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Toppled Monuments and Black Lives Matter: Race, Gender, and Decolonization in the Public Space. An Interview with Charmaine A. Nelson

by Christiana Abraham

Abstract: This paper discusses the recent backlash against public monuments spurred by Black Lives Matter (BLM) protests in North America and elsewhere following the killing by police of George Floyd, an unarmed African-American man in the United States. Since this event, protestors have taken to the streets to bring attention to police brutality, systemic racism, and racial injustice faced by Black and Indigenous people and people of colour in the United States, Canada, Great Britain and some European countries. In many of these protests, outraged citizens have torn down, toppled, or defaced monuments of well-known historic figures associated with colonialism, slavery, racism, and imperialism. Protestors have been demanding the removal of statues and monuments that symbolize slavery, colonial power, and systemic and historical racism. What makes these monuments problematic and what drives these deliberate and spectacular acts of defiance against these omnipresent monuments? Featuring an interview with art historian Charmaine A. Nelson, this article explores the meanings of these forceful, decolonial articulations at this moment. The interview addresses some complex questions related to monumentalization and the public sphere, symbolism and racial in/justice. In so doing, it suggests that monuments of the future need to be reimagined and redefined contemporaneously with shifting social knowledge and generational change.

Keywords: decoloniality; gendered representations; monumental recontextualization; public space; racial in/justice; symbolism; toppled monuments

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Introduction

The police killing of George Floyd, an unarmed African-American man in Minneapolis, United States, in early 2020 unleashed a wave of angry street protests led by the Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement. Huge anti-racism protests featuring tens of thousands of persons of diverse races and ages, that began largely in the United States, have brought attention to the proliferation of police brutality, systemic racism, and racial in/justice (Cheung 2020; Altman 2020).

The replay in the media of video that captured the arrest and slow, public killing of Floyd sent ripples across the world in the weeks and months that followed, spurring protests in Canada, Europe, and further afield (Bennett et al. 2020; Aljazeera 2020).

As part of these manifestations, protestors have taken to demonstrating against statues and public monuments (MacDonald 2020; Selvin and Solomon 2020). These targeted monuments are viewed as heroizing persons associated with colonialism, slavery, and imperialism. Hence, protestors demand the removal of these symbols of slavery or colonial power. Monuments that have received the most vehement protestations are those representing historical figures, recognized slave traders or owners, or those viewed as having supported outright racist policies against Indigenous, Black, and other racialized people. In these protests, prominent public monuments have been pulled down, defaced, painted over, toppled, graffitied, reconfigured, restaged, and reimagined in myriad ways (Draper 2020; Togoh 2020).

Colonial figures, confederate generals, and slave traders across the United States, Great Britain, and Europe have received the brunt of protestations. In the United States, protestors targeted monuments of Christopher Columbus to whom historical texts have falsely attributed the 'discovery' of the Americas (Dunbar-Ortiz and Gilio-Whitaker 2016). Also singled out was the statue of American president Andrew Jackson, a slave owner, and General Robert E. Lee, a confederate general who fought on the side of the Confederacy during the American Civil War (Draper 2020). In Bristol, United Kingdom, the statue of Edward Colston was spectacularly toppled by a large crowd and ceremoniously dumped into the harbour (Togoh 2020). Colston was a well-known slave trader who trafficked enslaved people at that very port. In Belgium, statues of King Leopold II were targeted (Rannard 2020). Leopold is known for his violent policies in the Congo Free State in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries that saw millions of Congolese people killed and maimed (Hochschild 1998).

In Canada, various statues of the first prime minister, Sir John A. Macdonald, were selected. A group protesting against police violence in Montreal, pulled a statue of Macdonald off its plinth such that it was decapitated as it crashed to the ground (CBC 2020). (See Figures 1 and 2).

Activists, demanding that these statues be brought down, say their aim is to change historical narratives and to remind people of the full and complex biographies of these heroized figures who actively participated in the often-genocidal marginalization of Black and Indigenous people and other people of colour. As David MacDonald writes, "These protests highlight the racism of these infamous figures, the racist societies that produced these representations and the ways these representations and these statues continue to both normalize and obscure settler violence and systemic racism" (MacDonald, 2020).

Noticeable in these overt public performances of dissent are expressions of disdain for representations of colonial and racist power and its racist outcomes. MacDonald describes this aspect of the protests: "Protestors beheaded Christopher Columbus, pitched Edward Colston into the sea, pelted Cecil Rhodes with excrement, doused John A. Macdonald with paint" (2020). Similarly, in London, a statue of Winston Churchill was defaced (see Figure 3); in Antwerp, a statue of King Leopold II was set on fire (Togoh, 2020); and in Cape Town, South Africa, a statue of British imperialist Cecil Rhodes was decapitated (BBC 2020).

These emphatic and symbolic displays re-enact a type of historical poetic street justice that draws attention to the violent nature of colonialism and its lingering legacy. Supporters of this movement say that the offending monuments should be removed, while those who disagree say the past cannot be erased, arguing that those who profited from slavery cannot be judged by today's standards.

Figure 1: Toppled statue of John A. Macdonald lies on the ground after protestors pull it off its plinth in Montreal. (Photo © Canadian Press MacDonald)

Figure 2: The head of the statue of John A. Macdonad lies a few feet away from the body after the statue was toppled to the ground in Montreal. (Photo © Canadian Press MacDonald)

Monuments and Monumentalization

These targeted public sculptures are monumental structures that represent persons who once lived. Cast in stone, marble, iron, or bronze, these larger-than-life figures are usually mounted on tall stone or concrete plinths high above street level. Figures depicted are commonly staged in bold ceremonial wear, sometimes posed on a horse as a representation of human greatness (Dickerman 2018). As spectacles designed to dominate the public space, these monuments and statues are rife with symbolism that conflate lofty imagery with common national identity in the production of myth. They function as collective narratives in the production of heroes worthy of public adoration (Dickerman 2018).

Critical theorists suggest that these monuments are not neutral but powerful technologies that vehiculate selective historical narratives rife with ideology (Nelson 2017). They can be viewed as forceful forms of selected memory framing socially constructed public consciousness which tell the public how they should view historical figures. As Dickerman suggests, “You can think of monuments as

the expression of forms of collective memory as doing a kind of political editing of the past, what has been excised is made visible in a bid for remembrance" (Dickerman, 190).

These public monuments offer a selection of people deemed the heroes of history by ruling settler governments and powerful lobbying bodies, but these selections reflect hegemonic histories bereft of or blatantly celebrating the imperial violence inherent to them. They offer poignant narratives of those who should be imagined as heroes, but what is problematic is the narratives that are left out of these public displays. The production of monumental heroes simultaneously produces anti-heroes as those characters in history deemed to be forgotten (and forgettable) or symbolically devalued. And these are the unspoken or unwritten histories which are brought into focus by the monumental protests, in both literal and symbolic forms.

Figure 3. A Statue of Winston Churchill defaced by BLM protestors in London, England, June 2020. (Photo credit: Ehimetalor Akhere Unuabona on Unsplash.)

Statues and monuments are thus built to remind people how to remember history, but their deliberately falling in the act of protest signals a shift in social consciousness about who should be commemorated and how history should be told. The toppling of these monuments can be seen as a symbolic falling of the history that they represent.

Monumental Targeting, Not So New

Shepherd Mpofu remind us that these acts of deliberate earmarking of monuments are not new. They evoke similar disruptive actions that deliberately targeted colonial monuments by "fallist" movements of the past. Advocates for the falling of statues and monuments, referred to as "fallists" (Mpofu 2017), are ideologically positioned in provoking the symbolic falling of old, oppressive systems that privilege rich and White members of communities while marginalizing minorities and people of colour.

Recent movements such as #RhodesMustFall led by students in South Africa in 2015, and the United Kingdom, in the following year, deliberately targeted colonial monuments. This student-led movement in South Africa demanded and removal of the statue of Cecil Rhodes at the University of Cape Town (UCT). Rhodes, a notorious colonial-era explorer, is celebrated for his role in the expansion of the British Empire in Africa in the late nineteenth century. But, as John Newsinger points out, to many South Africans, the Rhodes statue is viewed as symbolizing the brutal conquest and exploitation of the African continent through vicious military and clandestine advances that included the capture, rape, torture, and killing of thousands of native Africans in order to lay siege to the land (Newsinger 2016).

Similarly, the #RhodesMustFall campaign picked up steam at Oxford University by 2016, with a student-led campaign for the removal of the statue of Cecil Rhodes at Oriel College. At Oxford, Rhodes is revered as an important benefactor after whom buildings (Rhodes House) and scholarships (the Rhodes Scholars program) have been named. Student activists on the other hand, view his legacy as an extension of the brutality of British imperialism that should be revisited and made right in the production of historical memory.

To Verity Platt, modern-day "fallist" practices echo philosopher Bruno Latour's notion of "iconoclash" as a powerful form of social change. Iconoclash features the

clashing of old and new images that results in the public replacement of figurative and literal images with new ones. The falling of monuments, like that of Edward Colston in Bristol, evokes the Roman practice of damnatio memoriae (condemnation of the memory) (Platt 2020), as the ritual removal and destruction of public figures that have fallen from grace.

> This equivalence between statue and body is also a striking feature of recent events, as when the fellers of Colston kneeled on his neck in an echo of the death of George Floyd. In an act of symbolic revenge, a figure who profited from the oppression of Black bodies (and whose monument was itself a perpetuation of this oppression) was subjected to the same violence perpetrated by his 21st-century successors (Platt 2020).

In this case, the physical monuments viewed as stand-ins for colonialism's legacy of systemic violence are forced to undergo similar violence as public ritual which, in the process, produces powerful new images and memories. These acts of tumbling monuments in the current context raise an array of issues about race and racialization, colonialism's knowledges and legacies, police violence, and inequalities. They also raise questions about the monuments themselves. What is their usefulness in changing times, and how can future monumentalization be imagined?

This article explores some of these complex issues associated with the toppling of monuments. It features an interview with Charmaine A. Nelson, Tier I Canada Research Chair in Transatlantic Black Diasporic Art & Community Engagement at the Nova Scotia College of Art & Design University (NSCAD), Halifax. Nelson offers an interpretation of the moment through an in-depth qualitative interview by discussing the complex nature of race, representation, symbolisms, historicity, and futurism, associated with the recent global toppling of monuments and statues. A former professor in Art History at McGill University, Nelson's research focuses on the Black female figure in western art, postcolonial and Black feminist scholarship, transatlantic slavery and Black diaspora studies. She has made groundbreaking contributions to the fields of the visual culture of slavery, race, and representation, and Black Canadian Studies. A prolific writer and commentator, she has frequently commented on the histories and representation of Black populations in the Canadian media. This interview was conducted in the summer of 2020, via zoom during the COVID-19 shut down, and in the midst of worldwide protests when many monuments came toppling down.

Interview with Charmaine A. Nelson

Christiana Abraham (CA): Can you please introduce yourself, who you are, and what your work is about?

Charmaine. A. Nelson (CAN): I am the Canada Research Chair in Black Diasporic Art and Community Engagement at the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design University (NSCAD) which is in Halifax, Nova Scotia. My specialization began by looking at art that represented Black female subjects. So, my MA thesis for instance, focused on mid-twentieth-century Canadian painters who were of European ancestry who focused on Black Canadian female subjects, nudes as well as portraits and figure paintings. Then my PhD focused on a similar subject, so I stayed with Black female subjects, but I looked at the American context in a slightly earlier period, in the period of just before and during the American Civil War, that was between the 1850s to about 1875. I looked at many of the artists who sculpted almost exclusively in white marble, so they were known aesthetically as neo-classicists because they looked back to Greek and Roman antiquity as a paradigm or the epitome of art that transpired before them. But what was interesting about them was that many of them were explicitly political in their agendas and in their ideologies in terms of why they made art and what they focused on. What I mean was that a lot of them were abolitionists. Slavery in the United States didn't end until the Civil War in 1865. So, many of these artists deliberately sculpted Black subjects, male and female,[1] to push for abolition or the end of slavery in their nation. After that period, they pushed for the reconstruction or the creation of a better nation that was not just free of slavery, but that had been reconstructed in terms of racial equity and racial justice.

CA: What is a public monument? Why are monuments important?

CAN: This is something a lot of people generally don't think about unless, let's say, you come from an art history background and you studied public sculpture and monuments before.[2] It takes a tremendous amount of cultural, social, political, and economic capital to be able

to erect a public monument. So, if you or I or anybody else wanted to say, "Hey let's just go put a monument up on the corner of St. Catherine's and McGill College boulevard [in Montreal]," we could not do that. You have to work for instance with a municipality or city where you want to erect the monument. You have to be given permission to use that public land. And then, you also require the money and the wherewithal to hire suitable artists, in this case, a sculptor in monumental work.

We need to think of the types of images, or which human beings are memorialized in monuments. This brings us to the question of how it is that our cultural landscapes in Canada and other countries in the West look the way they do? So, many monuments were built to white men, and this raises the question who had the power and the cultural capital? It was white men, historically, from colonial societies built on racial and patriarchal hierarchies that excluded women from having social, political, and legal voices. So, there's a reason why the cultural landscape is so biased towards white males and we need to think about the function of most of these monuments.

Why do we put up monuments? Usually to people we want to heroize or to situations that we're mourning or commemorating, or a monument to a prime minister, a president, a war hero. Often, how you represent that will be through allegory and different symbolism.[3] But in terms of people who get enshrined in monuments, usually they're people who are deemed to be social heroes for a certain reason. So, here lies the question of the public outcry in this moment and the controversy in who we have chosen to commemorate and heroize in and from the past. These things are being brought into question now.

CA: The issue of public monuments is very important. States and institutions have used them in various forms of public education, to influence history and public discourses. How would you describe the role of public historical monuments in Canada?

CAN: We need to understand the role that art and visual cultures played in politics throughout the world, across different spectrums of politics and across different nations. What is the political intention behind representing people in those institutions in that way? In Canada you would find very few eighteenth-century monuments, in part, because we just didn't have the art schools, artists, and professional sculptors established in that period. We remained loyal to the British Empire during the Revolutionary War and so when Britain abolished slavery in 1834 we were a part of the British Empire. We didn't have an explosion of monuments in the years after that, like the USA because a lot of the Confederate monuments [in the United States] didn't go up right after the Civil War was over. They went up a few years later.

So, we don't have the same history in Canada of fighting a war to end slavery. That is what the civil war was.[4] In the USA, the North wanted to end slavery and the South wanted just keep slavery and expand it. There was a nostalgia for slavery that sparked that cultural proliferation and the growth in those monuments in the South.

