacies: The Poetics of Transsexual Sadomasochism, Stryker explains how her experiences at sadomasochism parties affirmed her identity as a woman. She writes, "[i]n dungeon space I could see a woman in the mirror, and step into the place of woman in the structure of another's desire" (Stryker 2008, 43). Evidently, she illustrates how sex can be a place for one's gender and/or sexuality to flourish and be respected. simpson (2020c) highlights this very concept in their poem "waterways" when they write "my hormone-fuelled shifting body / lets me unlearn muscle memories / by allowing myself to touch my tender breasts / & rewild my once-forbidden intimacies"

(69). This quote points to potential discomfort around sex and simpson's body, particularly their breasts, that has morphed into pleasure. It references the exact idea that Styrker discusses in their work: that sex can be a portal for self-love and acceptance, particularly for trans and queer bodies. Further, it also points to the difficulty and importance of embracing one's sexuality and gender identity as a 2S non-binary queer trans woman in colonial society as colonizers sought to exterminate non-heterosexual sexualities and diverse gender identities. "forbidden intimacies" may directly be referring to the colonial idea that 2S bodies are unnatural and wrong and thus, do not deserve intimacy. Nonetheless, by resisting colonization's subjugation of 2S/Indigenous trans bodies and sex lives by creating a safe space in which simpson's body as a 2S non-binary queer trans woman is respected, cherished, and honoured, simpson's poetry invites 2S/Indigenous trans pleasure and is, therefore, decolonial.

To conclude, jaye simpson's poem, "bedroom hymns," invites 2S/Indigenous trans pleasure, acts as a Sovereign Erotic, and employs decolonial trans*feminist concepts of desire-based frameworks and CoC methodologies. In doing so, the poem embodies concepts of decolonial trans*feminism. Ultimately, 2S/Indigenous trans erotic poetry has the potential to help resolve historical trauma faced by Indigenous communities through re-writing and embracing narratives about their sexual lives. Therefore, works such as this should continue to be showcased and praised as they actively combat the settler-colonial project while celebrating and empowering 2S/Indigenous trans pleasures.

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Sitting on my Grandmother's Roof

Photograph by: Mahika Gautam

Proto-states and sexual violence: ISIS' state-building

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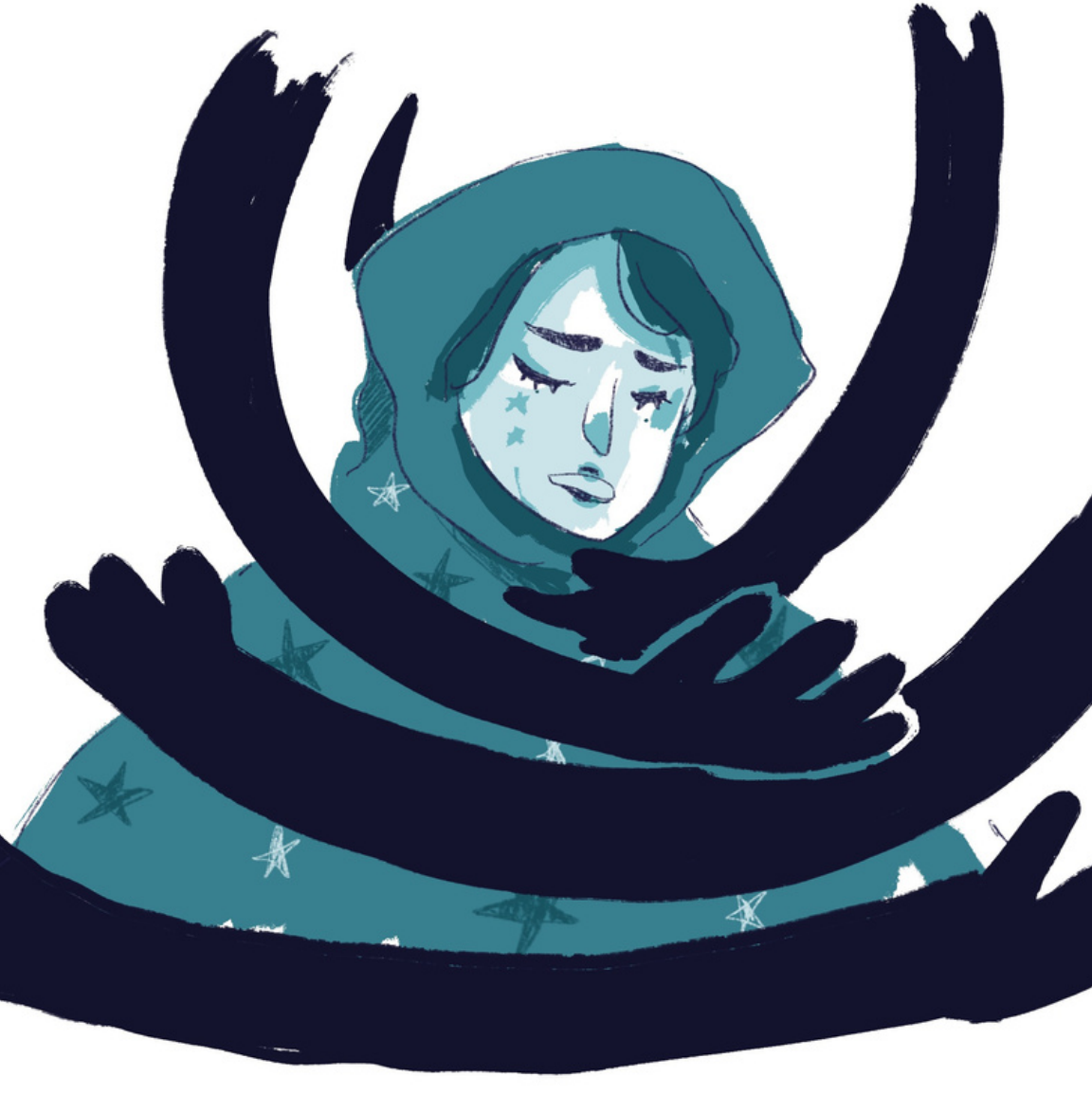

CONTENT NOTE: This paper discusses topics of sexual violence

Abstract

This paper aims to integrate the concept of sexual violence into the discussion of state-building through the case study of the proto-state ISIS between 2014 and 2017. The existing literature on proto-states competitive state-building rarely focuses on ISIS' extensive use of sexual violence, especially towards the local Yezidi population, though widely denounced by the international community. The literature focusing on ISIS's strategy for using sexual violence is often constrained into discourses around the Orientalist stereotypes of militant and sexually aggressive Muslim men associated with the narratives on ISIS fighters.

Building on the notions of sexual violence practices and policies, sexual colonialism, and sexual capital, this paper aims to provide a gendered analysis of why ISIS uses sexual violence, going beyond the sole ideological and religious factor, and found that sexual violence strengthened ISIS' state. The policy of sexual violence against the Yezidi population aimed at rendering a region homogeneous and destroying a group whose identity did not fit with ISIS' religious ideals. Furthermore, the creation of this collective identity using sexual capital through enforcing strict gendered norms illustrates how ISIS attempted to build its state through the private sphere.

Due to ISIS' nature as a terrorist organization, access to sources has proven rather difficult. Still, primary resources published by ISIS Research and Fatwa Department, especially the online magazine Dabiq issues and one Q&A style pamphlet on sexual slavery regulations, have been analyzed to understand both ISIS' policies on sexual violence and the rationale behind the targeting of different groups, as well as the sexual norms and values institutionalized and mandated.

1. Introduction

During its power culmination in 2014, the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria resembled a state in many ways. Indeed, Stathis Kalyvas notes that "insurgency can best be understood as a process of competitive state-building… State building is the insurgents' central goal" (Kalyvas 2006, 218). ISIS, also known as Daesh, IS or ISIL, is a jihadi proto-state seeking control and cohesion in an unstable environment. The group's extensive use of sexual violence, especially toward the local Yezidi population, was widely denounced by the international community. Yet, sexual violence has rarely been discussed in the scope of ISIS' governance and state-building strategies.

The existing literature aims at explaining the rationale behind sexual violence and its consequences through sociological, psychological, and humanitarian factors (Kizilhan 2021; Shahali 2020; Kaya 2020; Brown 2018). In contexts of rebel insurgencies, sexual violence is mainly seen as one of many ways to deal with civilians (Humphreys and Weinstein 2006; Felhab-Brown 2013, as cited in Ahram 2018, 180). Consequently, ISIS' sexual violence use has often been analyzed through Orientalist stereotypes of militant and sexually aggressive Muslim men and Muslim women in need of protection (Al-Ali 2018). Overall, these analyses are often apolitical.

Due to ISIS' nature as a terrorist organization, access to sources has proven rather difficult. Still, primary

resources published by ISIS Research and Fatwa Department, especially the online magazine Dabiq issues and one Q&A style pamphlet on sexual slavery regulations, have been analyzed to understand both ISIS' policies on sexual violence and the rationale behind the targeting of different groups. Testimonies of Yezidi women were also used, but their pertinence was limited as they are secondary media sources.

Building on the notions of sexual violence policies, sexual colonialism, and sexual capital, this thesis thus seeks to integrate the concept of sexual violence into the discussion of state-building through the case study of the proto-state ISIS. Two hypotheses were developed for this thesis, which are:

H1: Through its sexual violence policies, ISIS enforces a form of sexual colonialism based on religious claims, as illustrated by the Yezidi genocide.

H2: Through sexual repression, sexual violence, and enforcement of strict gendered norms, ISIS utilizes sexual capital to build its caliphate.

2. Frameworks and Definitions

From proto-state to state

Under the declarative theory, a political entity must fit into statehood criteria to achieve a state's status. As defined by the Montevideo convention of 1933, the criteria are a permanent population, a defined territory, a government, and a capacity to enter into relations with other states. Furthermore, Max Weber defines military capacity as a critical feature of statehood, with the "monopoly of the legitimate use of force" being necessary to "ensure that the state holds ultimate power and authority" (Weber 1919).

However, the constitutive theory argues that statehood depends on the recognition as a legitimate state by other sovereign states, which ISIS never achieved (Belanger 2015). As such, there is a debate amongst scholars as to whether or not ISIS can be called a state under the declarative theory.

Katherine Brown defines a proto-state as an "emerging center of power [...] antagonistic to local and traditional ways of life and seeking to wrest authority and wealth away from existing structures to new ones" (Brown 2018). Proto-states are in a "perpetual state of flux," always fighting for power and control over a given area to build a state and a nation (Ibid.).

State-building or nation-building?

"Insurgency can best be understood as a process of competitive state-building… State building is the insurgent's central goal," Kalyvas argues (Kalyvas 2006, 218). In contexts of civil wars, existing research has focused on the way armed groups or non-state actors appropriate methods and functions of statehood (Ahram 2018, 180). To survive and thrive, insurgent groups must organize "the regulation of social, political, and economic life, taxation, provision of public goods, economic affairs, crime control, and symbolic expression of

power and legitimacy" (Ibid.).

However, to analyze ISIS' strategy, the distinction between 'state-building' and 'nation-building' must be made. While sometimes used interchangeably, the consensus is that 'state-building' refers to "interventionist strategies to restore and rebuild the institutions and apparatus of the state, for example, the bureaucracy," and nation-building refers to "the creation of a cultural identity that relates to the particular territory of the state" (Scott 2007, 3). As such, state-building is generally necessary for nation-building to be efficient. ISIS aims at doing both, but its nature as a proto-state prevents it from fully achieving both.