So, as a nation we don't have as many public monuments as the US, but that's not to say that we don't have colonial and racist monuments. We do. We do have the Nelson monuments, the Queen Victorias,[5] the Sir John A. MacDonalds,[6] but they look different because our national history is different. Montreal is interesting because you have a set of monuments that have been put up to mainly white male colonizers, either British or French.[7] There are dual monuments in the city because of the history of French colonization, then British conquest that you wouldn't see in other provinces in the same way. In Canada, many of our monuments show a nostalgia for colonial conquest.

CA: In what specific ways are these colonial monuments problematic?

CAN: I say to Black and Indigenous people and people of colour, what do these monuments do? If you go to the De Maisonneuve monument in old Montreal, across from the Notre-Dame Basilica, you would see a kneeling Indigenous figure at the feet of De Maisonneuve, who is a White francophone hero raised on a pedestal.[8] The kneeling Indigenous figure is not meant to be a portrait. It is not a specific Indigenous man. It is just supposed to be a crouching, abject Indigenous figure. [See Figures 4 and 5]

This is what is done to Black and Indigenous figures all of the time throughout the history of western sculpture. For example, consider the crouching Black man, kneeling beneath Lincoln's extended hand in all the abolitionist monuments [in the US]. We need to think about how Black and Indigenous people and people of colour are

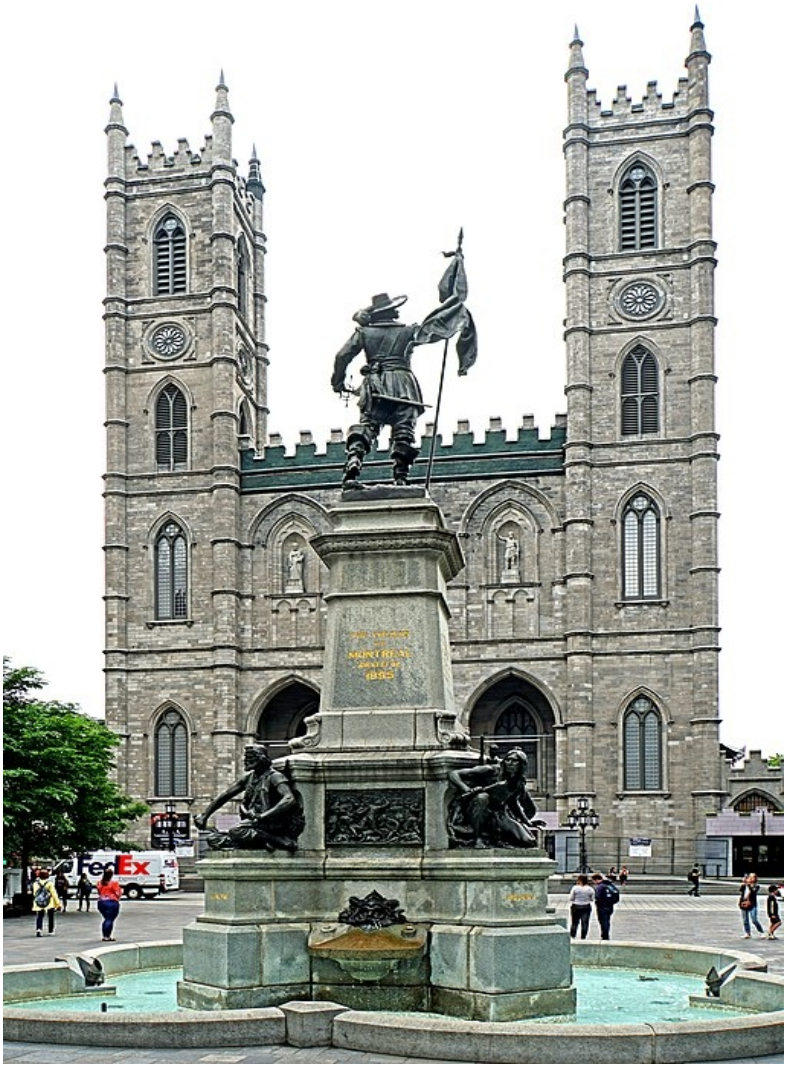

Figure 4. A grand statue of Paul Chomedy de Maisonneuve, founder of Montreal, outside the Notre-Dame Basilica in Montreal, featuring an Indigenous figure at the statue's base. (Photo credit: Maisonneuve Monument and Basilica by Dennis Jarvis, licensed with CC BY-SA 2.0.)

incorporated in these monuments. If they are there at all, they're almost never the central figure. This is what we need to think about. [See Figure 6.]

To whom are those monuments built and how then do we have to redress this idea of what history is. Let's be frank, history is written by the victors. So, Black people and Indigenous people never made anything worthy of contemplation? Of course that's false! This idea that the monument is a factual representation of a history that's written in stone that is handed down from a deity? That's wrong. So that's something that needs to be disrupted, especially in the Canadian context, because we don't have the background in Canadian history or in art history as a lay public or in academia. So, we need to think about what is the background that Canadians need to be able to approach these monuments critically and with some knowledge, in terms of the complexity of those histories and frankly, the falseness of the histories that have been written until this point.

CA: What are some of the ways in which we can approach this practice of monument building in the Canadian public space in terms of gender? It is clear that there is a scarcity of women's monuments and statues in the public spaces in which we live, however women have always been there, and they have done significant things.

CAN: The absence of depictions of women in monuments in the Canadian cultural landscape is directly con-

nected to sexism and racism in our society. Of course, this deficit has impacted all women, but Black and Indigenous women and women of colour most profoundly. Traditionally, the women who have been represented have been white women of the upper classes—like Queen Victoria—or female allegories who are often coupled with portraits of white men. These allegories are not portraits—representations of individual females who lived—but symbolic representations of things like victory, death etc., that provide a context for the deeds of the man/men who are customarily the central figures. Although women have always made significant contributions to Canadian society, we have not been represented as individual human beings in monuments because we have been denied the cultural, economic, and political capital that it takes to erect monuments in public spaces. But if we claim to be an inclusive society that acknowledges and seeks to dismantle systemic racism and sexism, we must commit to the radical diversification of the Canadian cultural landscape which includes its monuments.[9]

Figure 5. Iroquois figure at the base of the statue of Paul Chomedy de Maisonneuve at Notre Dame Basilica in Montreal. (Photo credit: "Iroquois" by archer10 (Dennis) licensed with CC BY-SA 2.0.)

CA: What is the significance of the recent public backlash against monuments in particular in the United States and Great Britain in response the Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement?

CAN: I think the example of the Edward Colston monument is an interesting one. The monument to Edward Colston in Bristol [England] dates from 1895, that is way after he had died. The monument went up at least six decades after Britain abolished slavery. Britain abolished slavery in 1834. They put up a monument in Bristol which was one of the central slave ports, a place where ships left for Africa with manufactured goods and then in Africa these wares were sold and enslaved human beings loaded on the same slave ships as cargo. Colston was a slave trader, and it is well known through archived documents that he enslaved at least one hundred thousand people.[10] What business did the people in Britain have putting up a monument of this man which implies that they literally heroized him sixty-years after the abolition of slavery? This is where you get the expression "putting someone on a pedestal." To put someone on a pedestal means to raise them above the general public in terms of the good things for which they deserve to be honoured.

So, Black Lives Matter protestors ripped down the monument and rolled it in the harbour. It was symbolically beautiful because part of that was a refusal to look at this man as a hero. The protestors were saying, "The governments of this municipality, region, or nation have to start to listen to us, a diverse public about who we deem fit to be heroized and commemorated in the public space. Someone who stands accused of helping to enslave one hundred thousand people of African descent is not someone who we choose to heroize at this moment when we still have Black people, and people of colour dying from police brutality."

CA: In many Canadian cities, monuments to Sir John A. Macdonald, Canada's first prime minister, have been regularly targeted by protestors or small groups. What is it about this monument in particular that draws such protestations?

CAN: In a place like Montreal, the monument to Sir John A. Macdonald was put up in 1895, several years after he had concluded his second term in office, and it's been the site of a lot of attacks over the years. People have chopped the head off, painted it red, or graffitied

the monument. The city just goes back and cleans it up. I saw the Mayor of Montreal on TV who said, "Why don't we just put a plaque on the side of the monument to contextualize who he was."

So, let's break this down for those who do not understand why people are so vehement in their protests against that monument. Sir John A. Macdonald was the first prime minister of Canada and central in the Confederation as we know it, or the pulling together of certain provinces into a nation. This is very important. He is also applauded for building the Canadian Pacific Railroad across Canada. But for that, he used large numbers of exploited immigrant Chinese male labour. We know, through documents and archival research that often these Chinese men's lives were valued less than those of white lives. They were given the most dangerous of jobs in terms of working with explosives, for instance. That same government tried to ensure that they would not be able to stay on permanently and become Canadian citizens and migrate their families to Canada to join them.

Figure 6. A freed slave kneeling at the foot of US President Abraham Lincoln in a monument to celebrate the emancipation of slavery.

Macdonald is also responsible for helping to develop the residential school system that is responsible for genocidal practices against Indigenous people, especially Indigenous children, who were literally kidnapped from their families. The system was aimed at trying to transform them into 'White' children by literally breaking them of their ability to communicate linguistically and culturally with their Elders. We know from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, and long before that, the horrific outcomes in terms of suicides, deaths, and prolific racialized pedophilia that occurred in those spaces.[11] So, John A. Macdonald's statues are being attacked for a reason.

To go back to the Mayor, this idea of sticking a plaque on it and then people will know how complex this history is to me "No"! We have to understand how taking up of public space by the monument and the fact that it is larger than life size, sitting on a pedestal, usually is telling the person standing in front of it that you are to commemorate this person as a hero.

CA: Can you comment more directly on the recent toppling of the Sir John A. Macdonald in Montreal (September 2020) within the context of BLM and defunding of the police protests? How can this act of monument disruption be read?

CAN: Before the monument was toppled [see Figures 1 and 2], I warned in a CBC interview that it was coming. I thought this would be the case because it has been the target of political protests for years. But as calls grew for politicians to revisit the explicitly racist nature of our cultural landscapes and public monuments in the USA, like Confederate monuments in the South, in Canada—like Edward Cornwallis in Halifax[12]—and in the UK, like the slave trader Edward Colston, the Macdonald statute became a more fervent target of protests. For many Canadians who do not understand or support the BLM movement, or other protests movements which routinely target colonial public monuments, they revere Macdonald as a symbol of Canadian unity and have a difficult time exploring his full and complex biography which includes genocidal injustices and grave harms against Indigenous, Chinese, and other people of colour (Cho 2013). It is quite similar to the reverence that many Americans heap upon their White founding fathers in spite of the fact that several enslaved people of African descent. If asked today, would most Americans agree with a decision to remove George Washington from the $1 bill? I don't think so. This is the kind of fer-

vour that some Canadians feel for Macdonald. However, if the City of Montreal does not move to replace the Macdonald monument and instead places it in a museum, for instance, we will have an opportunity for a fuller and more complicated conversation about who he was and the deeds that he committed and authorized in his lifetime.

So, when people were losing their minds over the potential of John A. Macdonald coming down because of how the history will be "damaged" and the resulting "false" history that will be provoked, the thing that they needed to understand is that in 1895, when that monument to Macdonald went up, do you think Indigenous, Black people, and Chinese Canadians in Montreal liked that monument? I bet you the answer was no, but no one asked them. Our ancestors were never consulted about these things because we didn't have the power, because the state was busy making sure we were disenfranchised. Think about the way classism and racism intersect to this day. You block people from accessing certain schools, you disallow them from attaining certain knowledge, you redline neighbourhoods so they can't get a mortgage to buy a certain house in a neighbourhood with proper facilities and amenities, all of this is going on historically and still today.

CA: What is the importance of this type of bold, public decolonial activism in Canada?

CAN: Very important! In general, most Canadians have no idea about the nation's colonial history. They don't understand how Canada became Canada; they don't understand about Indigenous dispossession. They certainly don't understand that we had at least two hundred years of transatlantic slavery where both Black and Indigenous people were enslaved in a province like Quebec, and Black people were enslaved from Ontario all the way to Newfoundland.

Therefore, our conversations about monuments as colonial are not based upon a full understanding of these contexts because we don't know how to grapple with the complexity of colonial history. Some people can't hold these two thoughts in their minds at the same time—Sir John Macdonald central in founding the nation of Canada and Sir John Macdonald central in the architecture of the residential school system and the death and harm of many Chinese male immigrants. They can't hold these two thoughts at the same time.[13]

CA: How do you believe the work of these monuments and statues deemed offensive can be deactivated, so to speak?

CAN: So, how we deactivate that monument is by taking it down. In Halifax in 2018, for example, the municipality removed a statue of Cornwallis who was a first governor, who was vehemently racist against Indigenous and Black people. There was a vote at the level of city council where a majority voted to have that monument taken down. As an art historian, I don't want to see these monuments destroyed because I am not for censorship. But I think they need to be critically re-contextualized within an anti-racist, or post-colonial art historical practice. And how can we do that? Perhaps to put them in a museum, if the museum has the tools, meaning the curators who have the ability to re-narrate the monuments in all of their complexity. Now, this is a big "if" in Canada because museums and galleries are guilty of institutional racism and the underemployment of staff who are Black, Indigenous and people of colour. So which museums are we going to give these monuments to at the moment? That's another conversation but a conversation that is needed as well.

CA: In what other ways do you believe publics can reject, dissent, or speak back to these important, imposing forms of public art?

CAN: Part of what we have to think about is [if we] are a society that believes that monuments still have work to do? If so, then what is the work of the monument? How long is any given monument of value to us, or valid, in terms of intersecting with a public? This gets complex because something we might want to put up today, in 2020, our descendants might say, "What were they thinking? Who is this person? I don't get it". Do we just accept then that if every generation puts their monuments up, the next generations might take them down so that monuments aren't forever.

This is hard for people to deal with because of the very materiality of the monument, the fact that they are usually built in stone, marble, metal, or bronze, which are supposed to symbolize in their very materiality that they are permanent. So, what happens if we start to say, "They are generational."

Here's a case in point. The monument to British Admiral Nelson, in Old Montreal, may be the oldest monument

in Montreal, built in 1809. This was about five decades after British conquest over the French. The French did not like that monument, and that monument was a site of a lot of francophone graffiti for years. They were like, "Let's paint on it. Let's draw on it. Let's hack it up. Let's try to knock it down", because there wasn't consensus about the monument. French Canadians in Quebec took strong offence to this statue because of Admiral Nelson's role in defeating the French. Rich Scottish and English men who wanted to heroize and commemorate Nelson put up the monument. So, these issues aren't new, but we have to be expansive and truthful about how we think and talk about them and about what possibilities lie in the future in contesting these monuments. Do you rip them down all together?

This also makes me think of other more recent techniques of dissent, like yarn bombing. Yarn bombing was done by female artists [in the US and UK] who were knitters who would put up a knitted cloak over the monuments that they thought were racist and sexist.[14] The use of knitting was instrumental because knitting is usually dismissed as a female domestic form of craft (meaning not 'high' art), that women do at home. Instead of pulling down the offensive monument like Black Lives Matter protestors did with the Colston statue, which is another way to go about it, they would instead put these very colourful, almost fantastical, knitting over the top of the entire monument. So, the act of covering the things that they were critiquing in the public sphere was a very powerful way to bring a spotlight to why they thought these monuments, relics, or artefacts in public places needed to go.

CA: At this juncture, these public actions have forced pertinent discussions on the colonial role of these monuments and the necessity of decolonial responses to them. How do you believe future projects of monumentalization should be conceptualized?

CAN: We have to think of the types of interventions and new forms of commemoration that make permanent or non-permanent interventions. For example, under the presidency of Barack Obama, celebrated enslaved runaway freedom fighter and conductor on the Underground Railroad, Harriet Tubman had been chosen to replace Andrew Jackson on the $20 bill.

In Canada, we have a new $10 bill with Viola Desmond on it, a Black woman, who is a twentieth-century civil rights hero from Halifax, Nova Scotia.[15] The symbolism of those women being on the currency is very powerful because the currency is also a space for portraiture and people that are revered in any nation, and usually that's White men in Western nations, certainly not women or women of colour.

But people have found it potentially offensive to have someone like Harriet Tubman who was enslaved herself, who was treated as a form of chattel, who was exchanged for currency, to end up on currency. So, we have to think critically about the interventions we make, if they are appropriate and that's a debate we need to have. Is that the most appropriate way for us to salute her, to heroize her, to remember her and her wonderful legacy?

The thing I want to point out, if I may, is the complexity of the question you are bringing to bear. We have to be sure we don't conflate two things and that is, where are the relics to the transatlantic slavery for instance that are still left in the landscape, and how can they be mobilized as a kind of natural form of sculpture that brings us to a confrontation with histories that are often uncomfortable? Also, where should we be building new monuments?

Allow me to share two recent examples. There was a newspaper article about a slave auction block on the corner of a street in the small town of Fredericksburg in Virginia. Some people in the town were saying, "Knock the slave block down, it's inappropriate. It's reminding us of slavery." And the Mayor's position was, "Listen, the block isn't a commemoration to slavery, the block IS the history of slavery[16] and the fact that the block makes you uncomfortable is actually good in this case, because many of you don't want to remember the role our town played in slavery."[17]

So, you see the difference? This is the difference that all of us need to get. The difference between a relic that actually is of the history, that was created of the history, and how that can provoke us to change and to think, as opposed to someone coming in and building a monument to slave owners or slave traders.

The other example I wanted to share is of the National Monument for Peace and Justice that was built in 2018 in Montgomery, Alabama, in the USA.[18] That's a monument to people who suffered slavery in the USA, who suffered the terror of lynching, who were murdered by

white mobs. These were mainly African-American men and often some women and some people of other races as well. It is a six-acre memorial with engravings of every name, or "unknown" in some cases, of the individuals who were murdered at the hands of white mobs. It features also the strategic uses of monuments in the space that deal with histories of slavery and the histories of different moments of different racial injustice in the USA, also interspersed with the words of African-American leaders, like Ida B. Wells.

So, that is a completely different undertaking than the monuments that are being attacked now by a lot of the public and by groups like Black Lives Matter. This is an example of a monument done right.[19] It is not just a one-off object but a space of contemplation that is also recording and commemorating a history of brutality.

CA: It is clear that youth are playing a pivotal role in this transnational monumental decolonial activism. What inspiration are we to take from this generation's activism? And what advice would you offer to those contemplating on history's lessons in this movement?

CAN: It is great to see how active the youth are in these recent political movements for social justice, however, they must also remember that "the fight" has been going on for generations before them and they still have things to learn from their elders. They are indeed standing on the shoulders of giants, many of whose names they may never know, but whose bravery and defiance in the face of terror made the public activism of 2020 possible. I would also always urge people to think, read, research and to admit what they do not know. Arrogance is an impediment to knowledge-seeking, and we must all be wary of this. Intolerance often goes hand-in-hand with the seeking of justice because people come to only see their path, their way, their story, their claims, their strategies as valid. We are living in an extremely partisan, hate-filled moment, and listening and understanding can take us a long way. The youth must also recognize that the political right is not the only group guilty of intolerance. Indeed, the left has weaponized "cancel culture" in ways that may harm its own movements and goals. Finally, although it is wonderful to see the racial diversity in the protest movement around Black Lives Matter, the idea of "wokeness" should not allow White people to again feel emboldened to interpret, represent, and inhabit Black experience and suffering. That will not result in more justice but a continuation of White privilege masquerading as allyship.

Conclusion

This interview raises an array of complex issues relating to the revisiting of colonial knowledges and related historical, racial injustices represented by these public enactments of monument toppling in the immediate aftermath of the killing of George Floyd. It raises important questions about the global movement to decolonize public spaces—whose public and what history is remembered with colonial monuments.

It underscores the problematic nature of the thousands of imposing monuments that populate public spaces that symbolically represent the impact of colonialism and its ongoing legacies. Shohat and Stam (2014) draw attention to the functioning of colonialism as a project of global domination of subject Black, Indigenous, and Brown populations encountered in conquest, while Indigenous activists and theorists insist that colonial domination is not only a practice of the past, but an ongoing part of the present (Barker 2009).

These monuments in question bear testimony to colonialism's horrific legacies of conquest, racial violence, and systematic categorization of knowledge in the production of "otherness", through the marking of hierarchized bodies, some of whom were determined heroes, worthy of public remembrance, and others that were deemed disposable life. This revisiting of monuments through grounded decolonization activism lays bare the simplicity and outright falseness of complex historical narratives such as colonial conquest, wars, surrender or treaty negotiation, and catastrophic loss of life that have been reduced to the commemoration of, often, one White male hero. At this juncture, the reductive reproduction of complex national memories that these colonial monuments represent are challenged from the ground up as forceful forms of public actions that attempt to deconstruct and denaturalize myriad accounts of nationalism and nation building.

The performances of these monuments as representations of national heroes in public spaces enact double forms of epistemic violence: firstly, in the airbrushing and re-presentation of violent colonial historical figures as heroes; secondly, in the re-enactment of deep epistemic wounds in the production of individual and col-

lective identities of those who encounter them. These monuments thus validate the continued domination of the inheritors of colonial power while negating the presence of others through dramatic erasures of large intersectional groups of gendered, classed, and racialized persons in so-called Canadian society. The tearing down of monuments is no simple act, but profound decolonial manifestations that strike at the heart of the epistemic legacies of colonialism's false, biased, racist, and misogynist histories and practices that continue to echo today.

As Verity Platt argues:

> Iconoclasm and damnatio memoriae teach us that monuments are only as powerful as the human will that keeps them in place. With a shift in public attitude towards the living bodies of Black individuals, the imposing bases and columns that had enshrined the hollow bodies of their ancestral oppressors no longer have the ability to elevate and protect. Now the work begins to dismantle the less visible institutional structures that such monuments were designed to fortify. (Platt 2020)

Figure 7. David Garneau's Dear John: Louis Riel performance in Regina, 2014. (Photo ©Eagleclaw Thom; used with permission)

In as much as this knowledge has been challenged in other domains in the past few decades, the time of reckoning for these reminders of history etched in public squares is at hand.

Decolonising public spaces have to be part of a larger process demanding that these public sites of knowledge become more democratic, not in forgetting the past but in acknowledging their complexity and relationship with the present. As Ronald Rudin suggests, a bold, more temporal approach may be needed in rethinking the future of public monuments where contemporary themes, personalities, and ideas mingle with the past: "For minority groups this means seeing themselves represented in ways that recognize their historical marginalization, but also go well beyond that, making their contemporary perspectives and experiences a part of civic culture" (Rudin 2021).

How do we imagine inclusive representative futures for Black and Indigenous people and gendered, and diverse communities in urban and rural public spaces? Recent Indigenous artists' performative confrontations with colonial statues offer examples of monumental engagement. In a performance at a John A. Macdonald statue in Regina, in 2014, entitled "Dear John: Louis Riel", David Garneau, a Métis artist and scholar, dressed as Louis Riel, holds a silent conversation with the statue. Garneau's performance marked the 129th anniversary of the death of Riel, a Métis leader who was hung in a mass hanging of Métis resistance fighters in Regina in 1885. Macdonald was instrumental in Riel's execution as well as the implementation of aggressive measures such as the Indian Act and Indian Pass Laws aimed at assimilating Métis and First Nations peoples into colonial society. (Garneau 2019). (See Figure 7.)

In this performance, the spirit of Louis Riel confronts the statue of John A. Macdonald using symbolic props and Indigenous artefacts in order for Canadians to see these monuments from an Indigenous point of view, to "nudge them in reconsidering their celebration of Macdonald in Canada." Garneau suggests that when Indigenous artists engage colonial monuments in public spaces, they engage these sculptures not merely as things

or even representations but as “having being” (Garneau 2019). Following this and other protestations, the Regina City Council voted in the spring of 2021 to remove this statue of Macdonald in Victoria park. It has since been placed in storage (Atter 2021).

The challenge that the Floyd case lays bare for this generation is the continued creative engagement with and rethinking of monumentalization that shifts from commemorating simple and static narratives of the past. In this way, monuments as a part of the everyday experience become sites of justice and social inclusion that commemorate the social condition—a monumental challenge in process.

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Endnotes

1. For further reading see: Nelson, 2007. *The Color of Stone*.

2. Public monuments differ from patronage installations which are funded by powerful patrons associated with particular artists. Public monuments, on the other hand, promote broader national histories, identities, and politics. For more on public monuments' political and aesthetic functions see: Bellentani and Panico, 2016. For more on patronage installation see: Cohns, 1998.

3. Allegory in art refers to uses of elements (in the referenced art) that symbolize deeper meanings, e.g., life, death, or victory. These create extended metaphors that convey art's underlying narratives. For more on allegory see:https://www.tate.org.uk/art/art-terms/a/allegory

4. Maureen Elgersman Lee suggests that Canada's relationship to the end of slavery was a piecemeal affair (Elgersman Lee 1999).

5. Queen Victoria is celebrated as the “mother of Canadian Confederation,” the constitutional Monarch who supported the initial development of the Dominion of Canada (Rayburn and Harris 2015). Monuments to Victoria can be found on Parliament Hill (Ottawa), Stanley Park (Vancouver BC), Manitoba Legislative Building (Winnipeg MB), and Victoria Square (Montreal QC), among others. For more on the thirteen-foot statue of Queen Victoria commissioned by British Colombia pemier Richard McBride in 1912 see: https://www.leg.bc.ca/dyl/Pages/Queen-Victoria.aspx

6. Monuments to John A Macdonald, Canada's first prime minister, can be found in most large cities in Canada, such as Ottawa, Montreal, Toronto, Halifax, Victoria, etc. A number of public buildings such as schools have been named after Macdonald over the years, although there has been concerted efforts to remove some of these. For more on some remaining monuments see Yun, 2018.

7. Popular monuments to francophone "heroes" in Quebec are to French navigators and explorers Samuel de Champlain and Jacques Cartier: https://artpublic-montreal.ca/en/oeuvre/monument-a-jacques-cartier/. Similarly, well-known monuments to English "heroes" include Queen Victoria, James McGill, slave owner philanthropist, and Admiral Horatio Nelson (https://en-.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nelson%27s_Column,_Montreal-Robert).

8. For more on the monument to Paul de Chomedey de Maisonneuve, founder of Montreal, see :https://artpublic.ville.montreal.qc.ca/en/oeuvre/monument-a-paul-de-chomedey-sieur-de-maisonneuve/

9. The monument on Parliament Hill, Ottawa, to the five famous women who fought for women's voting rights in Canada (Women are Persons!) represents a shift away from monuments to female characters such as Queen Victoria. Viewed as the culmination of popular feminism, this is an example of emerging and contemporary expressions of power. However, the five women have been the subject of controversy, criticized as racist and elitist in their support for eugenics laws that led to forced sterilization of Indigenous women. See James Marsh (2015). This monument also simplifies the complex social attainment of the vote, where Black and minority women's roles in the process are not acknowledged. For a visual reference see: https://www.canada.ca/en/canadian-heritage/services/art-monuments/monuments/women-are-persons.html

10. Edward Colston (1636– 721) was an English mer-

chant and member of Parliament who was involved in the Atlantic slave trade. An eighteen-foot bronze statue of his likeness was erected to him in honour of his philanthropic works. For more on Colston see Farrar, 2020.

11. The report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission released in 2015 recognizes the trauma and suffering experienced by Indigenous children at these residential schools across Canada. See: http://nctr.ca/assets/reports/Final%20Reports/Executive_Summary_English_Web.pdf

12. Edward Cornwallis, army officer and colonial administrator, is recognized as the founder of Halifax, Nova Scotia. He is considered a controversial figure who issued two scalping proclamations that offered cash bounties ("Ten guineas for every Indian taken or destroyed") on Mi'kmaq persons. https://www.aptnnews.ca/national-news/not-forgotten-mikmaq-bounty-never-rescinded

13. For more on Macdonald's role relating to the Indian Residential Schools and Chinese migrant /indentured labour see Stanley, 2016.

14. For more on yarn bombing see: https://www.widewalls.ch/magazine/what-is-yarn-bombing

15. Viola Desmond is the first woman to be featured on Canada's ten-dollar bill. Desmond was a Black rights activist who was jailed for defiantly sitting in the "whites only"'section of a Nova Scotia's cinema in 1946. She represents the often-unacknowledged history of racial segregation in Canada. In 2018, Desmond's image replaced that of Sir John A. Macdonald, Canada's first prime minister on the note. See: https://www.bankofcanada.ca/banknotes/vertical10/

16. For more on this slave auction block see: https://www.fredericksburgva.gov/1287/Slave-Auction-Block-slave

17. In an analysis of slavery and the Black body, McKittrick argues for the re-visioning of society, culture, and space from the vantage point of the slave auction block (McKittrick 2006).

18. The National Memorial for Peace and Justice sits on a six-acre site overlooking Montgomery, Alabama. It is informally known as the lynching memorial and commemorates slaves and other Black persons who were racially terrorized in the United States. Opened in 2018, it advocates for social justice.