The sociology of statehood needs to be defined to further understand the theoretical framework of state-building. Pierre Bourdieu defines statehood as the following:

> [The] culmination of a process of concentration of different species of capital: capital of physical force or instruments of coercion (army, police), economic capital, cultural or (better) information capital, and symbolic capital. It is this concentration as such which constitutes the state as the holder of a sort of meta capital gaining power over other species of capital and over their holders (Bourdieu 1999, 57).

Feminist sociology emphasizes the gendered aspects of these state-building capitals (Haney 2000, 641; Geva 2013, as cited in Ahram 2018, 182), regarding family relations as a set of "sexual and economic relationships regulated by state power" (Ahram 2018, 182). As such, it is the state or any coercive state-like entity which plays a crucial role in controlling the norms around sexuality, sexual property, and any other daily life aspects linked to sexuality.

The notion of habitus, "a subjective but not individual system of internalized structures, schemes of perception, conception, and action common to all members of the same group or class," developed by Bourdieu, establishes the framework of sexual norms (Bourdieu 1977, 86). The habitus creates a shared identity among a given population based on shared norms, and ISIS utilizes it to build the caliphate. Indeed, gendered sociological perspectives highlight the role of gender-based and sexual violence in state-building by understanding it as an "institutionalized form of practice or habitus, not a by-product of innate biological urges" (Ahram 2018, 183).

Wood's repertoire theories of sexual violence (Wood 2008; 2009), which will be developed later on, go hand in hand with the sociological idea of habitus, or the sociological perspective of how a given society functions:

> The habitus is the embodied dispositions of symbolic power, the state's capacity to claim legitimacy in imposing classification and meaning onto society. Habitus is a repertoire, a normative script defining what practices, hierarchies, and orderings are legitimate

and justified (Ahram 2018, 82).

Defining sexual violence

The United Nations International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda (UNICTR) was the first international tribunal to define the act of rape in international criminal law and to "recognize rape as a means of perpetrating genocide" (UNICTR). The ICTR defines sexual violence, which includes rape, as any "act of a sexual nature, which is committed on a person under circumstances which are coercive. This act must be committed:

(a) as part of a widespread or systematic attack;

(b) on a civilian population;

(c) on certain cataloged discriminatory grounds, namely: national, ethnic, political, racial, or religious grounds" (Akayesu, 2 September 1998, para. 598 as cited in Bitar 2015, 22).

Later, the International Criminal Tribunal for Yugoslavia (ICTY) went further in defining the physical aspects of the act of rape, "...the crime of rape in international law is constituted by: the sexual penetration, however slight:

(a) of the vagina or anus of the victim by the penis of the perpetrator or any other object used by the perpetrator;

(b) the mouth of the victim by the penis of the perpetrator; where such sexual penetration occurs without the consent of the victim" (Kunarac, Kovac, and Vukovic, 12 June 2002, para. 127 as cited in Bitar 2015, 3).

As the notion of consent is developed by ICTY, the notion of force is also clarified: "Force or threat of force provides clear evidence of non-consent, but the force is not an element per se of rape" (Ibid., 23). This allows qualification as rape as aggressions where the victim did not struggle by fear "of the oral threat of the return of the rapist for her family" which is an essential factor in the case of the Yezidi women (Bitar 2015, 23).

In the Iraqi penal code, rape is criminalized in "Part Two, Chapter 9, Section 1 (Moral indecency – public etiquette) of the Iraqi Penal Code (IPC) Law No. 111 of 1969. Rape is defined as an "offence against the public welfare" and as "moral indecency – public etiquette" rather than a violent act against the person. The Kurdistan Region of Iraq does not have a separate law on rape" (OHCHR 2020). It is further defined as follows: "Any person who has sexual intercourse with a female without her consent or commits buggery with any person without their consent is punishable by a term of imprisonment not exceeding 15 years" (Ibid.).

Understanding sexual violence

Revkin and Wood's theories of sexual violence patterns and practices versus policies are crucial in understanding the role that sexual violence can play in state-building strategies. Contrary to common narratives and assumptions, Revkin and Wood argue that ISIS'

violence practices "systematically targeted different social groups with distinct forms of violence, including sexual violence" (Revkin and Wood 2020, 1). Their theory is based on ideology and how it "prescribes organizational policies that order or authorize particular forms of violence against specific social groups and institutions that regulate the conditions under which they occur" (Ibid.).

Rape is common in wartime, and it is common for soldiers to engage in unauthorized and/or unordered violence toward civilians that may be tolerated by commanders (Ibid., 7). In such cases, rape "is a practice that is (1) tolerated by commanders and (2) driven by private preferences (opportunism) and/or small unit social dynamics such as a desire to conform or to avoid ostracization" (Ibid.). Sexual violence can be the reflection of societal gender norms or of "new norms inculcated by horizontal socialization by peers or vertical socialization by superiors" (Ibid.).

The concept of policy thus contrasts as Revkin and Wood define it as being "purposefully adopted by an organization for group objectives" (Wood 2012, 2018, as cited in Revkin and Wood 2020, 8). They note that sexual violence as a policy can either reflect military strategies, as a tool for ethnic cleansing, or reflect organizational purposes "to manage the sexual and reproductive lives of their members" (Revkin and Wood 2020, 8).

Overall, while the empirical study of wartime rape has been extensive over the last decades (Wood 2018), few links between sexual violence and state-building have been made. A large share of the literature on wartime sexual violence understands it as a consequence and response to wartime conditions, making it "curiously apolitical" as it ignores "prevailing modes of gender inequality and patrimonial social structures that exist at the edifice of state power" (Ahram 2018, 181). A strong emphasis has been put on ISIS' cruelty when seeking to explain its use of sexual violence but rarely was it analyzed as means of governance, "analysis of ISIS often reverted to Orientalist stereotypes about sexually aggressive Muslim men and the need to protect Muslim women that tended to distort rather than explain" (Al-Ali 2018, as cited in Ahram 2018).

Background

(A) ISIS

While ISIS emerged during the Arab Spring, its origins lie in the Jamaat al-Tawhidwa al-Jihad, which later merged with al-Qaeda and other Iraqi Sunni groups (Brown 2018). ISIS was first the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant before expanding into Syria through Jabhat al-Nusra. It became the Islamic State of Iraq and Al-Shams (greater Syria). In the meantime, disagreements with al-Qaeda were growing until 2014, when both groups split, ISIS rebranded itself the Islamic State, and its leader al-

Baghdadi proclaimed it the Caliphate (Ibid.).

ISIS aimed at reclaiming territory they found to have been stolen from Muslims by Crusaders and colonial power. They published propaganda "announcing 'the end' of the Sykes-Picot order, including a video in which bulldozers demolish the border between Iraq and Syria" (Revkin 2016, 29).

At its highest in 2014, ISIS controlled approximately 65 000 square kilometers (Gutowski 2016, as cited in Brown 2018), around 6 million people, and between 20 000 and 100 000 members (Institute for the Study of War n.d.; Gartenstein-Ross 2015, as cited in Brown 2018).

The nature of ISIS' government

The Islamic State is an example of a proto-state, is "Schrödinger's state," simultaneously both a state and a not-state" (Brown 2018).

ISIS rejects the notion of the state. This means that the definition of a quasi, failing, weak, collapsed, de facto, postcolonial state or any category of "political organizations that do not fit neatly into the standard Westphalian story of statehood" can hardly be applied to ISIS (Ibid.). First, statehood is 'man-made' and goes against the fundamental and divine goal of recreating the Caliphate. Any man-made conceptualization of what ISIS is would thus be seen as illegitimate. Also, the idea of a state depends on a nationality-based identity, and ISIS rather claims loyalty through the Umma, meaning the Muslim community. Through its nature and theoretical claims, ISIS rejects and appears incompatible with the notion of Westphalian statehood. (Ibid.)

Still, Brown proposes the understanding of ISIS as a proto-state, highlighting its nature as an emerging power center that is "antagonistic to local and traditional ways of life, and [is] seeking to wrest authority and wealth away from existing structures into new ones" (Ibid.).

Indeed, in 2014, ISIS published a 24-page manual written by Egyptian Abu Abdullah al-Masri, on the state's organization, outlining themes such as the administration of military operations, education, wealth, projects, foreign relations, and media. Although ISIS' institutionalization dates back to as early as 2007, it was around 2014 that western media and the general public realized that ISIS is "a project that strives to govern. It is not just a case of their sole end being endless battle" (Al-Tamimi 2015).

ISIS justifies this bureaucratization through shari'a law — a way of life that governs every aspect of one's existence. To summarize, ISIS aims at recreating the caliphate for the Umma - as a transnational idea of identity - to live 'the good life' in the Dar al-Islam territory (the world of Islam and peace) under Shari'a legal governance (Ibid.). Indeed, ISIS refutes any affiliation to a state or nationality as an identity-defining factor. The caliphate extends

across Syria and Iraq and is thus transnational. Yey, Brown notes the existential paradox of ISIS being "both dependent on, and denying,' territory'" (Ibid.).

A jihadi proto-state

Jihadism initially focused on overthrowing local governments. These groups' objectives have now reached transnational and transcontinental claims, as seen with ISIS and its Caliphate (US Institute of Peace, 6). Moreover, defining characteristics of jihadi proto-states can be applied to ISIS, the 'marketing' of their ideology, aggressive behaviors towards neighbors, and effective governance (Lia 2015, 36). The use of the internet to share ideological acts, as well as the harsh treatment of minorities, are all features of the jihadi proto-state ideology. Building on the transnational basis of ISIS' governance claims, Lia argues that jihadi proto-states reject the colonial borders emerging from the Sykes-Picot agreement and instead refer to them as "frontlines," thus using international terrorism as a 'legitimate' weapon for territorial expansion (Ibid.). The last feature outlined and the most relevant to this study is the "commitment to effective governance" (Ibid.). As discussed above, ISIS' administration has sought and arguably achieved effective governance in many aspects of its population's daily lives, "devoting significant resources to the provision of civilian services, [providing] an effective (but often very harsh) justice system, (…) and the like" (Ibid.).

ISIS, sexual violence and state-building

In an interview conducted by Mara Redlich Revkin and Elisabeth Wood in 2016, Heza, a thirty-six-year-old Yezidi woman, shared her story. When ISIS attacked Mount Sinjar in August 2014, she was living with her husband and three children. Her husband was executed while she, and her children, were abducted. She was sold to twelve different ISIS fighters and raped and beaten daily. She shaved her daughter's hair and eyebrow to try and make her appear as a boy or ill. Her two sons were eventually placed in training and indoctrination camps (Revkin and Wood 2020, 1). This testimony resembles that of over 6000 women and children who were abducted in Mount Sinjar in August 2014. The estimated amount of deaths during the attack ranges between 2000 and 5500 and is therefore considered a genocide by the United Nations (UN OHCR 2016, 7; UN HRC 2016, 31, as cited in Revkin and Wood 2020, 1). In 2017, more than two years after ISIS lost control of Mosul, its former de facto capital city, and the majority of its territory, an estimated 3000 Yezidi women and children remained missing (Revkin and Wood 2020, 1).

The killings, abduction, and enslavement of Yezidis were regulated and part of leadership-mandated

policies. Many tools were used and developed to serve ISIS' territorial expansion and, as such, its state-building strategy. From sexual repression, violence, and rape to sexual slavery and colonialism, each tool served a specific strategic purpose backed up by religious legitimization, as will be developed later on.

Theological background

ISIS' religious ideology is multifaceted. As Hassan argues, "it is the product of a hybridization of doctrinaire Salafism and other Islamist currents" (Hassan 2016). The Salafists are a group of the Umma adhering exclusively to an early Sunni theology, considering that violence is a legitimate tool to enforce power and spread their Islamic way of living (Kizilhan 2021). Wahhabism, a branch of Salafism, is characterized by traditionalism and literalism as it rejects "scholastic concepts like maqasid (the spirit of sharia law); kalam (Islamic philosophy); Sufism (Islamic mysticism); ilal (the study of the Quran and Hadith); and al-majaz (metaphors)" (Hassan 2016). Furthermore, Wahhabi clerics rely on the concept of bidah, meaning the interdiction to stray away from authorized religious practices, and used to label other religious practices – often Sufi or Shia– as polytheistic (Ibid.).

ISIS' penal code was primarily influenced by Wahhabism and especially by the concepts of wala wal bara and tawhid, namely the "loyalty to Islam and disavowal of un-Islamic ways" and the oneness of God (Ibid.). Ibn Abd al-Wahhab wrote that without the rejection and hostility towards polytheists, one's faith could not be sound (Ibid.). ISIS' hatred and violence towards the Yezidis are thus based on and legitimized by these precepts.

ISIS' ideology then relies significantly on the concepts of ahl al-kitab (People of the Book), ahl al dhimma (non-Muslim living in the Caliphate), and mushrikin (polytheists). Its administration and the rights it grants to its population, such as the right to go to court, are only granted to Sunni Muslims. Following the Hadith, Ahl al dhimma (Christians, Jews mainly) were historically given the possibility to accept Muslim rule and obtain protected status. Any other religious group must be fought and is regarded as polytheistic. As such, ISIS established a pact, known as the Raqqa Pact, for Christian residents of its de facto capital, Raqqa, detailing the conditions of their remaining in ISIS territory (Hoffman 2014). The pact resembled the Pact of Umar signed between Umar bin al-Khattab, the second Muslim Caliph, and the non-Muslim residents of the Islamic Caliphate. This pact and the jurisprudence it brings forward create the legal background for ISIS' attitudes towards the Yezidis. manifestation of the creator, is the Peacock Angel, Tawûsî Melek. He is "to take care of worldly affairs and human fortune, God

is interested only in heavenly affairs" (Ibid.).

4. Research Findings

H.1 The first assumption is that through its sexual violence policies, ISIS enforces a form of sexual colonialism based on religious claims, as illustrated by the Yezidi genocide.

First, using Revkin and Brown's theory of sexual violence practices versus policy, it is necessary to outline the nature of ISIS' sexual violence. Under ISIS' governance, sexual violence is a fully-fledged political tool, not only authorized but government-mandated (Islamic State 2014). Below is a chart outlining ISIS' differential treatment of different groups. It appears clear that sexual violence was perpetrated against many women of many different groups. Christian women have been targeted by rape, and Iraqi women in Mosul have been called to "submit themselves voluntarily to the Jihadists fighting the Iraqi Army" (Boyes 2014). Yet, the overwhelming majority of victims of sexual slavery and rape inside of forced marriage were Yezidis. To understand how the use of sexual violence benefits the creation of the Caliphate, it is necessary to understand how it contributes to a form of sexual colonization based on religious claims. Indeed, "ISIS has sought to dismantle the diverse social fabric made up of Sunnis, Shias, Kurds, Yezidis, and Christians that has developed and persevered since the ancient civilization of Mesopotamia, today's Iraq. Broadly, their wrath is directed at minorities whom they view as infidels without human rights" (Gerges 2016, 30, as cited in Corticelli 2022, 386). In order to recreate a homogeneous caliphate, free of any individual who did not fit into the collective identity standards, ISIS utilized sexual violence to occupy and exert political control over the Sinjar region. ISIS' policies of sexual violence and slavery illustrate a form of sexual colonialism based on religious justifications where women's bodies are sexually occupied.

The Revival of Slavery Before the Hour

They say that the Yezidis don't believe in anything (The Atlantic, 2018)

In the 4th issue of Dabiq (September/October 2014), a four-page article called "The revival of slavery before the hour" is dedicated to the legal issues regarding Yezidis's religious affiliation: are they non-Muslim or Muslim apostates? The research was conducted before the conquest of the Sinjar region to decide on a classification for the Yezidis. ISIS determined that "this group is one that existed since the pre-Islamic Jahiliyyah, but became 'Islamized' by the surrounding Muslim population, language, and culture, although they never accepted Islam nor claimed to have adopted it" (Islamic State 2014, 15). Moreover, they found that Yezidism was influenced by many elements of Sabianism, Judaism, and

Christianity but expressed in the "heretical vocabulary of extreme Sufism" (Ibid.). ISIS explains how Yezidis worship Iblis, a fallen but forgiven angel who refused to prostrate in front of Adam after God ordered him to, and who represents evil in the Quran. The article argues that Yezidis consider this disobedience as noble and regard Iblis as misunderstood by humanity, enlightened, and believe that he will be forgiven by Allah (Ibid.)

On these grounds, ISIS decided that Yezidis should be treated as polytheists and thus treated differently than Christians and Jews. They were not offered the option to pay a tax (jizyah), and the women could legally be enslaved, unlike female apostates (Ibid.)

Sexual concubinage practices in contexts of war can be found in Ancient Near Eastern contexts as represented in Deuteronomy, the fifth book of the Pentateuch, 21:10-14, in which "female captives are considered amongst the spoils of war, which practice recent scholarship describes as genocidal rape intent on erasing the ethnic identity of the captive women" (Rey 2016, as cited in Seedat 2017, 28).

The origins of sexual slavery and broader control of women's sexuality can be found in historical legal mechanisms. As such, they are used to justify the enslavement of Yezidi women and their making into concubines. Yet, Seedat notes that the legal grounds used by ISIS to enforce these "contemporary enactments of sexuality in war are not, however, to be found waiting in the historical texts and innocently revived or re-enacted today" (Seedat 2017, 30). ISIS' practices and legal justifications are a product of present-day readings of legal texts "informed by the normativity of sex in the economy of war using modern sexual technologies of the body" (Ibid.). Indeed, ISIS soldiers are strongly believed to be following a pure reading of Islam, as the testimony of one soldier who raped a 12 years-old Yezidi girl who stated that "according to Islam he is allowed to rape an unbeliever. He said that by raping [her], he is drawing closer to God" (Callimachi, 2015, as cited in Bitar 2015, 62).

Following ISIS' doctrine and law, abducted Yezidi became concubines and the spoils of a jihad (Hal 2014, as cited in Ahram 2018, 187). Their bodies were "expropriated sexually and biologically" (Ahram 2018, 187). As such, the sexual violence committed by ISIS forced Yezidis, considered infidels, to the bottom of ISIS' hierarchy, sexually and socially.

'Questions and Answers on Captives and Slaves'

In October 2014, ISIS' Fatwa Department: ISIS Ministry of Research and Legal Opinion published a pamphlet on the regulations around owning enslaved women titled 'Questions and Answers on Captives and Slaves'. With this pamphlet, ISIS institutionalizes the

religious justifications for slavery. Indeed, it justifies al-Sabi, taking a woman captive during war because of her unbelief (Islamic State 2014).

Question 3: Can all unbelieving women be taken captive?

There is no dispute among the scholars that it is permissible to capture unbelieving women [who are characterized by] original unbelief [kufr asli], such as the kitabiyat [women from among the People of the Book, i.e., Jews and Christians] and polytheists. However, [the scholars] are disputed over [the issue of] capturing apostate women. The consensus leans towards forbidding it, though some people of knowledge think it permissible. We [ISIS] lean towards accepting the consensus… (Ibid.).

The 27 questions and answers pamphlet regulates most of what is permissible to do with a slave woman and what is not. There are rulings on the permissible manners to have sexual intercourse, what types of punishment should be applied for what actions, and rulings on inheritance and property rights. The slave trade was regulated through slave markets, and to attend them, soldiers had to "register their names with the administrative officials of the battalion" (Islamic State 2015, as cited in al-Tamimi 2015). As such, this pamphlet outlines the legal background and the policies around ISIS' slavery trade.

The nature of ISIS' sexual violence as a policy has thus been demonstrated by the institutionalization of the sexual slavery of Yezidi women. In her autobiography The Last Girl: My Story of Captivity and My Fight Against the Islamic State, Nadia Murad, Nobel peace prize winner, Yezidi, and former ISIS sex slave, explained, "Islamic State planned it all: how they would come into our homes, what made a girl more or less valuable, which militants deserved a sabaya [sex slave] as an incentive and which should pay. They even discussed sabaya in their glossy propaganda magazine, Dabiq, in an attempt to draw new recruits" (Murad 2018).

A legal analysis of ISIS' sexual slavery policy based on the Rome Statute sheds light on its nature as a genocide. In the summer of 2014, ISIS started its territorial expansion, but the Yezidis of Sinjar "were in the way, geographically and ideologically" (Hall 2021). Slavery of Yezidi women constitutes an act of causing serious bodily or mental harm, which can constitute genocide under the Rome Status. In order to be successful, a genocide prosecution to the International Court of Justice must establish the dolus specialis, that is, the particular intent to not only target individuals based on their membership to a protected group but to destroy that group (Ibid.).

Yezidi victims reported feeling a "loss of individual and collective honor through rape" because "sexual relations

with non-Yezidis [...] constitutes a forbidden act of religious 'conversion'" (Vale 2020, 527). Further from inflicting emotional and physical pain on Yezidis, sexual slavery inherently attempts to reduce and destroy the community. Indeed, in order to be considered Yezidi, a child needs to be born with two Yezidi parents. ISIS authorizing its soldiers to impregnate Yezidi slaves consequently leads to mothers bearing non-Yezidi children and forces them to "grapple with isolating stigma, as well as choosing between [their] community and [their] child" upon liberation (Hall 2021).

As defined earlier, a proto-state perpetually seeks control over its territory to assert its political power and build its state. Through that prism, the Yezidis represent a 'threat' to ISIS' expansion, a population that does not align with ISIS' religious ideals and identity criteria. ISIS' sexual slavery policy towards the Yezidis thus further shows its territorial expansion rationale and its success in the efforts to render its territory more homogeneous as well as to "tear the social fabric of targeted communities" (CODEXTER 2016).

It then appears clear that religious justifications are grounds to legitimize strategic and political sexual violence policies, here taking the form of sexual colonialism against the Yezidi population. Moreover, beyond illustrating a territorial expansion quest, ISIS' utilization of sexual violence through slavery illustrates the importance of sexuality in controlling a given population. ISIS achieves territorial control and expansion by controlling and exploiting women's bodies.

Controlling sexual norms

H2: The second assumption of this paper is that through sexual repression, sexual violence, and enforcement of strict gendered norms, ISIS utilizes sexual capital to build its Caliphate.

To build the caliphate, ISIS followed a strategy which is similar to that of nation-building. It tried to enforce and develop common sets of norms and moral values among its population based on its extremist religious ideology. This identity is significantly based on the utilization of sexual capital and the creation of a sexual habitus following strict gendered and repressive sexual norms.