19. For a virtual tour of the National Memorial for Peace and Justice see: https://museumandmemorial.eji.org

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Research

Hear My Cry: Breaking the Code of Silence around Intimate Partner Violence among Black Women in and beyond Midlife

by Ingrid Waldron, Eileigh Storey-MacDougall, Lori E. Weeks

Abstract: There is a knowledge gap about how the intersections of gender, race, culture, age, income, social class, and other identities shape Black women's experiences of intimate partner violence (IPV). In this qualitative study, we utilized an intersectional approach to examine how IPV is experienced and managed by racialized women, and in particular, our focus was to explore the IPV experiences of Black Nova Scotian women in and beyond midlife and their experiences of seeking support. Participant recruitment was predictably challenging, but we were able to collect in-depth interview data from a Black woman who identified as being in and beyond midlife and who had experienced IPV in the past and from three people who provided support to Black women in a paid capacity. An interpretive narrative approach was utilized to identify five dominant themes: descriptions of the experiences of IPV for Black women; strategies for coping with IPV; strategies in supporting Black women experiencing IPV; barriers in accessing support; and challenges in the delivery of support. The knowledge gained through this research provides important insights about the experiences, barriers faced, and how to address these challenges for Black women who experience IPV in and beyond midlife.

Keywords: Black women; intimate partner violence; midlife; Nova Scotia; transformative justice

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long-term care homes. She has conducted research on the abuse of older adults with particular focuses on supports for older women experiencing intimate partner violence. Lori is a member of the Abuse and Neglect of Older Adults Research Team in the Maritimes, a research team affiliated with the Muriel McQueen Fergusson Centre for Family Violence Research at the University of New Brunswick.

Introduction

There is a gap in our knowledge about how the intersections of gender, race, culture, age, income, social class, and other identities shape Black women's experiences of intimate partner violence (IPV). In this qualitative study, we used an intersectional narrative approach to explore the IPV experiences of Black women in and beyond midlife. As little is known about these women, we interviewed them and those who, in a paid or unpaid capacity, support them. The knowledge gained through this research provides important insights about the challenges for Black Nova Scotian women in their experiences of IPV and the barriers faced in getting support. We begin by providing an overview of our theoretical framework including an intersectional approach. This is followed by a review of the literature on Black women's experiences of IPV and in seeking support, and the limited knowledge about racialized women in and beyond midlife who experience IPV. We then provide details about the methods followed in conducting this study and the results. We conclude by highlighting our key findings in relation to the existing literature, the implications of our research for practice, and future research.

Theoretical Framework

In this paper, we are using an intersectional narrative approach to examine how race, culture, age, immigrant status, and class shape how IPV is experienced and managed by Black Nova Scotian women. Indeed, Black and other racialized women's location at the intersection of IPV and state-sanctioned racial and gender violence provides them with a unique understanding of and approach to dealing with their experiences of IPV. In this article, we use the term "racialized" to refer to non-White people who experience overt and/or systemic racism based on skin colour and phenotypic features, and we recognize that the process of racialization is one in which racial hierarchies are embedded within our social institutions in ways that determine the extent to which we are able to access various resources. Race developed over the years as a principle of social organization and identity formation and has been used to categorize, to include, and to exclude people based on physical traits. Systemic racism refers to how racial hierarchies become entrenched within our social system resulting in the unequal distribution of resources, such as the denial of access, participation, and equity to racialized people for basic needs, such as education, employment, and housing.

It manifests in the policies, practices, and procedures within our systems that may directly or indirectly promote, sustain, or entrench differential advantage or privilege for people of certain races (Feagin, 2000; Miles, 1989). Therefore, as Hicken and colleagues (2018) observe, "Racialization is the process by which social meanings are attached to a constellation of biological, phenotypic, or otherwise observable features."

This paper also uses the concept of state-sanctioned racial and gendered violence (Waldron 2019) to expand the concept of state-sanctioned violence (Alimahomed-Wilson & Williams 2016; Menjivar 2016; Pellow 2016) and pinpoint the specific ways in which government policies and decisions harm or otherwise disadvantage racialized women, preventing them from meeting their basic needs and rights related to employment, income, health care, and other resources (Gazso, McDaniel & Waldron, 2016; Waldron & Gazso, 2017; Waldron, 2019). Racialized women's experiences of state violence are specifically shaped by their location at the intersection of race and gender and, consequently, their exposure to gendered and racialized inequalities.

For Black women, trauma is specifically experienced through their exposure to race and gender-based violence, including the violence of homophobia and transphobia in their relationship to the state and social structures, and additionally in their intimate and other personal relationships. For example, Okeke-Ihejirika, Salami and Karimi (2019) found that African immigrant women in Alberta experience specific stressors impacting their mental health which are related to the challenges faced in transitioning and integrating into Canadian culture. Contributing to these stressors are the following: the absence of support that was present in their home countries, language barriers, the devaluation of their credentials, job inequalities, economic insecurity, lack of access to social networks, and changes to traditional gender roles which put these women at increased risk for IPV. Martin, Boadi, Fernandes, Watt, and Robinson-Wood (2013) found that Black women's experiences of depression are caused by systemic racism, micro-aggressions, poverty, cultural socialization, obesity, diabetes, and exposure to interpersonal and community violence. Bukowski, Hampton, Escobar-Viera, Sang, Chandler and Henderson (2019) found that the factors which were significantly correlated with symptoms of depression for Black transgender women (BTW) included IPV, physical and verbal violence, social support, gender identity, sex work, level of education, employment status, relationship status, and homelessness in the previous year. BTW were found to be at a higher risk for IPV resulting from their intersecting identities, limited economic opportunities due to discrimination and stigma, and financial dependency on their partner. For example, when racialized women who have been victims of IPV seek support from the criminal justice system and service providers, their concerns are often dismissed and they often report experiencing discrimination and cultural insensitivity (Bundy 2019; Tam et al. 2016). Traditional ways of supporting women who experience IPV do not acknowledge the adversities that contribute to racialized women's experiences of violence and oppression (Lacey et al. 2015; Long and Ullman 2016; Sabri et al. 2016).

Although there continues to be a gap in research on racialized women's experiences of IPV, studies have been emerging in recent years (Godoy-Ruiz, et al. 2015; Rezazadeh and Hoover 2018; Tam et al. 2016). Further research on the experiences of racialized women in Canada who suffer IPV is needed in order to inform culturally sensitive practices. The focus in this study is Black women's experiences of IPV, and we refer to sources focusing on Black women in the United States (African American women), Black women of Caribbean heritage residing in Canada, and Black women born in Africa who reside in Canada. We recognize that the cultural contexts within which these Black women experience and address IPV will be different given the differences in historical, political, social, and economic contexts between Canada and the United States. We argue, however, that these women's shared experiences of state-sanctioned racial and gender violence in these White-dominant societies provide a fundamental analytical entry point to highlight how race and gender intersect in ways that not only create barriers to help-seeking among Black women in White dominant societies (regardless of cultural context or residence in Canada or the United States), but also have implications for the considerations that need to be made in providing services that meet the needs of Black women.

Women at the Crossroad: Black Women's Experiences of IPV

Researchers have examined how Black women who experience IPV are often examined as a monolith since the literature often fails to address the very different ethnic and cultural backgrounds and stories of Black women (Lacey et al. 2015). Since Black women experience mar-

ginalization due to race, gender, and the feminization of poverty (Gazso and Waldron 2009; Gazso, MacDaniel and Waldron 2016; Waldron and Gazso 2017), an analysis that acknowledges Black women's intersectional identities is important if we are to understand their unique experiences of IPV, and the challenges they face accessing support. Black women's experiences can be characterized in terms of their structural location at the crossroad of race, gender, class, age, sexual orientation, and other social oppressions.

Also contributing to the challenges which Black women face reaching out for help is the "strong Black woman" trope—a cultural phenomenon that places unreasonable expectations on Black women to be nurturing and supportive figures in their families and communities, often resulting in the undermining or dismissal of Black women's vulnerability (Etowa et al. 2017; Waldron 2019; Waldron 2002). Etowa and colleagues (2017) observe that Black women in Eastern Canada felt a pressure to be the "backbone of the Black community" (383) by taking care of all family members, putting the needs of others before themselves, being self-sufficient and invulnerable, and being willing to sacrifice and take on limitless burdens.

The characterization of Black women as nurturing, strong, invulnerable, and resilient "superwomen" is deeply rooted, and it serves to undermine the racialized physical and mental trauma that Black women have long had to endure, often causing them to internalize this damaging stereotype, as well as minimize, ignore, or deny the many challenges they face, including IPV (hooks 1993; Schreiber, Stern & Wilson 2000; Waldron 2002). Black women's internalization of the strong Black woman stereotype as a central component of Black womanhood can be harmful to their well-being because it promotes a perception of Black women as having excessive strength, caretaking abilities, and emotional restraint and, consequently, may be detrimental to their self-care behaviours, especially in the case of IPV where they may be less likely to seek support.

Black Women Seeking Support for IPV

Studies show that Black women are less likely to seek support for their experiences of IPV than White survivors and are often unaware of available resources (Bent-Goodley 2013; Sabri et al. 2015). St Vil and colleagues (2017) found that Black women utilized three types of survivor strategies: internal strategies of faith and religion, interpersonal strategies of leaving the abuse, and external reliance on informal and/or formal supports. Many Black women reported relying on the church community and friends and family for support, while only some looked for support from organizations that specialized in supporting women who experience IPV (Bent-Goodley 2013; St Vil et al. 2017). Other studies indicate that although Black women are hesitant to use legal resources, they are more likely to access them when there is a high risk for lethality (Sabri et al. 2014). Compared to White women, Black women are also more likely to seek medical treatment due to the seriousness of IPV (Bent-Goodley 2013). Black women are also less likely to access counselling and other professional supports because of a fear of contributing to racist and negative stereotypes of Black men and Black communities as inherently dangerous (Al'Uqdah, Maxwell and Hill 2016; Sabri et al. 2015).

Racialized Women in and beyond Midlife and IPV

In this article, we focus on older women. There is no consensus in IPV research on the specific age at which a woman is considered older than midlife. Typically, researchers include women who have at least reached the age of 50 years, which is sometimes described as midlife or older than midlife (Weeks and LeBlanc 2011). We believe that referring to women in and beyond midlife clarifies our population of interest as women who are not caring for dependent children. While our knowledge is far less complete on IPV among older versus younger women, mistaken assumptions are that woman of all ages experience IPV in similar ways, and that IPV ceases with old age (Hightower, Smith and Hightower, 2006). Prevalence studies show that between 15% and 30% of older women report IPV at some time over their life (Bonomi et al. 2007; Montero et al. 2013; Stöckl and Penhale 2015). In a Quebec study of coroners' files of homicide victims aged 65 and older reports that 89% of the victims were female, and of these, 93% were current or former spouses of male perpetrators (Bourget, Gagné and Whitehurst 2010). It is recognized that like other types of abuse, IPV among older women is under-estimated.

Research examining IPV among older women from various racialized groups is very limited (Mcgarry, Simpson and Hinchliff-Smith 2011; Pathak, Dhairyawan and Tariq 2019). Most studies include ethnically homogen-

eous samples of predominantly White participants or they include more diverse participants, but the results are not presented by racialized groups (Sormanti and Shibusawa 2008). As abused women may have varying needs based on race and ethnicity, understanding the needs of specific groups of women is important (Roberto, McPherson and Brossoie 2013), including women in and beyond midlife. Additional research is needed that focuses on the service needs for older racialized women experiencing IPV.

Methods

This study was conducted as part of a larger study focused on identifying and responding to the needs of diverse older women who experience IPV (Weeks et al. 2021). The main purpose of the larger study was to gain insights through interviewing older women who are from visible minorities and/or language minorities, living in rural or urban areas, and, in addition, interviewing those who, in a paid or unpaid capacity, provide support to women experiencing IPV. In this paper, we focus on Black Nova Scotian women's experiences of IPV in Nova Scotia.

Geographic Context

Results of the 2016 Canada Census show that 37% of the people who are visible minorities in Nova Scotia are Black (Statistics Canada 2016). About 80.7% of African Nova Scotians were born in the province, while 6.7% were born elsewhere in Canada (African Nova Scotian Affairs 2019). Nova Scotia has ten Black communities that surround the capital city of Halifax, and roughly 75% of the African Nova Scotian population are Canadians of three or more generations (African Nova Scotian Affairs 2019). Nevertheless, Black people in Nova Scotia continue to experience racism (Bundy 2019), from the forced displacement of Africville residents in the 1960s, the racial divides of the 1989 Cole Harbour High School brawls, to the 2019 Human Right Commission's report on disproportionate street checks on Black Nova Scotians. This racism continues to be present and pervasive in Nova Scotia.

Participants and Participant Recruitment

We identified potential participants in several ways. We created and distributed a poster about the study, placing it on public bulletin boards (e.g., libraries, health centres) and through social media (e.g., websites, Facebook, Twitter). Information about the study and the poster were distributed through organizations identified as service providers to women experiencing IPV. Inclusion criteria consisted of women who self-identify as being older, who had experienced intimate partner violence in the past, and who identified as Black. Inclusion criteria for supporters consisted of anyone who had provided paid or unpaid support to an older Black woman experiencing IPV. We also invited those who participated to share information about the study to other potential participants. In all cases, interested participants contacted the researchers directly to have any questions about the study answered, complete the informed consent process, and to organize the time and place for the interview, or to arrange a telephone interview.

While we undertook these various strategies to recruit participants, we were only able to recruit four participants. The challenges we experienced must be contextualized within a general reluctance by Black women to come forward and share their experiences about IPV and emotional issues in general, particularly when they are asked to do this for university research. We collected in-depth interview data from a Black woman who identified as being in the target age-group who had experienced IPV in the past, and three people who provide support in a paid capacity to Black women. We received approval for this research from the Research Ethics Boards at Dalhousie University (#2018-4433), the University of New Brunswick (2018-007), and the Université de Moncton (#1718-070).

Procedures

The semi-structured interview guide for women who have experienced IPV included questions about their definition of abuse, their personal experiences of IPV, their knowledge about services or supports, the supports and services utilized in leaving an abusive partner, and challenges they experienced in utilizing services. In addition, they were asked to give their recommendations for changes to better support women who experience IPV. The semi-structured interview guide for supporters of women who experience IPV included questions about their role, their experiences providing support, the unique needs of these women, and the strengths and challenges in supporting women. In addition, they were asked for recommendations for changes to better support women.