The systematic nature of rape through its legalization in the context of sexual slavery by ISIS indicates that it is considered part of the social habitus of ISIS rather than "irrational outbursts of sexual aggression (…). Direct orders are unnecessary. Commanders deem these acts unobjectionable or even commendable." (Leiby 2009; Wood 2008, as cited in Ahram 2018, 183). Yet, even though rape was forbidden outside of marriage and towards Sunni women and women from the *Ahl al-Kitab* (Revkin and Wood 2020), sexual repression and strict gendered norms

were still directed toward every woman on ISIS soil in order to reinforce its state institutions and functioning.

Ann Laura Stoler, a historian who has studied the interlinkages of power and sexuality in colonial contexts, argues that colonial sexuality serves two purposes: self-identity and social control (Grossman 2018, 2). Her work focuses on the case of the French colonization of Indochina, arguing that, through the utilization of sexuality, the French achieved the outlining of "the identity of the metropole and why it was superior to all others (identity)" and the solidification of "control over its colonial subjects through redefining their supposed sexuality as wrong (control)" (Grossman 2018, 3). The same dynamics can be applied to ISIS' attempts at developing its state through the creation of a collective identity based on sexual and gendered norms and the control of the population through the enforcement of these norms.

Furthermore, Fatima Seedat sheds light on the use of sex in the economy of wars going beyond the assumption that sex is constrained to be understood as a weapon of war. War requires "combatants to receive a steady supply of arms, food, and sex; all three are considered crucial to the combatants' ability to fight" (Seedat 2017, 26). Seedat argues that "the intersections of war and sex are not unusual, even if they are brutal" (Ibid., 27) and that Islamist militantism draws upon two narratives. The first is a political narrative borrowed from Fatima Mernissi about "the place of the jariya [slave-girl or concubine] in political memory, which combines a memory of the subjugated feminine and nostalgia for territorial absolutism" (Ibid., 29). It links to a mythical narrative of a "Muslim past where the caliph controlled both his territory and his women" (Ibid.). The second narrative comes from the "nationalist understandings of masculinity shaped in the protection of the nation, its women, and traditions from colonial others" (Ibid.).

Proto-states' inherent search for power and control compels them towards "hyper-masculinity and the creation of ethnic hierarchies" (Ahram 2018, 184, 185). Therefore, beyond being a means to control women and assert humiliation or violence, sexual violence is a way to extend control to the private sphere and amongst relations.

Furthermore, building on Mernissi, Seedat, and Ahram's gendered political narratives, Katherine Brown argues that a critical feature of ISIS' state-building strategy is the enforcement of the 'Muslim woman' narrative, a myth or idealized vision of women based on purity and piety. Indeed, "for a proto-state such as Islamic State, where there are competing institutions of governance in the local environment, the ability to intertwine a new global religious narrative into everyday living is key to building power" (Brown 2018). In June

2014, a city charter issued for Nineveh, in northern Iraq, declared: "'To honorable women: God is in decency and loose-fitting jackets and robes" ('City charter' 2014, quoted in Ahram 2018, 188). The ideals of feminine purity enforced by ISIS, as part of an ideal sexual habitus, were primarily enforced by the Hisbah division of ISIS, commonly known as the 'morality police' whose goal was to enforce a strict code of conduct for women (Vonderhaar 2021). ISIS imposes harsh restrictions on rights, freedom of movement, and dress code through "surveillance, coercion, fear and punishment" (CODEXTER 2016). Women are not allowed to show their hands or face or travel without a male guardian. Indeed, a woman living in Iraq under ISIS rule shared that she threatened to be punished for not wearing socks while rushing her pregnant daughter to the hospital (Khan 2016).

Collective identities are primordial to create collective cohesion regardless of local division and conflicts, as shown by the nation-building theory. The 'Muslim woman' archetype, a form of the 'national woman,' characterized by "modesty, motherhood, and chastity," was utilized by ISIS, making it a "privatized ideal coalescing around purdah, piety, and nonviolent jihad" (Brown 2018). Purdah, or "the life behind the veil" imposed by ISIS, illustrates its quest to create a long-lasting community. Enforcing it shows that ISIS members "live a 'full life,' one that includes a 'home life,' not just a fighting life" (Ibid.).

The sexual capital detained by women and their roles as jihadi brides and child-bearers is a primordial aspect of ISIS' state-building as "women's task in Daesh is to give birth to as many children as possible as quickly as possible" (CODEXTER 2016, 6). Forcibly keeping women in the domestic sphere ensures that they stick to their supporting and demographic expansion roles. The Al-Khansaa Brigade, a branch of the Hisbah, published a Manifesto on Muslim Women glorifying the spiritual and righteous role of women:

[W]oman was created to populate the Earth just as man was. (…) Her creator ruled that there was no responsibility greater for her than that of being a wife to her husband. […] The purpose of her existence is the Divine duty of motherhood (Islamic State 2015).

The regulations on sexual capital illustrate ISIS' attempt at creating cohesion by controlling the private sphere. The proliferation of rules and regulations on women's bodies and their lives, can be seen as an attempt to create an identity that transcends the territorial borders. By controlling the intimate, private, the sexual habitus of its women, ISIS goes further in controlling a given territory but controls the individuals, allowing for theoretical perpetual growth and expansion, as was their goal.

Conclusion

This research aimed to explain how sexual violence in the context of a proto-state can be a full-fledged tool of state-building. Such gendered analysis of ISIS' state building allows for a greater understanding of the group's motives and strategy as it presents alternative explanations for using sexual violence, which go beyond the sole ideological and religious factors. Concepts such as sexual colonialism, sexual habitus, and capital present some levels of explanation. Indeed, the use of sexual violence on the Yezidi population, as a policy, aimed at rendering a region homogeneous and destroying a group whose identity did not fit with ISIS' religious ideals. The overpowering and sexual domination over the Yezidi minority illustrates ISIS's territorial expansion strategy; the creation of its collective identity using sexual capital through the enforcement of strict gendered norms then illustrates how ISIS attempted to build its state. Overall, it appears clear that there is not one explanation, but it also appears clear that a gendered analysis of state-building practices and theories is primordial.

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Outcry

Written by Waahiba Siddiqui

I tried and I won,
But there was still more to be done.
To make the world a better place,
To eliminate hatred among religions and race.
To make them feel wanted again,
To give them both-a sister and a friend.
Being hopeful is useless nowadays,
Cause no one listens to our humble ways.
We try and try but it's all in vain,
As we still can't rid the world of pain.
In the distance we see people wail and perish,
Is this the result of all our merits?
We want tranquillity, we want love We want our symbol to be the dove.
To see the world as it was eons ago,
To get rid of corruption and have the world glow.
We wanted to replace darkness with light,
But trying with all our might.
Wasn't enough to turn evil to good, Still
it was all we could.
They say the past is the past and we'll all forget,
But where will it go-all our regret?
Remember the past is gone now and we're in the present,
But why are most of still treated like peasants?
Being a woman or a girl child,
What in this is a horrendous crime?
People are killed for taking a stand,
Against all the things that ruin our land.
We aim for the best but just don't realize,

That the real problems is right in front of our eyes.
We accomplished all of the greatest of feats,
Travelled to the ends of the earth and explored all the seas.
Still we have so much to achieve,
To get everyone on the same page that's what I believe.
So many imperfections we all have and that's a fact,
Still we distinguish between two mere colours-white and black.
It's hilarious to think that all this matters in today's day and age, Our gender, the colour of our skin and the amount that we wage. Truth is, it only matters as much as society likes,
But still is more important than what lies inside.
We all want attention and want to be heard,
For a voice that's as melodious as a bird's-
But we don't know, what we do and what we say,
Will be the most appealing thing on earth if it's done the right way.
So my fellow people take my into mind,
For who knows-one day you could be the savior of mankind.

Shamanism and the Emancipation, Healing and Empowerment of Korean Women

Written by Léonie Coke
Edited by Aelia Deletre and Rachel Barker

Abstract

This paper explores the idea of political resistance and gender construction within the practices of Korean Shamanism. This paper argues that the uniquely matrilocal focus of Korean Shamanistic practices makes the religion a site of gendered resistance. The author makes this argument by examining both the history of Korean Shamanism and its place in contemporary Korea. In this paper, power, gendered separation, and traditional hierarchies associated with neo-Confucianism are challenged by female Shamans, who therefore provide both feminist decolonial possibilities.

Shamanism and Gender in Korea

For many people, participating in religion provides a community, a way of life, and a source of support in the face of the many trials that come with the human experience. Korean women's fervent religiosity and spirituality, whether influenced by Confucianism, Buddhism, Shamanism, or Christianity (Pae 2014, 57), are heavily determined by their ancillary role in women's lives in the context of the strict and restrictive gender system of Korea. Shamanism specifically does so. As the "oldest [indigenous] religion" of Korea (Lee 2009, 187), shamanism is characterized by "a technique of ecstasy" where shamans use trance and altered state of consciousness to invoke gods and embody them (Lee 2009, 186). Korean shamanism is exceptional in the world because women monopolize it (Oh 2016). With as many as 300 000 practicing shamans, which exceeds the number of priests and priestesses in other religious establishments on the territory, shamanism does "not [provide] people with noble ideals or dreams, [it] just [supports] human beings by protecting them against bad luck and bringing them good luck" (Oh 2016, 71). Women actively participate in this religion whose primary purposes are to protect, heal and attract prosperity, because they require these services for their emancipation, healing and empowerment in the Korean gender system.

Since Neo-Confucianism heavily influences the conception of gender in

Korea, shamanism provides a counter-culture anchored in a tradition where women are venerated and powerful. When the Chosŏn Dynasty was established in the 14th century, Korea adopted Confucianism as the main religion (Lee 2009) and it remains the dominant ideology in Korean Culture today. This ideology promotes a patriarchal system where women are subordinated to men, confined to the private sphere and the household. "Obedience and chastity were the only virtues that women had to cultivate." In contrast, before the 14th century, during the Koryŏ dynasty, women were the recipients of ancestral patrimony, heads of households and financially independent (Lee 2009, 190). Since shamanism was closely tied to indigenous concepts of gender, where women did not have to conform to such strict roles and could hold more social and political power, the Chosŏn era targeted shamans or mudang. (Hwang 2009). Today, Korean women still use shamanism to "challenge Neo-Confucian patriarchal power" (Lee 2009, 186).

Shamanism, as a tool and a place for Korean women to resist patriarchal oppression, still holds an ambiguous place in Korean society as both a traditional ancient religion and a counterculture ideology that has "[resisted] the dominant ruling ideologies that have emerged from different historical periods" (Lee 2009, 187). People see Shamans as "both outcasts and priestesses" (Lee 2009, 187), which makes them the perfect social actors to fight against the patriarchal violence subjected on Korean women in everyday life. More precisely, the practice and beliefs of shamanism challenge patriarchal ideology and public organization by allowing women to emancipate themselves from oppressive structures, heal from gender violence, and access empowerment.

Shamanism and Women's Emancipation

Shamanism is a tool for Korean women to emancipate themselves from the role imposed on them because of their gender. It provides a culture of resistance and is a symbol of women's determination to create safe spaces for themselves. Women achieve ideological independence from Neo-Confucianism and patriarchal society through their religious practice. Indeed, shamans transcend the gender binary by performing public rituals which reject the notion that women should remain in the domestic sphere and. According to Lee, Neo-Confucianism is grounded on the beliefs that a "harmonious society could be achieved through a strict hierarchical social system," meaning that women are better fit for the household and "proper women should not express their concerns or feelings to outsiders" (2009, 189). With a social standing confined to the family, they

rarely have the opportunity "to participate in nondomestic activities" (Lee 2009, 189). In the documentary Shaman of the Sea, Shaman Kim Keum-hwa performs Baeyeonsin-Gut, a public ritual with the traditional purpose of bringing bounty to the fishing communities on the west coast of Korea. Looking at the barge she will have to perform on this year, the shaman reminisces on a time when boats could hold 1,300 people, a significant number of people gathered to see a woman execute a performance (Chan-Kyon 2016, 7:55). Power and public authority are conferred to Shaman Keum-hwa through the ritual, and she transcends the gendered private/public Confucianist division of space and qualities. Women shamans emancipate themselves from restrictive gender roles when they perform rituals because they reclaim a position of power in the public sphere. The other non-shaman women participating in the rituals are also emancipated from these roles because this religious space allows them to be loud and vocal. During the rituals, the shaman "blesses the spectators to untangle their sufferings while speaking, laughing, crying, dancing and singing with the spirits and spectators" (Lee 2009, 193), which makes the public shamanic space consecrated to the expression of women's feelings. Consequently, Jonghyun Lee argues that "because [shamanism] enables [women] to be emancipated from the influence of the deeply rooted Neo-Confucian patriarchal system" (2009, 192), there is a stigma associated with women involved in shamanism, shamans and clients alike.

Coming back to Neo-Confucianism as the ruling ideology in Korea, shamanism allows women to reclaim indigenous practices and spirituality in the face of colonization. Women, therefore, emancipate themselves from their colonial past when they reject Neo-Confucian traditions. After the Chosŏn Dynasty had already targeted shamanism in campaigns, proclaiming that it was a practice based on superstition and lewd behaviours because women led it (Lee 2009), shamans went underground to escape government persecutions. Korea's history of colonization perpetuated this as the Japanese government tried to stifle indigenous Korean culture and targeted practitioners and believers of shamanism (Hwang 2009). The governmental persecution eventually stopped after the Cultural Conversation Law protected shamanism as a traditional performance (completely overlooking its spiritual importance) but to this day, there is still a label of deviance associated with shamans and their followers (Lee 2009). One might see the label as translating the cultural malaise emerging from shamanism, as its survival is a reminder of a history of violence targeted at Korean indigeneity. The history of shamanism is also linked

to the patriarchal oppression of women in Korea, and its survival was due to the new private role women occupied under Neo-Confucianism. When women and shamans took their spiritual practices underground and into the private sphere, shamanism became much harder to control by the state and survived assimilation through centuries of oppression. Women transcended the Neo-Confucian gender system's restrictions and emancipated themselves from an oppressive colonial state by reclaiming their indigeneity through the practice of shamanism over centuries.

Women further emancipate themselves through the financial independence gained as they become shamans. Lee writes that "women have realized an economic opportunity for themselves as service providers of shamanism in traditional as well as contemporary Korean society" (2009, 193), precisely because shamanism is a source of economic revenue for women that moves beyond class, gender and economic stratifications because it was underground for so long. Today, women can become the principal breadwinners of their families (Lee 2009), which subverts gender expectations that position men as the major breadwinners of their families and women as dependents. Emancipation is a significant part of women's participation in shamanism because of the mobility spirituality gives them in the public space: economically, politically and ideologically.

The Healing Power of Shamanism

Whether it be for the individual or the community, shamanism provides a place for healing. Through its practice, women heal from patriarchal oppression and violence, and considering the shame associated with being a bad mother or a bad wife, women can shed all the negative energies accumulated around the household. They can also care for themselves and their families through rituals like the kut.

The first person to undergo a healing process in shamanism is the shaman. Before becoming shamans, women undergo the shinbyung, an illness that usually has no medical explanation and is traditionally thought of as a sign of deities choosing the next shaman (Lee 2009). The illness and subsequent healing of the women confer them their new social role and transcendental skills (Lee 2009). Moreover, Lee refers to D. Kim's remarks on shinbyung as occurring "mostly among women'"" whose souls have been fractured by personal tragedies or exploitations that others have caused them to suffer"'" (2009, 188). Because of the necessary step of the illness, one's experience of misfortunes is the most essential prerequisite to becoming a shaman. The practice of shamanism has a "self-healing effect because it leads the afflicted woman to heal her wounded heart by becoming a shaman" (Lee 2009, 189).

After the shaman heals herself, she can heal the members of the community. According to Oh, "the most important function of the shaman is the performance of rituals to help people solve their problems, which they cannot solve by themselves" (2016, 76). Because all misfortunes and sorrows suffered by a human being are linked to the anger of gods and ancestors, "the ritual service is performed for pacifying a deceased spirit through a shaman in order to achieve harmony and reconciliation between people and spirits" (Oh 2016, 76). The shaman's invocation of gods and spirits is the medium through which they heal the community. Since women compose the majority of shamans' clients and followers, one could argue that shamanism has a therapeutic effect on these women precisely because they suffer from patriarchal oppression. As Lee reports, "marriage, childbirth, child rearing, and relationships with in-laws are still Korean women's major everyday concerns" (Lee 2009, 190), and these major everyday concerns may lead to depression, burn-out, and anxiety or stress-induced disorders. These gendered responsibilities put an enormous strain onto the bodies and minds of Korean women, which would explain why they seek out shamanism.

Rituals like the kut and mugam specifically give women cathartic release from the weight of an oppressive patriarchal system they carry in everyday life (Kendall 1985, x). The mugam is a dance women perform in full shaman attire, during which they go through a possession trance. Lee describes how mugam can be a "therapeutic tool that relieves the women's experiences of social oppression and the psychological deprivations that wound their hearts" (2009, 195). The kut is similarly a tool for women to heal their households and let the bad energies of the past come out. Kendall refers to the ritual as it happens to the Chŏn Family in the first chapter of her book on Shamans, Housewives, and Other Restless Spirits. Here the kut is performed inside the house of the Chŏn Family because Grandfather Chŏn has been suffering from an illness that does not go away, and the shaman advised the family to have the ritual to appease the ancestors and honour them (Kendall 1985). During the ritual, the accumulated pollution (pujong) in the house (births, deaths, and profane existence) are cleansed (Kendall 1985). Through this act, and by actively seeking shamans to perform tailored rituals of the kut to each household, women offer a cathartic release to their households too. They let go of the negative energies and heal their households from the hazards of life.

Shamanic practices also offer a safe space for women to have their voices heard and share their stories. The *kut* specifically nurtures women's "self-defined standpoint" (Lee 2009, 194). Lee defines the standpoint as the

community sharing stories "based on their shared location in unjust power" (2009, 194) and being able to individually position yourself within an oppressive structure in relation to other women who suffer from the same injustice, ultimately bringing a sense of comfort. In shamanic rituals, Korean women share the experiences of being women, wives, mothers, daughters-in-law (Lee 2009) who have been injured by patriarchal violence. Lee shares the story of the widow who was suffering from back pain, and it was revealed in the kut that her "back pain represented her painful life experience as a Korean woman," especially through widowhood as it is a very low social position to hold in Korean culture (2009, 194). The kut provided a safe space for the widow to leave the pain behind. Finally, in this safe space, Korean women preserve "their sense of esteemed self while ensuring the well-being of their family members" (Lee 2009, 194).

Shamans also heal their communities through these rituals, just like Shaman Kim Jeum-hwa heals her community from the trauma of the separation from Korea in *Shaman of the Sea*. Because she had to flee North Korea during the war, the separation from her natal land is an important part of her work. She brought back with her the ritual of *Baeyeonsin-Gut* to Icheon, the fisherman's town where she relocated (Chan-Kyon 2016, 1:52; 3.37-4.15; 8:53; 20:50), in an attempt to heal her community and honour their cultural heritage. At the beginning of the movie, the spirit of the former North-Korean leader Kim II-sung possesses her, as he asserts that his son will help realize a peaceful reunification (Chan-Kyon 2016, 0:15-0:20), therefore promising the end of decades of conflict and embodying a pacifying role. This scene translates to shamans' collective therapeutic role in their communities because Kim Jeum-hwa brings hope and peace to her followers in her ritual. Shamans possess a healing power towards themselves, the individuals they seek to help and the communities to which they belong. As it is an environment dominated by women, they particularly help women heal from patriarchal and nationalist systems of violence and domination.

Women's Empowerment through Shamanism

The beliefs and practice of shamanism are a source of empowerment for shamans and followers alike. As an essential part of Korean women's lives, religion often offers a ground for political and social organization. As the public and private spheres perpetuate shamanism, the liberating and healing experienced by women in the ritual is of social and political importance. Through their religious practice, shamans and women challenge the Neo-Confucianist socio-political system by gaining agency, authority, and greater social and political mobility.

Indeed, as a woman who can take care of her community and relieve them from their suffering, the spiritual power harnessed by the shaman grants her a certain level of authority. The figure of the shaman is powerful, as only "gifted people [...] can enter the sacred world" (Lee 2009, 186), and the status associated with being elected by gods is one of respectability. Traditionally, in shamanism "Korean women wield positive powers, [and] in cooperation, they perform socially essential ritual work" (Kendall 1985, x), making women central to their communities' proper functioning. In the kut for example, Lee writes that "women are protagonists who show their superior abilities" (2009, 193) as they contact supernatural beings and harness their powers. The authority provided to the shamans as the spirits descend into them is such that the women are empowered to cast "criticism on the male power holders of society" (Lee 2009, 193). Since the kut provides a space for women to do so, Lee argues that it is part of the culture of resistance of Korean women to patriarchal oppression (2009). Moreover, Shaman of the sea provides a excellent visual representation of Korean shamans as powerful human beings, especially as people praise Kim Jeum-Hwa's charisma as unique in its theatricality and the power she has over others (Chan-Kyon 2016, 1:13; 22:00). Korean shamanism is unique in the way that shamans can become gods themselves, which encompasses the possibility that women can be sanctified and all-powerful.

Shamanism not only empowers women by giving them supernatural powers, but it also provides greater agency. Women take on the responsibility of caring forthemselves and their families, and they hold an active role in the rituals that liberate them. Grandmother Chŏn in "A Kut for the Chŏn Family" seeks a shaman after traditional medicine is inefficient in healing her husband (Kendall 1985). She organizes and participates in by directly interacting with the deity (Kendall 1985). Therefore, this process of taking care of themselves and their communities as they relieve others' sufferings empowers Korean women. Shamanism allows them to embrace their family members and ensures "their children's good health and their husbands' promotions," while generating a "vibrant energy that can enhance their sense of self-esteem" (Lee 2009, 195). Korean women are empowered through shamanism because they endorse an essential political and social role in the ritual, which makes them feel powerful and like the masters of their own lives. Finally, "Shamanism enables a Korean woman to be the center of her own family history, not a subordinate in the history of her husband's family" (Lee 2009, 195), which confers to them more social power and may contribute to a feeling of empowerment.

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empowerment.