Before beginning, the interviewer reviewed the information in the informed consent form and answered any questions. A signed informed consent form was received from each participant prior to the interview. Participants consented to anonymous quotes being included in any reports of the results and that the province where the study was conducted would be disclosed. All participants interviewed received an honorarium of $25. The interviews were conducted from December 2018 to March 2019 and ranged in length from twenty-nine to forty-two minutes. Two were conducted by phone and two were conducted face-to-face. The interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim.

Data Analysis

An interpretive narrative approach to data analysis was utilized (Polkinghorne 1988; 1995). This approach is inductive in nature, allowing research findings to emerge from the frequent, dominant, or significant narrative themes inherent in the raw data. Themes typically reflect the questions posed during an interview or focus group and, ultimately, reflect the research objectives and questions that were used to develop the interview and focus group questions.

This approach recognizes the oral tradition of people of African descent, in which storytelling is a key feature. The interpretive narrative approach focuses on highlighting direct quotes and statements voiced by participants, enabling them to articulate and give meaning to their experiences in their own words. Creating and identifying meaning within these stories empowers participants to directly represent themselves while challenging Western notions that narratives and oral storytelling are not empirical, objective, or valid. The interpretive narrative approach, therefore, recognizes humans as self-interpreting beings whose understanding of phenomena is embodied in social, cultural, and linguistic practices. Our interpretation of the data also involved ensuring that an intersectional analytical framework was used to examine how Black women's experiences of and help-seeking for IPV were influenced by the intersections of race, culture, gender identity, age, income, and socio-economic status.

Several steps were taken to analyse the data. First, the transcripts were read, and themes were identified based on the questions in the interview guides and on the study objective. The study objective was to gain insights into the needs of diverse older women who experience IPV through interviewing women from visible and language minorities and those who support them. The themes were used to create headings under which statements or direct quotes (narratives) from participants were transcribed. This process was repeated until all relevant quotes related to the themes were included under each heading. The researcher then interpreted and briefly summarized participants' quotes in each section before presenting the quotes as stated by the participant (please see the study results in the next section). This analytical process established clear links between the research objective, the interview questions, and the findings derived from the raw data. An interpretive narrative approach encourages the researcher to attend to the ways that participants construct and express their perspective of social relations. Its goal is to examine participants' multiple truths, rather than to confirm any hypothesis.

Clear links were established between the research objective and the findings derived from the raw data. In the next section of this paper, we present our findings organized by the themes identified.

Results

In this section, we report results from interviews from four participants, identifying each by a pseudonym: a Black woman who experienced IPV in the past (Jane); a Black nurse (Wanda); and two representatives of service agencies that provided support to women (Tina and Sue). Our data analysis process resulted in the identification of five themes: descriptions of the experiences if IPV for Black women; strategies for coping with IPV; strategies in supporting Black women experiencing IPV; barriers in accessing supports; and challenges in service delivery. We present a narrative description of each theme along with illustrative quotes.

Experiences of IPV for Black Women

IPV is endemic in any Black community that continues to deal with intergenerational trauma stemming from historical, structural, and institutional inequalities. Wanda discussed how a lack of opportunities for Black men often leads them to take their frustrations out on their partners:

> It's like dominos. Black males…no self-esteem, no self-worth, unable to get work in their chosen profession or their line of work. Starts doing other things like either selling alcohol, selling drugs. End up with a

> partner, you know, or a wife. Angry with the partner. Starts beating, degrading, you know, just putting this person down because they don't feel good about themselves. It's like a vicious circle.

The code of silence for Black women experiencing abuse was pervasive. Wanda discussed the code of silence around IPV in her community:

> It's quite an issue in our community because one of the things I've found, that a lot of Black women, especially older women, are very quiet about…they suffer in silence an awful lot. So that's been quite a challenge trying to get them to speak about it where they feel safe and they don't feel that they're going to be judged or penalized in any way.

Tina observed that many African Nova Scotian women who experience IPV often mask their depression in specific ways:

> When we see African Nova Scotian women who have experienced IPV, we usually see a depressed state first that is very uniquely masked, in that, although these women are depressed, they carry themselves as if there's not a care in the world.

Strategies for Coping with IPV

Jane shared that while she has never sought support from women's centres or other resources to help her deal with her experiences of IPV, she coped with her experiences in other ways, including relying on her belief in God and helping others:

> I put myself in Jesus and that's what kept me going, and working in the church, getting involved and doing a lot of things to live, that kept me...I get through with my frustrations by helping others. And, doing for the community. As long as I was busy doing for others, and seeing the results and the successes, it brought me a long way.

While Jane acknowledged that there are a variety of services to support women, she believed that experiences of discrimination, resulting in a lack of trust in systems which are set up to support communities, has contributed to Black people's general reluctance to share their experiences with service providers: As Jane observed, a history of oppression in the African Nova Scotian community, as well as a general mistrust of service providers have contributed to non-disclosure and a code of silence among Black women who have experienced IPV. In addition, Black people have traditionally relied on religion, faith, and church to cope with the challenges they face. While Tina shared similar sentiments about church, family, and friends being the main sources of support for African Nova Scotian women who experience IPV, she also identified praying, humming, and singing as three coping mechanisms that African Nova Scotian women use that she believes are unique to their culture:

> African-Nova Scotian women whose family don't know that they were victims of IPV keep very quiet about it. They pray a lot. Church is a big strength, a piece of strength… a lot of African-Nova Scotian women, there's a thing that they hum and sing. Those are also ways of coping.

Strategies in Supporting Black Women Experiencing IPV

While there were many factors contributing to Black women not seeking supports for IPV, the participants discussed instances in which they had worked with Black women. Wanda noted that many African Nova Scotian women who have experienced IPV are considerably resourceful and know where to receive support and share that information with other women:

> What I've found to be true is that their resourcefulness is amazing. They know where to go to receive the assistance that they need. And what they do is they build the capacity of other women in the community by sharing that information that they've received.

In her efforts to support Black women who have experienced IPV, Sue shared that asking the right questions can often be helpful in identifying the kinds of supports and resources these women and their children need: "Who are you as a person? What makes up your support circle? How can I best understand who you are so that I can help you along this journey?"

Wanda also discussed how she supports Black women who experience IPV. She provides services in a very individualized way, and she pays particular attention to both what the women say and do not say: "I listen to their story. I hear, I take their history, hear what they have to

say… and sometimes it's not even exactly what they're saying but reading between the lines, looking at their gestures." Tina also discussed how their service supports Black women who experience IPV with individualized and culturally appropriate options:

> So, we have done women circles where it gives an opportunity for them to share resources that have helped them. We also have had kitchen table talks where we have talked specifically about being a survivor, what that looks like, provide some peer support. Even provide some rituals around how we can…from the African Nova Scotian community, how we can utilize those rituals as a tool for healing.

Tina felt that Black women feel comfortable accessing their services because she is an African Nova Scotian woman who has experienced IPV herself and because the support worker, who is White, has experience working with African Nova Scotians:

> The other strength is that our women support worker…although she's of Eurocentric background, she has some experience within the African Nova Scotian community working with the Black Educators Association and what have you. So, she comes with a bit of a competency in working with African Nova Scotians.

Barriers to Accessing Supports

Our results showed that Black women experience several barriers to accessing supports for IPV, including lack of education about IPV, lack of information and awareness about available services that can support them, lack of trust in healthcare and social service professionals, reluctance to further stigmatize Black men and the Black community by disclosing experiences of IPV, fear of police involvement given the tense relationship between the Black community and the police, and a lack of restorative justice approaches. Jane noted that although Black women have traditionally lacked awareness about available services for IPV, they are becoming more educated about different types of abuse and more aware of services that continue to become more available. Racist and stigmatizing perceptions of the Black community, as well as the unavailability of services that can intervene in ways that don't cause further harm to the Black community, contributed to the barriers Black women face in accessing services. Sue pointed out, "Black women spoke about feeling concerned about leaving an impression about the Black community and violence that would then not be positive. They spoke about that as being one of the barriers to accessing services."

Sue discussed the challenges Black women encounter seeking informal and formal supports in rural communities, where there is a lack of anonymity and privacy, as well as a fear of judgement if you are Black.

> Not wanting someone to judge you or your partner based on that experience. So, that can be a real challenge particularly in a rural community. And when you link that into experiences of systemic racism where you're feeling, because of the colour of your skin, that you're potentially being judged as being from a community where there's more violence, then that becomes really complicated.

Wanda also identified lack of trust in agencies and organizations, as well as their failure to hire Black staff as key reasons why Black women in and beyond midlife who experience IPV fail to access shelters and other supports.

> If a Black woman is in an abusive relationship in her home, unless she has family support, many Black women do not go to the shelters. Many that I've known. And particularly the older women, they will not. That's foreign for them. That's not something that they have been used to … And so, what happens is that there's not a lot of trust in agencies and organizations. And particularly because they're not… most of the time, they're not staffed with Black people.

Wanda also indicated that the lack of available services that cater to Black women, as well as stigma, shame, embarrassment, and fear of sharing their experiences with IPV are other factors that contribute to a general hesitancy among Black women to access services after leaving their partner or being kicked out. Tina echoed sentiments expressed by Wanda that the lack of Black service providers, as well as a lack of cultural competency demonstrated by some organizations also create barriers to seeking help. Low income, lack of access to transportation, fear of racism from service providers, language barriers, and a lack of understanding of how IPV impacts their well-being are factors that also deter older

Black women from accessing support services, according to Tina.

> A lot of our African Nova Scotian women, even the older women, a lot of us are on limited income. So, having access to a vehicle to get into town. And for fear of what may await them, the trust that may not be there, the racism that may be there. Because that's something that no matter where we go, it's always in the back of your mind.

Addressing Challenges to Service Delivery

Barriers in accessing services and gaps in service delivery can be addressed in several ways, including developing partnerships with Black community groups, churches, and organizations to conduct outreach to Black women, creating initiatives or campaigns to decrease stigma around IPV in the Black community, conducting workshops and disseminating information on social media and through Black churches and organizations to raise awareness about IPV and available services, and providing mental health outreach services and other support services within Black communities. In addition, creating a service that brings together Black counsellors to provide support to Black women experiencing IPV would help address some of their mental health concerns. According to Wanda, "What would be great is if we had a group of Black counsellors for women."

A central component of cultural competency is ensuring that staff and service providers reflect the population they serve. This means that greater efforts must be made to hire racially and culturally diverse support workers with diverse experiences and skills.

Cultivating partnerships and better relationships with the Black community can also help organizations gain better insight into the specific challenges Black women face in their communities. The agencies can be better equipped to identify signs of abuse and support Black women when they are taking the necessary steps to leave abusive relationships.

Wanda pointed out that having an understanding of older Black women's unique experiences historically is a crucial aspect of culturally competent training that support workers must have.

> People who understand the elder population—elder Black woman population—you know, who have an understanding, who have some insight, and who can relate to the community concerns. What's this community about? You know, what's happened here historically?

Wanda also observed that the heterogeneity of the Black population requires that support workers understand the unique needs of culturally diverse Black populations in Nova Scotia:

> And there are cultural differences within the, I'll say, indigenous African population or African Nova Scotian people who have been born and raised here, and the immigrant African population. You know, there are cultural differences. There are many similarities but there are many cultural differences. So, I think that needs to be acknowledged.

Sue noted that support workers must also have an understanding of the role that systemic racism plays in Black women's lives—something she came to realize in her own work supporting Black women.

Discussion

For Black women whose experiences reside at the intersection of state-sanctioned racial and gendered violence and violence in the home, as discussed previously in this paper, IPV advocacy may not be as simple as it is for White women because it requires that they pit themselves against their men and, consequently, the Black community, which continues to be subjected to ongoing stigmatization based on enduring racist ideologies. Therefore, many Black women prefer to stay silent about their experiences with IPV to challenge ongoing forms of racism that they and their community continue to confront in all sectors of society.

In this paper, we identify several factors that deter Black Nova Scotian women in and beyond midlife from accessing support services for IPV in Nova Scotia. An important contribution of this study is our intersectional approach that contributes to our scant knowledge of Black women in and beyond midlife who experience IPV (McGarry, Simpson and Hinchliff-Smith 2011; Rezazadeh and Hoover 2018). In addition to the many

barriers that younger women experience, older Black women experiencing IPV may be even less likely to seek help from formal service providers. Our results showed that similar to younger Black women, Black women who are in and beyond midlife utilize faith and religion to cope with IPV (St Vil et al, 2017), but we identified that praying, humming, and singing were specific coping strategies.

Our results suggest that support services must be prepared to support Black women in and beyond midlife in holistic ways that acknowledge how all forms of traumatic adverse life events and existing traumas can impact Black women's health and their ability to access services (Long and Ullman 2016; Sabri et al. 2016). They must also be equipped to recognize the culturally specific ways in which Black women present symptoms of distress. Moreover, there is an increasing cultural diversity in the Black community in Nova Scotia as the historical African Nova Scotian community lives alongside a growing newcomer population comprised of people from various African countries and, to a lesser extent, the Caribbean. Thus, support services need to appreciate the implications of this heterogeneity in how they conduct outreach to diverse Black communities and bring training programs that develop service providers' competencies in understanding and addressing the needs of culturally diverse Black communities. Black women have shared and unique experiences of trauma that influence their propensity to seek help for IPV, including a legacy of racial oppression, in the case of African Nova Scotians, and war and political persecution, in the case of some African immigrants.

A trauma-informed approach to care can be useful in centering racism as an important aspect of providing support to Black and other racialized women and communities. This is a strength-based approach that understands and responds to the impact of trauma on individuals and communities, and it emphasizes physical, psychological, and emotional safety for patients, health professionals, and other support workers (Hopper, Bassuk & Olivet 2010). Being trauma informed is about acknowledging trauma, building welcoming and safe physical and emotional environments, promoting safety, trust, and respect in our daily interactions, and ensuring positive social interactions with clients, families, staff, volunteers, and physicians. It is also about being client-centered, valuing collaboration and partnerships, having choices and the freedom to make choices, and recognizing client empowerment (Wisconsin Department of Health Services 2018).

Support services for women who have experienced IPV must facilitate outreach to Black women in and beyond midlife who may not want to access existing community supports. This type of approach allows the organization to address their clients' needs by partnering with an interprofessional team of service and health professionals, Support services must also be based in transformative justice principles that challenge White, middle-class feminist understandings of IPV and approaches to seeking justice. These understandings and approaches do not often appreciate the larger historical and structural contexts that shape how Black women seek help for and cope with experiences of IPV, and that create barriers and opportunities for them to reach out for support or seek redress. In other words, without an analysis that speaks to the realities of Black women's lives, support services will fail to appreciate the specific ways in which Black women conceptualize and seek help for IPV (Bierra et al. 2006).