One must also refer to the centrality of religion in women's political activism in Korea. Pae writes that in Korea, interfaith relations are the main actors in peace activism for women (2014). In the Korean context specifically, she links peace activism to anti-patriarchy fights because its key goal is to liberate the people from militarism (Pae 2014), which is, in turn, linked to patriarchal masculinity. Giving the example of Jeju island, where "women have played a prominent role in [...] politics, economics, religion and culture" (Pae 2014, 56), interfaith activism has led the movement against the building of a military base in Gangjeong. In this context, women's spiritual practices went from Christianity to Buddhism, Shamanism, and more. Though activism brought the different communities together, it was the everyday activities of Gangjeong women that embodied peacemaking activism as they fed other activists or took care of the sick (Pae 2014). Pae writes that since the terrorist attacks on 9/11, "the most prominent concern of religious people on the global level [has been] peace" and engaging with religion in the context of peace and reconciliation (2014, 66). This is the goal of Shaman Kim Keum-hwa when she performs Baeyeonsin-Gut and invokes the spirit of Kim II-sung - bringing together the community and reconciling the people.

Moreover, Shaman of the Sea portrays a community and shamans that try desperately to keep up a tradition against the current of modernity. The Baeyeonsin-Gut ceremony used to be held on traditional fishing wooden boats that have disappeared because of modernization and the state's monopoly over fishing activities on the coast (Chan-Kyon 2016, 4:17-49). Performing the ritual has become difficult because of the port's schedule and the disappearance of these large fishing boats (Chan-Kyon 2016, 5:57-6:11). Moreover, the shaman talks about her wish that more young people involved themselves in shamanism, as they are a huge part of Korean indigenous identity and cultural legacy (Chan-Kyon 2016, 6:46-56). We see her work toward this goal as her team attempts to attract young people to the ceremony. Therefore, shamanism is a tool for empowerment, gaining agency and political activism against militarism or the disappearance of Korean cultures and communities. As Lee concludes, "when providing services, shamans particularly address the needs of those who are oppressed and disenfranchised in society" (2009, 196), and we can see this in shamans and women followers participating in activist fights.

Korean Women's Acts of Resistance

In conclusion, I will return to what are considered acts of political resistance. While the fights led by shamans and their women followers fit in the category of what one can consider activism, I

would argue that healing and emancipation are just as much acts of resistance against patriarchal oppression as empowerment. Shamanism provides a place for women to organize themselves under the banner of care, self-care and care for the community. As women live through personal cathartic release, they also protect their indigenous heritage and cultures. Healing one's trauma after being subjected to the violence of Neo-Confucianism and patriarchal ideology is an act of radical activism. As Audre Lorde famously wrote: "caring for myself is not self-indulgence, it is self-preservation, and that is an act of political warfare" (1988, 125). In the context of Korean women's place in Korean society, self-care or healing is an act of activism because Neo-Confucian ideology constantly devalues women's lives and painful contributions to society. Under Neo-Confucianism, women's labour is taken for granted because they are essentially (in the strongest sense of the term) bound to be obedient and subordinate mothers, wives and daughters.

Thinking about Rinaldo's definition of pious agency (2013), shamanism encourages women to be pious agents, as their participation in the religious subject is central to their independence and power. Furthermore, her definition of an activist as "a person who seeks to bring about social and political change, through various means" (Rinaldo 2013, 12) encompasses very well the activism engendered by shamanism as it encourages women to seek healing, empowerment and emancipation through their religious culture. Finally, Saba Mahmood's comments on the liberal assumption that every human being seeks to assert autonomy and that only acts that challenge social norms constitute agency, help us understand the complex standing of Korean women's resistance to patriarchal oppression (2011). In their practice of shamanism, Korean women do not entirely refuse Confucian beliefs and gendered roles such as the care for their families. On the contrary, their position in the household when they consult a shaman is reaffirmed as they are the primary caretakers of the domestic sphere - even in instances of spiritual care. However, this does not mean that they are devoid of agency, rather, Korean women create an alternative space within the cultural hegemony wherein they can exercise an independent and active role in their lives.

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An Ode to the Oppressed

Written By Waahiba Siddiqui

Violently broken, beaten and bruised
Got some thick skin from all the abuse
They always jeered but they never knew
That the bad bitch was once a victim too.

All of this violence that we despise
When it's done to women it gets normalized
We don't need no sympathy we don't need no crying
We just want a life without the fear of dying

Prayers and pity will not suffice
We need the world to realize
Longer the silence longer the war
So let her speak and walk out the door.

Working united, harmony a plus
When it's done to one it's done to all of us
Protests and preaching stronger than before
We come together to ask for more

Brutally bound, she's kept out of sight
Blamed for the things that go bump in the night
Witch or a warrior, one thing's for sure
In their eyes, she's not pure
(She must stay obscure, her job is to endure, she was made mature but she should be demure, always insecure, no more…. She'll find a cure)

Systems have failed us people have too
They only shame us, what shall we do?
But neither of them do have a clue
Justice will follow sure as the sky is blue

Bleak as our world may be right now
It's only as bad as we allow
Cultivate freedom using our plough
Life is ugly but we will not bow down, to the ground

Sisters, we listen, sisters, we unite
Fighting together to improve our plight
This is a man's world, it was implied
They've taken all our pride, they've lied, left us locked inside

Endlessly toiling through day and night
Only to wake up where nothing's right
She's got the hope for one more fight
Before she disappears into the light

She's not the only, there are many more like her
Life forced them quiet, how it'd prefer
They're standing up now for better or for worse
And wish to be reimbursed for the trauma that cannot be reversed.

We see a future, we see it bright
Free from the suffering, free from the fright
We will achieve it when we unite
Thanks to the spark that we'll ignite.

Wendy Red Star and Female, Indigenous Self-portraiture

Written by Margrethe Nielsen
Edited by Isabella Scali and Emma Gibb

Abstract

Through photography and portraiture, this paper examines the construction of a decolonial, indigenous identity in the work of Wendy Red Star. Through the artist, this paper argues that photography and self-portraiture as artistic forms are uniquely effective in the communication and construction of a decolonized indigeneity in the 21st century. Red star challenges prevailing ideas of indigenous identity through the medium of photography. The author poses this argument with an depth visual analysis of the work of Red Star, as well as that of her contemporaries Meryl McMaster and Lori Blondeau. The emphasis on the interpretation of visual evidence becomes the central methodology used in this paper.

Introduction

Photographic self-portraiture is a popular genre within the contemporary art landscape as it is an exceptionally communicative artistic methodology. Self-portraiture allows artists to fashion themselves how they choose and to communicate these fashionings effectively to viewers. To this end, photographic self-portraiture is seen as an artistic methodology of choice for artists belonging to traditionally marginalized backgrounds. Indigenous female artists such as Shelly Niro, Meryl McMaster, Lori Blondeau, and Wendy Red Star are known for their photographic self-portraiture works, which include themes of body sovereignty, irony, and satire. This paper will argue that self-photography as an artistic methodology is an effective means of communicating contemporary Indigeneity, as well as decolonizing female Indigenous identity. The central point of analysis of decolonized identity and irony will be the works of Wendy Red star, mainly White Squaw and Four Seasons (see note #1). Both series can be viewed on Wendy Red Star's Website: https://www.wendyredstar.com/.

Self-Portrait Photography as a Means of Representing Decolonized Identity

Photography is a very direct artistic medium, as it allows for the exact capturing of any given moment with limited intermediary intervention from an artist. This conceptualization has changed greatly over time, and within the work of Red Star and her contemporaries, it is evident that the artist's hand is not limited to the timed release of a shutter. The artistry that is presented in these photographs extends to the arrangement or construction of the set, as well as the costuming and posing of the artist. Due to the exactitude of the medium, as well as the depth of the artistry present in the crafting of each image, these photographic self-portraits are highly expressive and communicative. In the age of the selfie, photography and self-portraiture dominate. This is because when images include the artists themselves, it is easy to understand and thus to empathize with the perspective the artist is

depicting. As viewers, it is easy to understand art in which the central intention is self-representation. It is a very direct genre; the artist is fashioning themselves so that viewers may see them represented in this way.

For artists identifying with historically marginalized groups, the control of representational narratives incentivizes the creation of self-portraits. Drawing from art historian Heather Igloriote, visual culture is a colonizing tool to represent Indigenous peoples as historic, static and primitive. Thus, "by adopting [new modes of artistic production] Indigenous [artists] have refuted the colonial tropes of the romanticized and exoticized other," (Igloliorte, Taunton, and Nagam, 2016). Negotiations of a decolonized identity are central to Indigenous art, since the regulation of Indigenous identity has been crucial to the colonization process. Mi'kmaw scholar Bonita Lawerence writes "regulatory systems have forcibly supplanted traditional Indigenous identifying the self in relation to land and community, functioning discursively to naturalize colonial worldviews," (Lawrence, 2003). As such, issues of deconstructing and reshaping identity are central to decolonization efforts, a vastly complicated process as individual identity is considered in relation to collective tribal units as well as the colonizing society. Settler institutions and mechanisms have disrupted and controlled traditional Indigenous ways of identifying, "erasing knowledge of self, culture, and history in the process," (Lawrence, 2003, 24). To resist colonial narratives and decolonize Indigenous identity in the form of self-portraiture is an act of aesthetic activism, and in many ways, the raison d'etre for contemporary Indigenous artists (Scudeler, 12).

Further, for female artists the insurance of being understood as a subject of an artwork without fear of being diminished to the role of object is a great inducement to create self-portraits (Loewenberg, 1999). Especially for Indigenous women, who must contend not only with sexism but also with racism, the control over one's own representation is essential. Indigenous individuals, especially Indigenous women, are held hostage by the narratives of Indigeneity propagated by the hegemonic state. Indigenous female artists have turned to self-photography to illustrate ways of self that exist outside of the "bureaucratic apparatus of determination," (Scudeler, 21). Artist self-portraits have a substantial lineage in art history, but it is important to note that because of the political and socio-cultural implications discussed above, Indigenous self-portraiture exists outside of the historical meanings usually derived from these works. However, the complications and intersections within Indigenous identity create self-portraits that engage with Western art canons in their own way (Scudeler, 23).

Irony and Satire in Indigenous Art and Culture

Due to the directness and expressiveness of the medium, photography can be an effective artistic methodology among Indigenous artists as it allows for the salient understandings of themes such as irony and satire, which can otherwise be difficult to communicate effectively. Irony and satire are important tenets of Indigenous culture. As Vine Deloria Jr. writes, "the more desperate the problem, the more humor is directed to describe it. Satirical remarks often circumscribe problems so that possible solutions are drawn from the circumstances that would not make sense if presented in other than a humorous form," (Deloria, 147). Art reflects culture, and to that end it is perfectly logical that irony and satire maintain such an integral place in Indigenous art.

However, irony and satire can be difficult to communicate successfully to an audience through an artwork. Nuances can be lost and tone diminished through traditional artistic mediums like painting, but a medium such as self-portrait photography circumnavigates these issues. The artist can craft the shot exactly how she chooses, and capture it perfectly, relaying it to an audience without fear of misinterpretation. Due to the effective nature of the medium, many photographic self-portraits utilize irony and satire to communicate the central meaning of the work, which will be demonstrated in the following visual analyses of White Squaw and Four Seasons.

A Visual Analysis of White Squaw

White Squaw is a series of 24 prints based on a series of adult western romance novels of the same name published in the 1980's and 1990's. The books detail the experiences of a heroine with a mixed Indigenous background who undergoes a variety of adventures, many of them sexual in nature. In the White Squaw series, Red Star uses her visage as a means of confronting the problematic exoticization and fetishization of Indigenous women. The covers are adorned with titillating images and tag-lines rife with sexual innuendo. Red Star inserts herself onto the covers of these books; an imposition that functions as a forceful reclamation of the slur used in the titles of the books, as well as an effective means of drawing attention to the racist and sexist dialogue that is all too present in contemporary culture.

In the prints, Red Star is dressed as the main character of the book, who herself is represented in a stereotypical way. That is, with a beaded feather headband and two long braids, wearing a short and tight buckskin dress. In this series, Red Star aims not to represent herself in a culturally specific and accurate way. Instead, she parodies the audience's stereotypical expectations to effectively satirize the fetishization of Indigenous women. The costuming varies slightly from print to print with the addition of

props such as a tub of Land-o-Lakes butter, which famously features a stereotypical image of an Indigenous woman. Red Star assumes a different pose and facial expression in each of the 25 prints. Red Star's expression and body language varies throughout the prints; in some she pouts towards the camera, in others she is outwardly sexual. In the nature of seductive satire, she licks an ax while her gaze is directed at the viewer. Some are outright ridiculous, such as in print 24 where she uses the end of a feather to pick her nose. Still, some are more defiant in nature, such as in print 13 where she flips off the viewer.

This collection, with the range of facial expressions and props Red Star chooses, demonstrates the tongue-and-cheek way Red Star approached this series. The ridiculousness of her poses is consistent with the ridiculous sexual nature of these books. However, there is a difference in that Red Star is sarcastic, whereas the innuendos in the titles and taglines of the book covers were not satirical. Therefore, the imposition of Red Star's face onto the covers of these books is an intervention into the problematic narratives these books propagate. In this work, she is not representing herself as a contemporary Indigenous person, but instead as the fetishized version of Indigenous womanhood that Western media continuously instills. She uses her visage and her personhood as an Indigenous woman to implicate her viewers as consumers of media that instills harmful and racist narratives.

A Visual Analysis of Four Seasons

Four Seasons is once again an ironic pushback of how Indigenous people are conceptualized within white, Western society. In Four Seasons, Red Star pictures herself dressed in formal Apsáalooke regalia and surrounded by artificial turf, inflatable animals, plastic flowers, and various two-dimensional backgrounds. In each scene, Red Star crafted elaborate "sets" that appear as dioramas present in history museums. This work is situated with the context of how museums have displayed and crafted public perceptions of Indigeneity and inflicted historicization of Indigenous cultures. Objects with suspicious provenances are displayed in history museums as relics of a vanished race. In an urban contemporary setting, this may very well be the only contact the public has with Indigenous culture, and seeing it framed within the context of a relic in a museum affixes a static temporality to a viewer's understanding of Indigeneity. This is exceptionally problematic for contemporary Indigenous individuals who have identities outside of the narratives dictated by the hegemonic state. Representations of contemporary Indigenous identity and culture are situated within these narratives but tools such as irony and juxtaposition are used by contemporary artists to challenge

these notions. This is seen in Red Star's Four Seasons.

Red Star noted that the idea for this project came to her while she was completing her graduate degree in Los Angeles. She was feeling homesick, and she knew that the only place in the city that would have elements of her culture would be the Natural History Museum. Red Star recognized the situational humor present in this and channeled it into the Four Seasons series. In this manner, Red Star is drawing inspiration from the problematic ways in which Indigeneity is represented in Western culture and is using irony to challenge these notions in her art.

Unlike in the White Squaw series, Red Star is dressed in a traditional and culturally specific and accurate way. She is wearing an iichíilihtawaleiittaashte, or an elk-tooth dress, which is an important status symbol for Apsáalooke women. Her hair is also plaited in keeping with traditional Apsáalooke custom. This styling as authentically Indigenous creates a juxtaposition to the fake set Red Star is posed within. It is through this tension that the meaning of the work is realized, as it situates Red Star within the discourse of what it means to be a contemporary Indigenous person when confronted with a world that continues to historicize Indigenous experiences.

Additionally, Red Star is posed in a manner consistent with the typology of the "stoic Native". This image of Indigenous people is as realistic as the AstroTurf she is sitting on, and in this way, the artwork functions as a method for negotiating an Indigenous identity outside of the confines of the hegemonic state and culture. Red Star refuses to be considered a relic of a bygone era, instead she fashions herself in a greatly ironic context to draw attention to her real and contemporary existence. In this way, her imagery is empowering and successfully communicative.

Red Star's Work in Situ with her Contemporaries

Red Star is but one Indigenous woman who has produced self-portrait photography. The abundance of artists working within this medium, such as Shelly Niro, Meryl McMaster, and Lori Blondeau, is proof that it is effective and allows for greater artistic agency among artists belonging to marginalized groups. This follows the general trend that "Indigenous artists have always already been innovators and have therefore been at the forefront of practice and technologically oriented methods and methodologies," (Igloliorte, Taunton, and Nagam, 7). While the methodologies are the same across the work of many artists, they are applied to different ends. However, there is evidence of central common themes such as a reclamation of sexuality and cultural identity.

Blondeau's Lonely Surfer Squaw - which can also be viewed at www.canadianart.ca/reviews/lori-blondeau/ - pictures the artist posing in

a beaver skin bikini on an arctic beach. In this image, Blondeau is satirizing a pin-up magazine in reclamation of the Western fetishization of Indigenous women, her costuming plays into stereotypical expectations of female Indigeneity. The ridiculousness of the image, including the fur bikini and the inflatable surfboard, echoes Red Star's White Squaw series. Blondeau is therefore calling out the racist expectations of the hegemonic state as well as reclaiming agency over her body. Additionally, she titles the work using a slur, as another act of reclamation. This is, again, like Red Star's White Squaw series, which serves as a reclamation of the same word.

McMaster's work, Calling Me Home - which can be viewed at www.artsy.net/artwork/meryl-mcmaster-calling-me-home - is a self-portrait of the artist in which she wears a blue and yellow bison mask holding a rope that is dropped into the lake behind her. This work alludes to a Plains Cree story of the Buffalo Child Stone in which a young boy was raised by bison after being separated from his parents. When reunited with his parents, the boy could not decide whether to stay a bison or rejoin the humans, and so he became a stone bison for eternity. The Buffalo Child Stone was thus a sacred gathering place for the Plains Cree people, but in act of settler-colonial violence it was dynamited to create a man-made lake. It is at this lake that McMaster has extended the rope she holds in the image.

McMaster's work often focuses on the construction of her identity as a person with mixed heritage. In Calling Me Home, McMaster alludes to the sacred story and honours it, while also drawing attention to the other half of her heritage in the form of the rope. The dropped rope literally ties her to the colonial powers that decimated the sacred Indigenous space. McMaster's identity is defined both within the confines and in opposition to the colonial state, and she uses photographic self-portraiture to negotiate this complicated identity. There are similarities between this work and Four Seasons, in that both pieces rely heavily on the background as a signifier of meaning. While the background in McMaster's work is genuine and grounds the work to its historic context, the artificial background of Red Star's work allows for the juxtaposition of artificial and genuine which is central to the meaning of Four Seasons.

Conclusion

As I argue throughout this essay, the direct medium of self-portraiture allows for effective negotiations of decolonized Indigenous identity, as well as resistance to racist and sexist narratives about Indigeneity that abound in Western society. As discussed, common themes throughout self-portrait photographs include irony, satire, and a reclamation of empowered sexuality. These themes

are present in Red Star's White Squaw and Four Seasons series, as well as in the work of her contemporaries, Lonely Surfer Squaw and Calling Me Home. Common artistic methodologies and similar imagery allows links to be created between these artists, ultimately with the intent of proving that "through gathering and networking, Indigenous voices and perspectives come together, are centrally positioned, and ultimately combat the colonial marginalization of Indigenous epistemologies and ontologies," (Igloliorte, Taunton, and Nagam, 7). These similarities in themes between the works are indicative of the artists working within the frame of aesthetic activism, and it is this aesthetic activism that proves useful for female Indigenous artists in representing decolonized identity.

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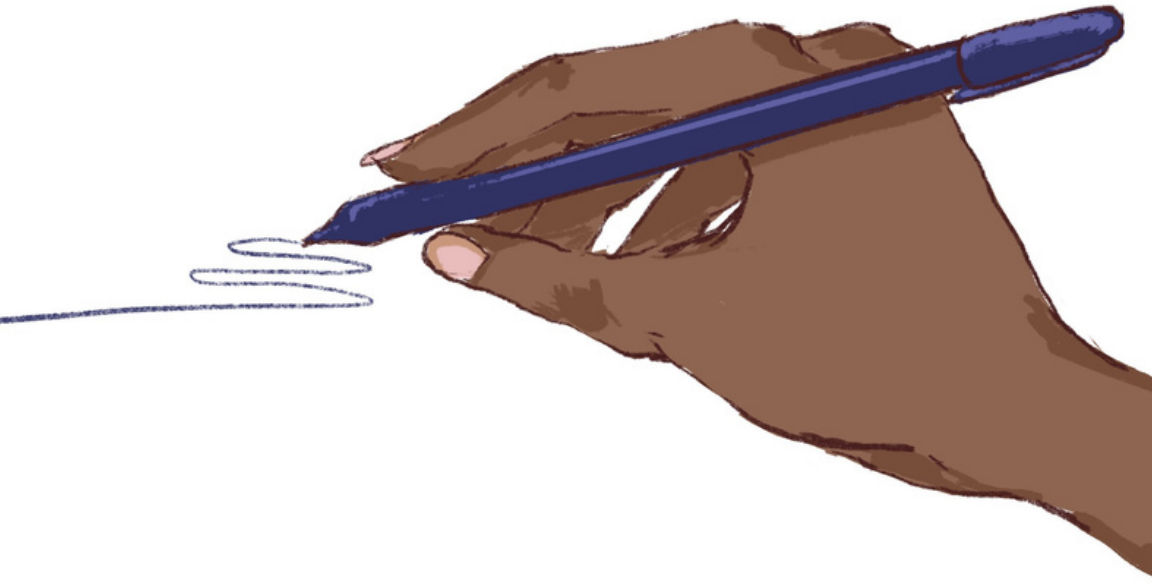
Reading and Writing as Colonized Tools of Insider/Outsider Binaries in the Feminist Movement



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Abstract

This paper dissects the presence of colonial presuppositions in the relationship between academia and the written word. It argues that the privileged position of the written word precludes non-western cultures or movements from being granted the legitimacy that written knowledge has. The inclusion and validation of other forms of knowledge thus present powerful feminist and decolonial potential. This paper establishes the argument by reviewing feminist literature on the subjects of written knowledge and insider/outsider binaries within academia and activism.

Western education and academia have placed intellectual superiority on the hegemonic knowledge-guarding capabilities of reading and writing. With this comes a casual disregard of other cultural mediums to convey knowledge, information, and stories — resulting in ingroup and outgroup binaries that push non-reading and writing cultures to the margins of feminism. Pushing back against this marginalization, Jana Sequoya Magdaleno argues that Indigenous writers who engage solely in written dialogue reinforce practices of othering and assimilation (Sequoya, 2005). Magdaleno highlights how reading and writing needs to be analyzed and understood as a tool shrouded in controversy and possible imperialist intentions (Sequoya, 2005). In a similar vein, the work of Uma Narayan draws connections to the essentializations of non-Western cultures by feminists (Narayan, 2000). By falling into the same essentialist tendencies that once entrapped women, the feminist movement continues perpetuating ingroup and outgroup binary mentalities. In our time, these tendencies manifest in the othering of non-Western women in relation to white-women rather than women in relation to men. This connects Narayan's work, in particular, to the work of Ien Ang.