Participants in this study shared a similar sentiment regarding the need for more services to be made available that enable Black women in and beyond midlife to see themselves, either in the service providers hired, or in the acknowledgement of their unique experiences as Black women in the delivery of support services. Our results point to the importance of hiring support workers who reflect the racial and cultural backgrounds of the broader community, including older women. Etowa, Price, & Debs-Ivall (2011) observe that diversity in the healthcare workforce can help address health inequities experienced by racialized and ethnic minority communities, as well as provide culturally sensitive care to all Canadians. Similarly, Pacquiao (2007) found that the advantages of increased diversity in the healthcare workforce include the fact that minority professionals are more likely to serve minority and medically underserved populations.

We drew our results from four interviews conducted in one Canadian province. Our small sample size could be considered a limitation as we were not able to represent the diversity of older Black women's experiences. While we gained insights in this study, the results should not be generalized to other locations and cultural groups. Additional research is needed to further illuminate the specific barriers and recommendations for change for Black women within other geographic and political contexts (Lacey et al. 2015). However, our research does provide important insights about the experiences, barriers faced,

and how to address these challenges for Black women who experience IPV in and beyond midlife. It is clear that IPV within Black communities can only be effectively addressed if support services are prepared to help dismantle the systems of oppression that continue to harm Black communities and to address the intersecting forms of violence that Black women experience through both state agencies and intimate partnerships.

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Out of the Closet and into Quarantine: Stories of Isolation and Teaching

by Michelle Forrest and Phillip Joy

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Abstract: Being queer can be filled with moments of isolation: not fitting in to heteronormative rites of passage, not knowing if or when to come out in academia, and now, trying to cope with the difficulties induced by officially-mandated social distancing in a global pandemic. Although isolation is a common human experience, for queer people it is often an intimate part of their stories, leaving lasting scars. Experiences of isolation, loneliness, and being "othered" have serious consequences. Through autoethnographic queer inquiry, we explore isolation and how it shapes teaching and learning. Drawing on concepts of the *outsider-within* and the uncanny, and distinguishing isolation from loneliness and solitude, we share our personal stories of isolation through the perspective of a performative "I", examining how our pedagogical philosophies and practices inevitably reflect our queer experiences. Coming from different disciplines of practice, we met because of the COVID-19 pandemic, which prompted this return to old and new forms of social isolation—the old being the experience of growing up queer and the new through teaching online. From our perspectives across a generational divide, we trace the unsettling experiences of being queer and teaching in our COVID bubbles, and we attempt to navigate ourselves and our students safely through disconnection and isolation.

Keywords: COVID-19, performative I, outsider-within, queer inquiry, queer pedagogy, social isolation

> *In loneliness, one is abandoned even from that space that was one's own in isolation. By either being abandoned solely to oneself or being dispossessed of even that, isolation and loneliness are social forms of being unmoored in the world.* —Ricco 2020, 165

Introduction

Social isolation is a common human experience that can be thought of as the absence of meaningful and sustained connections with others (Perone, Ingersoll-Dayton, and Watkins-Dukhie 2020). For many people, the opportunities for meaningful connections with other humans are intimately tied to their identities. For example, identifying within queer communities can shape the experiences of social connections in diverse ways. "Queer" can be used as an umbrella term to represent people who identify outside of socially constructed cis-heteronormative identities, including but not limited to lesbian, gay, bi, trans, pansexual, asexual, and two-spirit identifying individuals. "Queer" has historical connections with abuse, stigma, violence, and harassment of these people within society, as well as the pathologizing of their identities within health care and medical institutions. The term has been reclaimed by these communities in an effort to push back against these historical connotations. It is in this reclaimed form that we use the term "queer," while recognizing the harm that this term has done to many people. Even as "queer" continues to be used in what Youdell (2010, 89) calls unsettling and scattering practices, it increasingly functions to interpellate—to make someone or something start to exist or have a particular identity (Cambridge 2021)—which puts at risk the term's tactical application of troubling identity spaces. As Sedgwick (1993, 8) defines it, queerness is "the open mesh of possibilities, gaps, overlaps, dissonances and resonances, lapses and excesses of meaning when the constituent elements of anyone's gender, of anyone's sexuality aren't made (or can't be made) to signify monolithically."

Social isolation can have serious consequences for the health and well-being of queer identifying people. Some scholars suggest (House 2001; Yang et al. 2018) that social isolation is a "silent killer" by contributing to cognitive decline, heart disease, depression, loneliness, and suicidal ideation. Overall, literature suggests that social isolation decreases the mental and physical health and well-being of individuals (Perone et al. 2020). Building and fostering social connections can be critical to improving health and well-being (Chen and Feeley 2013) and is associated with improved self-esteem in trans and gender diverse individuals (Austin and Goodman 2017). Societal views of queerness shape the experiences of social isolation for many. Some religious views position queerness as unnatural or against a divine being and can lead people to be shunned by their families, peers, and social supports (Lalich & McLaren 2010). Young people who report a high level of family rejection based on their sexuality are six times more likely to experience depression and eight times more likely to attempt suicide (Salerno et al. 2020).

Within schools, negative views of queerness lead to students being ostracized from their peers and can expose them to violence and harassment. Gender non-conforming students may feel frightened to talk about issues of sexuality and gender to their families, teachers, and school counsellors for fear of being further harassed and rejected, which can lead to isolation and feelings of intense loneliness. It has been noted that, ironically, social isolation for queer youth often occurs in the same spaces, such as schools and families, that are meant to provide meaningful connections and supports (Garcia et al. 2020). Not all teachers are prepared to deal with the complex issues of queer students and there have been recommendations for teachers and advisors within schools to be more effectively trained in this work (Garcia et al. 2020). The fear of family and social rejection, as well as the threat of violence lead many to struggle with the concealment of their identities—another contributing factor to diminished health and well-being (Salerno et al. 2020).

Although queer people face many challenges because of the ways diverse sexualities are often viewed negatively within Canadian society, there are also many supports available. For example, in many school systems across the country Gay-Straight Alliances (GSA) offer social support and safer spaces for queer students (Fetner et al, 2012). GSAs have the capacity to inform and supplement the pedagogical gaps and practices that exclude queer lives and experiences within Canadian schools.[1] As Lapointe (2016, 206) argues, "When educators follow the lead of some GSA members, they may borrow students' queer teaching and learning practices, and apply them within Social Studies classrooms to disrupt the privileging of heterosexuality in schools." Inclusion of queer content within schools can help shift social views

of diverse sexualities through active participation and disruption of cis-heteronormative assumptions (Lapointe 2016).

The global COVID-19 pandemic that began in early 2020 has intensified the social and health inequalities that queer people face (Fish et al. 2020), including social isolation and social disconnectedness. Many schools and universities closed their physical locations and moved online. For some queer students and teachers, this limited their access to social supports and other queer people (Salerno et al. 2020). The move to online teaching at home also left many queer students sheltered in place with unsupportive families or in situations in which they needed to repress or hide their identities (Fish et al. 2020). As Drabble and Eliason (2021) suggest, the COVID-19 stay-at-home orders and the shutdowns of schools, social support organizations, and queer health service providers may have resulted in queer people being more vulnerable to loneliness and social isolation. Salerno et al. (2020) note that many schools and community-based organizations have moved their support groups, mental health care services, and social activities on-line during the COVID-19 pandemic. Such moves to online formats have been critical for many queer youths and individuals to feel safe to seek support, especially when the platforms used are synchronous and text-based (Fish et al. 2020). Researchers have suggested, however, that many of these programs are at their capacity and overwhelmed by high numbers of people reaching out (Salerno et al. 2020) and there are issues of internet connectivity for many queer people that limit their ability to access these services (Drabble and Eliason 2021).

Finding ourselves facing challenges in our teaching during this pandemic and sharing parallel backgrounds growing up in small-town Nova Scotia, we asked ourselves how we might conceptualize our isolating experiences of teaching and being queer. How might our experiences shed light on the phenomenon of social distancing in terms of what it means for traditionally marginalized folks and for those, like some of our students, who may be experiencing a pervasive sense of loneliness and unease for the first time? Having chosen to analyse the problem of social isolation and loneliness, so prominent in pandemic times, from our perspectives as queer academics, we employ queer inquiry and conceptual analysis to examine four autobiographical accounts of feelings of separateness. These four stories are included in this paper. There is one from each author about a childhood event, and one from each author directly related to the current situation of seclusion precipitated by COVID-19 rules and regulations and our mandated move to online academic work. Using concepts of outsider-within and the uncanny, and distinguishing isolation from loneliness and solitude, we analyse our stories asking how being queer queers teaching and working in post-secondary education in pandemic times.

Queer performative "I"

We believe that what follows resonates with how Holman Jones and Adams (2016, 197) describe the "share[d] conceptual and purposeful affinities" between autoethnography and queer theory. Both frameworks favour fluidity and being responsive to particularities over the assumptions of orthodox methodologies, and inventiveness of methods and theory over static legitimacy. Both take up selves yet resist the notion of stable self-subjects, express how self-subjects are realized in interaction and act in the world, and are political in their commitment to questioning normative discourse and how lives come into being (Holman Jones and Adams 2016).

Like these authors, we use the first-person "I" perspective to tell our stories and to merge our voices through them into a shared experience. Gender-specificity in our memoirs is specific only insofar as it is a common point of resistance. Youdell (2010, 88) claims, in reference to ethnographic work, that queer, "whether as a practice, subjectivity or positioning, brings tensions that are productive in their irresolvability." Thus, our interpretations of the following stories are possibilities, not inevitabilities, composed to remain as open as "queer" the category is open and fluid, in order to give a wide range of readers entry for comparison to their own experiences of isolation. As Holman Jones and Adams (2016, 198) put it, "My experience—our experience—could be your experience ... could reframe your experience ... could politicize your experience and could motivate, mobilize you, and us, to action." The "performative I" is a concept and technique of storytelling articulated by Pollock (2007, 247) to convey what is only possibly real, made real in the writing performance, in order to elude any presumption of a foundational ontology or convenient claims to authenticity. We see this technique as consistent with the contradictory stance of queer inquiry and autoethnography in adopting a subject position in writing while resisting the instantiation of any such position or its experience as stable or fixed. If our stories "work," it is because of their fluidity. As with fiction, their truth lies in

their verisimilitude or life-likeness, not in their accurate depiction of actual events. Paradoxically, their specificity is what mobilizes an "I" story into *your* experience.

The difficulty in resisting the notion of stable self-subjects in typical expository writing lies in the authority of the text itself. Once posited, the I (like the we, the you, or the omniscient third-person perspective) is stable and read as such, lending it sovereign rule by virtue of convention. The experienced reader recognizes the positionality elicited by the perspective of the text, accepts it, and reads on without second thought. To say "the self-subject named and implied in this text is not stable" is to make a claim that will be accepted or not, depending upon the strength of the justification given and the reader's inclination to accept it. To demonstrate the potential instability of the writerly voice within the writing itself serves to derange reading as usual by discomposing the reliability of the narrative perspective, thereby evoking the potentialities of an insecure self-subject, and provoking the reader to ask: Why break with convention by disrupting a reliable narrative?

According to Warren (2006, 318), performance ethnography is about "seeing the constructed nature of our lives and then interrupting that seemingly stable process." Using the shifting perspective of the performative I effects this suspension for the reader, who is likely to be confused momentarily about whose voice is whose. As Pollock (2007, 252) describes it, the performative I "has a politics and an ethics. Performing displacement by error, intimacy, others, it moves beyond the atomization, alienation, and reproduction of the authorial self toward new points of identification and alliance." In describing how we met and in telling our stories, we inject a politics of instability into the following narrative by not naming clearly each self-subject in turn, as a means of implying the ethical question regarding the value of irresolvability in response to the particularities of queer lives. Thus, our experience "could politicize your experience and could motivate, mobilize you, and us, to action" (Holman Jones and Adams 2016, 198).

"Twice-told Tales"[2]

Phillip and I are colleagues at the same small university; he is a new hire and I have been here for twenty years. Under normal circumstances, before campus restrictions due to the pandemic and our move to online work, we likely would have met at the annual union event to welcome new faculty. It was COVID-19 and our shared interests that brought us together professionally because the university art gallery moved their weekend workshops online. In November 2020 we both signed up for one on queer memoir comics.[3] Before the pandemic I was commuting two hours to work and back, so, on-campus weekend art workshops were more than I could manage.

Drawing comics has always been a love of mine, inspired by my father's facility for reproducing comic strip figures from the funny papers. My early experience of formal art training thwarted that interest because, in those days, comics were not considered art. I often add cartoon-like characters on notes or cards to friends, and I teach a graduate seminar on aesthetics in which we engage in various art activities and I have written about the provocative role of non-traditional art forms in teaching to be critical (Forrest 2001). The workshop rekindled my childhood love of these cartoon drawings, got me thinking about being a queer feminist teacher and philosopher of education, and offered another way of bringing art, life, and professional practice together in my course for in-service teachers.

Like Michelle, my interest in comics was born in early childhood, along with my love of fantasy and science-fiction stories of heroes battling the forces of evil. In my work in Applied Human Nutrition, I do arts-based research using comics to study body image. My research reveals that representing the lived experiences of queer men and their bodies through comics can be a positive, self-reflective experience (Joy et al. 2020). I was looking for ways to further my use of comic art in my research, which brought me to the workshop. So, there we were, meeting for the first time, in a setting that foregrounded sexual orientation and memoir, and that experience prompted us to work together across our respective fields of Education and Applied Human Nutrition to consider what our past and present experiences as queer scholars and teachers negotiating the challenges of COVID-19 might have to offer readers of this special section of *Atlantis*.

In her December 2020 President's Message to unionized university faculty in Canada, Brenda Austin-Smith (2020) describes what we have been living:

We can all by now list a ton of words and phrases we are sick and tired of hearing from administrations to describe our collective scramble to adjust to the COVID world. We have pivoted and relaunched; we have over-

hauled and uploaded; we have weighed the merits of synchronous and non-synchronous instruction. With a variety of makeshift home studios set up across the country, cameras and laptops perched on top of books and cartons and counters, we have all become broadcasters. But the most irritating phrase from the past term for me remains "We're all in this together." Because we are not. The virus may be global, but its effects are systemically uneven in our sector, as in many others.

Austin-Smith rightly goes on to point out how much worse the effects of the pandemic have been on academic workers in precarious, part-time contract positions. Mandating that university programming go online has meant the prospect of lost revenues from empty residences, among other things, and increasing class numbers to mitigate budget shortfalls has led to lost employment for many part-timers teaching in Canadian universities (Wright et al. 2020). Those of us fortunate enough to be tenured or in tenure-track positions are a privileged minority. The challenges we face and present in this paper are not as extreme as those experienced by many of our contracted colleagues. We have secure full-time jobs and institutional support to represent our experiences. Wherever our stories figure in the larger picture of pandemic-related stresses and anxieties in the academic workforce, they do open a window on life in post-secondary teaching and research under these novel circumstances and, as such, may shed some light on the plight of those worse off than us.

Tempting Fate

It was time for the annual school play and my grade 5 teacher decided that our grade would portray an assortment of "walks of life." I don't remember having any choice in the matter but recall vividly not being thrilled with her choice for me. I was to depict a "wife" and would wear a wedding dress. I wasn't privy to whatever the adults may have decided. What Sister Mary Anthony—I call her that to protect the late woman's identity—may have asked or told my mother remains unknown. All I remember is being taken off to my aunt's place where she opened her cedar chest and offered up her own wedding gown for me to wear in the play. My mother was older than my aunt and had been married in a smart suit, Rita Hayworth style, after the war when times were tough and ordinary folks didn't splurge on single-occasion wedding apparel they could not afford. So, out of moth balls and tissue paper came my aunt's lacy gown and veil to be worn by me, likely after some alterations.

Those were the days when what the teacher said held unquestioned authority. So, if my mother and aunt considered not complying with Sister's wish, it never came up. Perhaps it was the availability of the yellowing wedding dress that landed me the role. I shall never know since it was only thinking about times of isolation that brought this absurd and humiliating episode to mind again. What I do remember clearly, as if it were yesterday, is feeling an absolute fool and knowing, without ever having been taught such a lesson, that there was something strangely ominous about wearing a wedding dress for anything other than one's own marriage service. I felt too conscious of tempting fate to play act such a serious event. I may as well have been playing the corpse at an enactment of my own funeral. These were solemn ceremonies, this I knew well, going to a parish school and being taught in religion class that they were sacraments. So, why couldn't I be the nurse, or the teacher, or the secretary? I don't remember anyone making fun of me, though the dress didn't fit all that well. My classmates all seemed pleased with the grown-up roles they were playing. I felt ridiculous and completely alone in my discomfort. Standing on that stage, reading the lines I'd memorized about the role of wife and mother, I had an odd sense of foreboding, as the stays in the bodice stuck into my ribs and the scratchy veil made my head itch.

The experience related in this story made me feel queer, in the root sense of strange, odd, or peculiar. Deep down I knew something was not right about it, yet all the adults seemed to think it perfectly fine. I may have complained to my mother about the feel of the dress and that veil, but not about my worry that something more was amiss, because I had no language to express it, even if I did have the nerve to object to the play and my teacher's wishes.

The etymology of the word *queer* is uncertain, though it is suspected to have come from the German *quer* meaning transverse, oblique, crosswise, obstructive (of things going wrong) (Oxford 2021). I had the feeling that by wearing that wedding gown I was asking for things to go sideways in my life, which they did subtly and incrementally without my acknowledging to anyone, including myself, that I was destined never to live the cis-heteronormative life I play-acted on stage that day.

According to Youdell (2010, 89), "We have no grip on queer." Understanding this was not a rhetorical or conceptual possibility for my ten-year-old self at a time when the term "queer" had not yet been reclaimed as an ironic badge of honour among those on the periphery of

heteronormativity.[4] I had no language for what felt strange and alienating up on that stage or for why I felt a sense of foreboding being typecast as a bride at age ten. Now, that episode seems emblematic of my isolation, in a time and place when being queer was best kept secret. Viewing myself as someone playing a part in a life I was destined to watch from a distance, I could not have known then how long it would take me to recognize and acknowledge why playing that role felt so strange. In *Black Feminist Thought*, Collins (2009/2000) describes the experience of feeling nothing wrong in being who she was in a world where "apparently many others did." As she grew up and that world expanded, she felt herself growing smaller. "I tried to disappear into myself" is how she depicts the childhood experience she later describes as "being placed in a curious *outsider-within* social location, a peculiar marginality that stimulated a distinctive Black women's perspective on a variety of themes" (Collins 2009/2000, vii, 13).[5] Being queer in a cis-heteronormative society, even though I had no name for it, made me internalize a similar outsider location which gender diverse persons occupied back then and still do in many ways today, despite protections in Canadian law and tacit social acceptance.

Hours in a Library[6]

I looked down at my fingers and stared at my nails. They were well-kept, clean with no dirt buried within them, but long, for a boy. I thought they were pretty. They made me feel like one of the rich and beautiful stars on Beverley Hills 90210. But in this moment, as I examined each nail in turn, I began to feel panic. Icy tendrils of dread reached out from the pit of my stomach to diffuse through my whole being. It was by now a familiar sensation. It was the sensation of my junior high school.

This day I was in the library, with its fluorescent lights humming ever so slightly. When you first entered there was a central open area with a help desk where there would sometimes be a teacher. Off to the right there were long wooden tables. To the left, grey metallic bookcases in neat rows. The back wall was divided into cubicles with windows that overlooked the back of the school, the baseball field, and a row of orange school buses waiting for the end of the day. The library had become a hideaway for me. Earlier in the term, the guidance counsellor of the school had suggested it as such a place. A place I could go before the morning bell rang to avoid the awkwardness of walking the hallways alone, a place I could go during recess to avoid the name-calling, and during lunch to avoid the bullies who threatened me with violence. I was grateful for his suggestion.

Today, however, the library did not offer its usual shelter. In the last ten minutes, the library had turned from my sanctuary to my prison, invaded by the boys that I tried so hard to avoid. I was in the stacks, nestled as far away from the door and the outside world as I could get. I was in my own personal cubicle, or what I had claimed as my own, and the newly arrived boys were in the front of the library, settling down at one of the tables. There was no way out without being noticed. One of them was Kester, a dark-haired boy in the same grade as me. He was an avid reader so his presence in the library was not a surprise and I assumed he was in the library for a book. He left the others and entered the stacks. I had known Kester since we were five; we started school together, celebrated birthdays together, and went to this new junior high school together. It was only in the last year that he became one of my bullies.

I prayed that he would not notice me as I slid further down in my chair. But fate had other plans. He came over, his intent obvious in cocky stride and the smile he wore. He leaned over the wooden divider of the cubical about to say something I could only imagine would be mean. But before he did, he must have noticed my hands on my book. My nails had caught his attention. He demanded to know why they were so long. Didn't I know that boys were not allowed to have long nails. Didn't I know that only girls were allowed that privilege. Why was I so weird? he asked, without hesitation. He stood there waiting for me to say something. When I could not answer, he hurried off to his friends to report my transgressions to them. Time was running out. Kester would be back with the other boys soon. I looked at my nails and started biting them down.

This story reminds me that times spent in the library were safe times away from the destructive setting of my high school—an experience that is true for many queer students. The staff were helpful in providing the advice to seek shelter from the bullies in the safe space of the library, but they were also complacent in upholding the strict hetero- and cis-normative learning environments that created and perpetuated my terror. The repercussions of those terrifying moments are still visible on me, symbols of my queerness. They run along my body, rivers of shame that transform the way I interact with others, friends, colleagues, and students. I often wonder how I would be different if I had not felt so alone and fearful of the other students. What if my teachers had suspected that my soul was inflicted with loneliness and

what if they had been more willing to step in? How could they have continued to ignore my silent cries as other students circled and threatened me with violence in the hallways? Surely the teachers were not that unaware of these occurrences? They should have tried to question and disrupt the normative discourse of gender. After all, why should I have needed the library as my own secret safe space? Should not the whole school have been safe for me?

As I reflect on my queer transformations and my own teaching I cannot help but question how these experiences shape my own classrooms. Do I now ignore the cries of hardship and isolation in the virtual hallways of my classroom during the global pandemic? Have I, as Freire (1974/1968, 23) warned, become one of those who oppress? Another cog on the "circles of certainty" in a dehumanizing, traditional education system that has simply been transposed on-line to address the realities of COVID-19?

I try to be compassionate to my students, especially teaching through the global pandemic. I offer extended deadlines on all assignments, give my students twenty-four hours to write all their exams, and try to create as many classroom connections as I can. I attempt to recognize the many difficulties they may be dealing with struggling to learn in virtual isolation during this global pandemic. Unlike Freire's radical sectarian, I do not "suffer from an absence of doubt" (1974/1968), but, I ask myself are current conditions calling me to implement more radical change? Although my students' struggles may be different from those of folks growing up queer and alone, I try to imagine myself as the helpful and caring teacher I needed when I was a student hiding in the library. How can I draw from that formative experience of fear and isolation to help us cope with the pedagogical transpositions we are now experiencing?

According to Sedgwick (1993, 4), 'queer' is a politically potent term because, "far from being capable of being detached from the childhood scene of shame, it cleaves to that scene as a near-inexhaustible source of transformational energy." Those carefully manicured nails that I loved became marked by "shame's threshold between sociability and introversion" (Sedgwick 1993,12). Has this history of negotiating queer instituted for me "far more durable, structural changes in [my] relational and interpretive strategies toward both self and others" (Sedgwick 1993,13)? If so, how can I draw from this source of strength to enact the queer pedagogy Britzman (1998, 82) describes as "constituting normalcy as a conceptual order that refuses to imagine the very possibility of the other precisely because the production of otherness as an outside is central to its own self-recognition." This is not a search for the 'correct' method or 'right' questions; but rather, like queer inquiry, it is a pedagogy that "works to question situations of apparent normality in the classroom and concerns itself with the social production of what is learned" (Neto 2018, 256).

How we have established our professional identities directly affects the assumptions we bring to our relations with students, beginning as we do from positions of vulnerability that carry "transformational energy" earned on the "threshold of shame" (Sedgwick 1993, 15). This shapes queer identity as "to-be-constituted," rather than giving that "identity-space" the standing of an essence (Sedgwick 1993). As Britzman (1995, 153) points out, "the 'queer,' like the 'theory,' in Queer Theory does not depend on the identity of the theorist or the one who engages with it." The extent to which we as teachers disclose our queerness in the classroom is not pivotal in our orientation to queer pedagogy. What makes our pedagogy queer is how we balance resisting the normalization of education and the taken-for-granted givenness of standardized curricula with accepting the challenge of "proliferating identities; not closing them down" (Britzman 1995, 158).

DePalma (2020, 6) asks if queer can be purposeful and suggests five directions one can explore in conceptualizing queer pedagogy: unsettling and unlinking hierarchical binaries; analysing processes of normalization; privileging embodied experience over preconceived knowledge; critically analysing media tropes and images to uncover the hidden curriculum of popular culture and everyday learning; and, working within and against institutionalized schooling (DePalma 2020, 9–10). In these suggestions, we recognize what makes our pedagogical orientation queer. Central to our pedagogical aims has been bringing a critical lens to teaching dietetics and education by troubling distinctions between dominant inter-related concepts such as wellness and illness, care and competence, queer and straight. This work is inextricable from our larger analyses of normalization in health care and teaching, such as, how success is increasingly evaluated more according to statistical metrics and less on the nuanced qualities of human relations that justify our disciplines as caregiving professions. We raise questions in our classes regarding the systemic epistemic injustices perpetrated upon vulnerable bodies dependent

on public institutions, such as hospitals and schools, ostensibly dedicated to support them; questions about the ethics of care, cultural sensitivity, and what it takes to debunk tired stereotypes and comfortable certainties. We came together on account of our keen interest in analysing oppressive biases in mass-media imagery, such as those both reinforced and challenged in popular culture and that affect deep-seated assumptions within the public imaginary. Each of us works within and against the dominant normalizing tendencies of our disciplines of practice, even as we teach their protocols to aspiring professionals.

Working together in socially-distanced isolation from our departmental colleagues and students during this pandemic has brought into sharp relief what Britzman (1995, 152) describes as the "centripetal force, of a cultural insistence to put back into place boundaries at all costs, that education is obligated to exceed." By questioning situations of apparent normality and enacting concern for the social production of what is learned, purposeful queer pedagogy has the potential to generate new relational and interpretive strategies between teacher and student. The precipitous pivot to online teaching has provoked unexpected social and learning conditions the effects of which are only beginning to make sense to those of us thrown into this massive educational experiment that has been implemented with no prior risk-reward ethical analysis.

Unmasked

It's the pandemic spring of 2020, the prime minister has called for a nationwide lockdown, universities have moved to virtual teaching, and I am about to start my first online course, an experience I would never have chosen willingly. I have had three weeks to get a course I'd developed and taught several times ready for this new-to-me mode of delivery. The idea of "course delivery" is one I'd always avoided since it evokes Freire's (1974/1968) banking metaphor critique of education. Deposit/deliver content in hopes it earns interest, like putting money in a bank account. People are not empty accounts to be filled or blank slates waiting to be written on. Yet, despite Freire's influential critique, the language and rhetoric of the knowledge economy imposes its epistemological assumptions on post-secondary education, now magnified as COVID finds us all scurrying to shelter from face-to-face contact and implement new ways of teaching.

Deciding on a place in the house for my home office means not monopolizing any room that may otherwise be needed as I spend hours online each day. At first I assume the headset will help cut me off from my environment and protect my partner from having to hear the workings of all my meetings and classes. Quickly I discover it hurts my ear and gives me a headache; so, the laundry room in the basement becomes my work hide-away. I try to angle the computer so it does not give pride of place in the background to the washer and dryer, but glare from the window makes that difficult. When wash-day coincides with class or meeting times, I push the rack full of drying clothes to the far corner of the room, away from the camera's prying eye. On the wall behind me is a large framed photo of me on Brighton pier, all those years ago when I thought my future would be in the performing arts. Little did I know that one day my stage would be this "philosopher's laundry."

The course is a graduate seminar of twenty—more students than I can comfortably get to know and draw out in discussion in this awkward format. We communicate mainly by speaking and listening, as on a radio talk-show, with the occasional talking head appearing on screen; me welcoming students or bidding them adieu, leading discussion, or answering general questions; and students, at most two at a time, sharing their work. We must save bandwidth, we are told, by being judicious in our use of this digital platform. All the while, random running comments from students pop up in chat balloons that disappear before I can read them if I don't have the full chat thread open, stage right. My teacher voice tends to be most prominent, framing each class with intros and wrap-ups, leading into group work, answering questions, and directing most discussions. Some students take up my invitation to put a photo up in place of the default silhouette avatar; many do not and so, in most instances, voice recognition is how I tell students apart. Those who immediately stand out are two with deeper, male-sounding voices and two of the eighteen female-sounding voices whose first language does not seem to be English. The other sixteen female-sounding voices, all with similar turns of phrase and intonation patterns, are difficult to tell apart, especially for the first few classes. This adds an awkward note since I have to continually look for the open microphone symbol on the class list to be sure I'm calling them by their correct names. Calling each student by name is part of an ethics of care in teaching, which seems all the more important in this de-personalized classroom.