Ang deconstructs notions of a shared 'sisterhood' and shared women's experience "popularized in the early days of the second wave" of feminism (Ang, 191). Ang's work draws attention to the ways ingroup and outgroup mentalities are maintained for people who don't share experience with white, Western, upper-class women. Given how these essentialized perceptions of womanhood and culture are contested by post-colonial theory, reading and writing differences must follow as another theory of analysis. Investigation of hegemonic reading and writing practices and differences is needed in post-colonial feminist theory to properly disengage the colonialist legacies of the work of feminists.

Authors are the keepers of this imperialist-endorsed practice — and in

post-colonial feminist theory, they must also attempt to use the tools, crafted by colonialism, to unpack or even dismantle the very system which disseminated the primacy of the tools themselves. Conversely, Audre Lorde, a canonized feminist writer, reminds us, "the master's tools will never dismantle the master's house" (Lorde 1984). Yet, the supplementary logic of postcolonial critiques suggests that the tools can nevertheless be allies in this discourse, even if they cannot be entirely relied on to serve justice. This practice — in a paradoxical tension — is most apparent in the works of Gayatri Spivak and Linda Tuhiwai Smith, and becomes a point of differentiation among 'Third-world' feminists (Smith and Spivak, 83). Ingroups and outgroups are perpetuated by the imperialist tools of reading and writing hegemony. Authors of post-colonial feminist theory must therefore address the power of such mediums in their texts, and work to destabilize the hegemony of these colonized literacy regimes.

The proposed natural allegiances formed by the shared experiences of women, as counterposed to either fundamental or contingent differences, entered feminist debates and discourses at the turn of the second wave. This acknowledgement or notion of a "global sisterhood" falls out of commonality among women, as its primary use at the time was to place primacy on white, Western, upper-class feminists (Ang s191). "Dealing with difference" (Ang 192) is a prominent feature of Ang's perspective on this homogenization of cultures, and has posed a recurring question that the feminist movement has addressed only with great difficulty. This need to "deal with difference" has been problematized by Ang (2003). She emphasizes that feminists must not gloss over differences — or alternatively address them solely through dialogue or communication — as this narrative of "dealing with difference" in itself can be extremely harmful insofar as it places cultures in 'to-do' boxes to be considered until they are ultimately done and closed, devoid of further consideration or change (Ang 192-3). Ang warns us that a disregard for difference along these lines could uproot much of what feminism has done (Ang 192-3). Such 'package pictures' of cultures — an idea proposed by Narayan — results in harmful dialogue that reduces and essentializes peoples and cultures outside of Western hegemonic feminism to categories and check-boxes rather than a changing, complete, and complex entity (Narayan 1083).

Discourses which are critical of the Western hegemonic feminist movement often possess a critical and prescriptive lens when it comes to recognizing and accepting differences instead of the impossible pursuit to solve them (Ang, 193). As colonizers approached a region to control and colonize, they often sought to correct what they deemed as '

psavage' in order to save a region from itself — the epitome of a white saviour complex. With that in mind, the notion of "dealing with difference" perpetuated by the Western feminist movement could be seen as a direct derivation of colonial tendencies to 'repair' difference in non-Western, non-European cultures and create similarities to the colonial ideal of white patriarchy. By placing cultures in 'package pictures' as Narayan describes as essentializing cultures into discrete packages, or engaging with actions to 'deal with difference,' feminists risk ignoring colonial legacies of genocide, conquest, and control — and thereby re-create them through dialogues of assimilation (Narayan 1083). The difference between the ingroups and outgroups among feminists can be understood as a defining feature of feminist movements. These group binaries can, however, permeate further into smaller group dynamics that focus on one non-white culture.

Magdaleno's text "How(!) is an Indian?" describes the ways Indigenous writers engage in storytelling that reinforces colonial forces of assimilation (Sequoya Magdaleno 2000). Moreover, this association is made to draw attention to the various imperialist constraints of participating in colonial-endorsed rules of writing and storytelling. In addition to this, the relationships Indigenous authors may have to their own language and writing are also problematized by these colonial rules of narration (Sequoya Magdaleno 2000, 280-1). Sequoya Magdaleno suggests that ingroup and outgroup dynamics within Indigenous cultures could be further widened and accentuated by Indigenous authors who fall into the trap of colonial generalization through their written narratives. Indigenous writers can thus be subject to the othering practices of colonization which further marginalizes the Indigenous form giving into common generalizations and stereotypes internalized by Western and Indigenous (Sequoya Magdaleno 2000, 280). The fluidity and association of Indigenous cultures cannot be captured through literature or writing, and are better understood as life beyond pages, books, and material objects (Sequoya Magdaleno 2000, 288). Sequoya Magdaleno's main dispute is that if cultural revitalization is to occur — especially in the context of Indigenous cultures — then literary works and written texts must actively contest whether their mediums and the knowledge they produce as potentially inappropriate compared to more culturally applicable forms of storytelling (Sequoya Magdaleno 2000, 288).

Mediums and materials used by cultures in storytelling are in many ways just as important to the impression than the story itself. Furthermore, when academics and authors do not represent

these cultures in their intended mediums, they negatively impact efforts of cultural revitalization and understanding (Sequoya Magdaleno 2000, 288). Understanding the 'insider' and 'outsider' binary narratives addressed by Sequoya Magdaleno in consultation with cultural mediums and representations beyond Western terms and languages, the works of Narayan and Ang all come to a resounding conclusion that difference cannot be solved, cultures cannot be packaged, and words cannot represent all. With these conclusions, what is the relevance of greater colonial constructions of history and in what ways do Indigenous oral histories contest and contextualize the need for literacy, and colonial conceptions of written history?

"I lack language / The language to clarify my resistance to the literate" (Smith 2012, 90) deeply debilitates the need to operate within colonial-sponsored texts, discourses, and acts of resistance. The radical rejection of today's hegemonic forms of communication presents itself as a revitalizing effort, often leading back to legitimations of Indigenous oral histories (Smith 2012, 79). Western viewpoints of history have been allowed to permeate the minds of younger cultural generations through schooling, academia, and written texts (Smith 2012, 79). History is about power (Smith 2012, 79) — who had power over who, and how he wrote it down.

Smith suggests that radical reconceptualizations of history placing primacy on oral knowledge can be a host for active resistance strategies to decolonize (Smith 2012, 81). Smith indicates that "Coming to know the past has been part of the critical pedagogy of decolonization. To hold alternative histories is to hold alternative knowledge." (Smith 2012, 81) In this view, holding alternative knowledge promotes the critical lenses to view culture removed from the Western patriarchal gaze.

Smith emphasizes this need for alternate histories, but given this need to experience cultural materials in their own mediums, what happens when Western academia endeavours to incorporate oral histories of Indigenous peoples? What happens when academics attempt to bolster oral histories' legitimacy by including them in syllabi and articles? Smith fails to address these questions precisely. In our era's history-teaching practices, oral histories have gained legitimacy, but not without wear. In my own classes, pre-colonial Ethiopian oral histories were reduced to text copied onto a page taken out of its cultural context, placed in academia supplementally, on the podium of progress within colonized ivy-covered stone walls. Oral histories are lost when they are separated from their context of cultural practices. By attempting to bridge knowledge within history, academia risk perpetuating the same p

problematic practice as the notion of 'dealing with difference' in the feminist movement. They take cultural values and try to fit or mould them into a Western space to be consumed, much as white Western material is.

While asserting, therefore, that materials and mediums are only fully understood within their cultural contexts, we must also conversely consider Spivak's take on writing within a transnational feminist setting. "Literacy is poison as well as medicine," (Chakravorty Spivak 1992, 16) and to benefit and share in a transnational literary space is about making the voices of non-white feminists heard. Transnational literacy, according to Spivak, allows women's 'third-world' feminist voices to be better heard outside their own contexts and permeate theory (Chakravorty Spivak 1992, 19). Encouraging transnational women to "take up the pen" (Chakravorty Spivak 1992, 21) achieves its most substantial inherent value when posed in contrast to the colonial suppression of those meanings — where the engagement of writing and disseminating written work is ultimately regarded as a complete truth.

Spivak's telos, though admirable, is still lacking as is problematized by the authors mentioned earlier: Ang, Lorde, Narayan, Sequoya and Smith. If we understand — as Sequoya Magdaleno would — picking up a pen as the engagement and legitimization of this colonial-sponsored hegemonic medium, Spivak only focuses on surface-level decolonization. While that can be the first step, it can also paradoxically prevent further steps, and negatively impact the cultures represented by not providing the subtext and medium needed. However, while "taking up the pen" (Chakravorty Spivak 1992, 21) is inherently tied to imperialist modes of knowledge-keeping, pens are not the only way to convey information and truth. Mediums are not fixed, and just as culture, they can be interpreted and created. Spivak encourages voices to be heard, but this is not necessarily only through written works. Cultural mediums are extremely vast and must be legitimized in their own forms. Thus, the metaphorical pen should be replaced with sets of constellated, situated cultural mediums unencumbered or limited by colonial-derived materials and mind-sets.

Writing — even and perhaps especially here, in an essay based on the power of print — about the hegemonic imperialist tendencies of reading and writing practices, in the context of post-colonial feminist theory, is paradoxical and problematic in itself. While the authors cited in this paper actively contest it, they remain hard-pressed to expand beyond the white pages and monochrome typefaces perpetuated by inherited systems of patriarchy, power, and control.

The stipulated interpolation of insiders

and outsiders in Western feminist theories proliferate anywhere cultural difference finds primacy or relevance only within the limited Western cultural mediums of reading and writing. However, this difference cannot be 'dealt with' in that it is not a checkbox on the new feminist agenda. We cannot "deal with difference" by transcribing oral histories to be consumed as written material in Western classrooms. This difference in knowledge production between cultures could be sustained and should never be denoted as a fixable matter. The most important aspect to acknowledging the complexity of knowledge across cultures and difference is providing legitimacy to the 'outgroup' or non-Western feminists to close this binary. Mediums and subtext must be of greater consideration in the knowledges we permeate or replicate in post-colonial feminist theory as we attempt to destabilize the white patriarchal hegemon of reading and writing truth. When literature reviews become a point of discussion over cultures within feminist works, we cease to acknowledge and provide legitimacy to these cultures in their own stead, outside of colonial constructions. "The master's tools will never dismantle the master's house" (Lorde 1984) and pen and paper are unequivocally those tools if they cease to evolve or account for their limits.

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While many of our pieces in this issue deal with difficult subjects, we want to provide readers with resources that can be found within and beyond the McGill community.

Montreal Sexual Assault Centre - 1-888-933-9007 or 1-514-933-9007 (crisis line) or info@cvasm.ca

Provincial Helpline for Victims of Sexual Assault: 1-888-933-9007

West Island CALACS - 514.684.2198 or info@calacsdelouest.ca

The Resource and Information Centre for Men Sexually Abused in their Childhood (CRI-PHASE) - 514.529.5567

Shield of Athena crisis line - 514.270.2900

The Third Eye Collective - thirdeyecollective514@gmail.com

Native Friendship Centre - 514-499-1854

Centre for Gender Advocacy - Telephone: 514-848-2424 x7431 or Peer Support Line: 514-848-2424 x7880

Pride Therapy Network of Montreal - info@montrealpridetherapynetwork.com

Crisis Text Line - Text ‘CONNECT’ to 686-868

Suicide Action Montreal - 1-866-277-3553

Trans Lifeline - 877-330-6366

Face a Face - Service line for those experiencing homelessness - 514-934-4546