After my first online class, I am pleased that things went fairly smoothly, without any technical hiccups, but I feel uneasy. One student tended to dominate the small and large-group discussions. Since this is early days I put it down

to students' reticence to speak in the first meeting, especially while distanced from one another. It becomes clear by the end of next class that my initial unease was well-founded. The same student takes up more air-time than he ought to and is very opinionated, taking issue with everything everyone else says. To fairly distribute air-time and in hopes of taking the wind out of his sails, I impose time limits for responses and curate discussions more closely than I prefer doing in a grad seminar. This does the trick but being on guard against his oppositional demeanour threatening to direct the flow of conversation keeps me on edge and I am pleased when the course is over. What the other students thought of the experience is anyone's guess. On account of COVID, the anonymous student ratings of instructors are made optional and, with all the other challenges in my altered work life, requesting that students be sent evaluation forms is just one more thing I don't have time to think about.

It seems that whatever chance I might have had of developing the relaxed style I try to arrive at in-person with students is compromised by the student who loves to hear himself talk, and by whatever is at the core of the uneasy feeling his behaviour evokes in me. Why does he get to me so much? After years of teaching high school before moving to post-secondary, why should something so simple have this effect? Might things be different on campus where I could gauge everyone's responses to his adversarial tone? Having a group of relative strangers peering into my home through a webcam feels invasive. Years of theatre training and teaching hasn't prepared me for this experience of intimate, exposed isolation.

Looking back on that first experience of teaching online has allowed me to see how I was strangely unnerved by one student's tone and the relational dynamic he provoked. At the time, his interactions made me question what I might have done differently. My tacit intention from the start of the course was to try and produce a learning environment as close to an in-person or normal classroom as I could. On later reflection, I wondered if I had deceived myself by assuming that any approximation of apparent normality was possible under these conditions or, indeed, ever? The pandemic brought to the fore the social production of what is learned and the instability of my assumptions about what constitutes normal. How I interact as teacher with students is as integral to what is learned as is the subject matter I choose for the course syllabus. I know this to be true from years of educational philosophy and curriculum theory,[7] and yet, these new circumstances led me to miss the obvious. The pre-planning required for uploading course materials onto a digital platform took my focus away from the social production of learning as lived and directed it towards a digital production line of pre-determined discrete files and documents. Filling up the online course site gave me a false sense that the course could somehow teach itself. It looked so impressive with links and layers of PDFs, URLs, assignment drop-boxes, video streams, and other dazzling, digital accoutrements. All it took was one oppositional student to evoke the unease of my latent outsider-within. The unreconciled contradiction between who I know myself to be and the objectified other that queerness consigns me to is always already at play in every human relation, ready to undermine any presumption I make to being "normal" or teaching "normally."

Attending the queer memoir comics workshop where Phillip and I met is what got me thinking about growing up queer but unaware of what it was that made me feel different. I put it down to being an only child; I was the only "only" I knew and assumed that not having siblings to relate to was what made me feel distanced from even my closest friends. As I matured, nothing remotely resembling gay pride was part of my cultural milieu, even though my under-graduate years coincided with the Stonewall Uprising that sparked the global movement for gay and lesbian rights.[8] Although wearing that wedding dress felt wrong, I put it down to tempting fate, nothing more. All these years later, though my partner and I have been together for over thirty years and LGBTQ+ pride has been a phenomenon I respect and discuss in my teacher-education classroom, I never took the movement to heart personally until I began to discuss queer theory with my gifted new colleague. This experience helped me realize my complicity in permitting cis-heteronormative impingements to linger in my life and work. As a feminist, I had not paid sufficient attention to queer theory nor brought it to bear more directly on my own attitudes, past and present. In her autobiography, Rosemary Brown (1989, 81) describes reading Betty Friedan (1963) and experiencing that *click* of recognition whereby she realized she had more in common with other women than what divided her from them. In the uncanny discomfort I felt when being challenged by that obstructionist student during COVID online teaching, I experienced more of a *thud* than a *click* of queer consciousness-raising. Thankfully, I finally faced my long-standing capacity to reinterpret my queerness in ways that fit within mainstream stereotypes of resistance, such as assuming that philosophical training inevitably

made me critically astute and aware of contradictions. How ironic that in so assuming I was performing yet another contradiction.

Britzman (1998) contends that the "force of secrets" effects "the need to excavate the lost subjects of education until what is uncanny can be engaged" (1998, 13,15). Youdell (2010) points out that the Freudian concepts of the uncanny (*unheimlich*) and its opposite, the homely and familiar (*heimlich*), are implicated in each other. "[T]he uncanny is at once what is homely and familiar *and* what is hidden" (Youdell 2010, 91). According to Freud, the uncanny has an unsettling effect because it "leads back to what is known of old and long familiar" and this return entails ambivalence and ambiguity. As Youdell explains, "Not only does the uncanny speak of an ambivalence of feeling and meaning, but the relationship between the *unheimlich* and *heimlich* is itself ambiguous, with what is *heimlich* also coming to mean the familiar re-emerging in a place it should not be—the *unheimlich*" (2010, 91). Under COVID-19 restrictions, the familiar is systematically defamiliarized or made uncanny:[9] teacher-student relationships; daily faculty/staff interactions; scholarly/professional society meetings; human-science research practices; domestic arrangements for families and communities. This is a world turned sideways with everyone continually holding the familiar up against the unfamiliar that, we hope, will soon recede. This is not a situation in which old ways can be abandoned and new ways embraced; rather, we work in familiar and unfamiliar conditions simultaneously. Queer folks who carry the "force of secrets," regardless how seemingly resigned, reconciled, or oblivious they are to this fate, may see the pandemic as both an opportunity to "excavate the lost subjects" of their education and engage with the uncanny, as we are doing here in our stories. By examining our ambivalent feelings about these shifts in working relationships and the contradictory meanings we draw from them, and by learning to live and work in the ambiguity of finding strength from our own vulnerabilities we lead ourselves into new unknowns, in the light of what is old and familiar.

Fifty COVID Bubbles

It was my first time teaching online. I had three courses in this term of COVID-19 online teaching. The term was almost over, and I had just finished reviewing the last assignment for one of my classes. This class was a first-year course with about fifty students. I looked around my office. In August, I had transformed my spare bedroom into my new teaching, research, and office space. I spent several hours rearranging the room, putting pictures on the wall that made me smile and tinkering with the small corner of the room that would be visible to my students through my webcam. I did not relish the idea of the close-up images of my face bobbing back and forth on their screens, but I wanted the background to be fun and joyful. The thought of removing the "gay" stuff—the rainbow flag, the RuPaul merch,[10] the pride teddy bear, the movie stills from the Wizard of Oz—had briefly flashed across my mind like lightning in a storm. A quick mental argument ensued: this stuff reflects me so why should I hide it? The days of hiding myself were past. The pit of my stomach was heavy— it was those feelings of fear, those feelings of not being accepted. The mental cartwheels continued. Ignore that feeling. I want to be a 'good' instructor to these students and to do that I need to be myself. Afterall, I intended to create safer spaces through the displays of pride items, such as the rainbow flag. Besides, my office on campus would be similarly decorated. Pride symbols are important for those students who may be looking for signs of acceptance. I know I would have felt less isolated in the library if my teachers displayed the rainbow. Although I may feel unsure or fearful of displaying such symbols, it is important for both my queer pedagogy and for being myself. I made my decision to leave the gay stuff where it was. The voice in my head always has to have the last word: "But what happens if these pieces of yourself are not accepted?"

This work I had just finished looking over was a visual assignment in which I asked students to include photographs. I was not expecting them to include selfies, but I was pleasantly surprised when a few of them did. It actually took me off-guard and felt very surreal. To be honest, throughout the term sometimes it felt like speaking into a void. I knew the students were there. I could see their names. They would type in the chat box questions they had or the responses to my questions, but very rarely would they use their microphones. I think I can count on my fingers the actual number of students I heard speak. Even more rare was the use of their cameras. Many did not even have a photo in their profile.

I think this was the source of my recurring feelings of being in a virtual void over the semester. It was not the students' fault nor was it mine. I recognized that. There was nobody to blame. The pandemic was raging across the globe and this was one of its many consequences. But I did try to minimize the void. I tried everything I could think of to more fully engage the students and to create those much-needed connections. I used online break-out groups to get students

to connect and encouraged them to use their microphones and cameras within their groups and in the class generally. I felt like a bit of a rebel doing that since we received institutional recommendations to discourage students from using their video, to save bandwidth and preserve connectivity, but was it pedagogically sound? I would debate that.

I would often jump virtually between break-out groups whenever I used them. Each time I entered a new room it felt like an intrusion. I felt like there should have been a knocker to announce my entrance to the group, like the computer voice from Star Trek replaying a standard message, "Warning. The professor is now entering the room." It sometimes felt like there were fifty different worlds, each one a bubble unto itself and, in a way, there were: fifty pandemic bubbles floating in the digital classroom. I think this was why I was so pleasantly surprised now. Seeing the students' selfies in their assignments was uplifting. It was December and the first time I was seeing the faces of some of my students. In many ways, teaching during a global pandemic was a lonely craft.

The word "bubbles" conjures up so many thoughts in my mind lately. Translucent and shimmering orbs floating through the air or the image of Glinda the Good Witch travelling through the Land of Oz inside her own little bubble (Baum 2010/1900). Since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, the word has taken on new meaning. Personal bubbles, household bubbles, and even provincial bubbles popped into existence as the infections spread across the country.[11] According to Danon et al. (2021), bubbles, in reference to COVID-19, are defined as "small, non-overlapping, groups of households that are permitted to come into contact with each other ... intended to maintain benefits of social distancing while reducing the negative impacts of isolation." From July 2020 to now, I am within my teaching bubble, isolated from my students, my colleagues, and my university community for the benefits of social distancing. As a mostly shy introvert, I did not mind this too much, but the teacher in me, who is more extroverted, has struggled to create meaningful connections with students through virtual classrooms. The challenge is epistemic and existential, as I question the grounds of what I thought I knew, adjusting to new insight, providing authoritative stability for students cut off from a campus community, even as I question who I am as a teacher and academic.

Writing these memories of isolation—a queer youth in the library and an early-career scholar in his COVID teaching bubble—has helped me draw connections between them, connections of spatially, of physicality, and of emotions. The library, although a safe haven for me in troubled times, was a haven for one. It was a physical separation from other humans. The office I used for my online teaching was also separated from others, another space for one, a familiar part of my home turned theatre set for vicarious viewers. Although other people were within the library and although my students were present in my online classroom, little sense of them permeated my senses. Absent were the coughs, movement of chairs, and whispered remarks typical of in-person teaching. These memories are uncannily the same and yet different.

Yalom distinguishes three types of isolation and loneliness: intrapersonal, existential, and interpersonal (1980, 355). The global pandemic puts queer folks at risk of loneliness and anxiety from all three. Internalizing an outsider-within as a result of growing up queer can cause intrapersonal isolation from oneself, reflecting this dissociation and precipitating feelings of loneliness, especially in presumptively cis-heteronormative social situations. Existential isolation is one of life's givens; for everyone there is an "unbridgeable gulf" between the self and another (Yalom 1980). And, with the social distancing mandated by COVID-19, interpersonal isolation can exacerbate the other two conditions, magnifying the endemic loneliness of a queer life pre-pandemic. Fear of existential isolation, typically present in the face of imminent death—a reality COVID-19 has brought closer in fact and in the public imaginary—raises defenses that can cause numerous interpersonal issues (Yalom and Josselson 2014). In a cis-heteronormative society, queer folks feel lonelier and less socially embedded, particularly when they feel the need to censor their identities in interpersonal relationships, all of which makes it more difficult for them to find others who share their vision of existential loneliness (Ratanashevorn and Brown 2021). Assuming mass vaccinations are successful in producing herd immunity, COVID bubbles will burst and semblances of pre-pandemic societal relations will resume. Queer pods of isolation will persist as before.

Conclusion

Ricco suggests that, in addition to the bio-political (life preserving) and the political-economic (work/profit focus) responses to the COVID-19 pandemic, there is something beyond these dominant perspectives that is "more ominous because it is more fundamental"

(2020,165). The space of separation between people, or "zone of ethical sociality," is no longer "left open, in-appropriable, and to be decided," which erodes our freedom in more than a physical sense. The phrase "social distancing" is therefore an oxymoron because the distance between us is always "the very spacing that structures any sense of the social." Isolation evacuates that space such that each of us is "abandoned to a mine-ness that is lacking betweenness," a condition that can evoke feelings of loneliness and "being unmoored in the world". Without being tethered by the shared space of sociality, the structures of decision and the ethical are fundamentally compromised (Ricco 2020). Ricco (2020, 165) draws on Arendt's (1973/1951, 476) distinction between loneliness and solitude in which the latter is a necessary condition of dialogue with the self that only results in loneliness if "all by myself I am deserted by my own self." Arendt issues a dire warning: "Loneliness and the logico-ideological deducing the worst that comes from it represent an anti-social situation and harbour a principle destructive for all human living-together." This picture is not without hope, however. Ricco describes how pandemic isolation has had positive effects. Many have found recourse in "artistic practice, writing, craftsmanship and other modes of making and fabricating that benefit from being left to one's creative potential" (Ricco 2020,166). And, as Arendt states, it is only when the elementary form of human creativity that allows each person to "add something of one's own to the common world" is disrupted that isolation becomes unbearable (1973/1951, 475).

Sharing our stories of growing up and teaching "queer," we contribute to what Spry (2016) calls the "politics of 'I'", which enact the potential of performative autoethnography to embody "epistemic discomfort in an effort to explore why it exists." She considers performative-I epistemology to be empathetic, keeping her looking "forward and back to my own dis-ease" (Spry 2016, 30). Coming together by chance and discovering how much we share across generations and disciplines in the same workplace—even though we have never met in person—has given us the grace to describe our difficulties in a world thrown sideways, and to examine our dis-ease at being expected to be "expert" in a pandemic context of apparent education-as-usual. Performing familiar roles with scripts we did not devise but must enact nonetheless has evoked in us the uncanny, a return to that which is familiar but continually made strange and unsettling. Citing Pollock (1998), Spry says that performative writing encourages her to "move into a space of practiced vulnerability with her own work" (2016). Attempting to come to terms with the effects of our epistemic discomfort on our pedagogical and scholarly practices has elicited old and queerly familiar vulnerabilities that we are grateful to be able to share. Continually, we wonder how best to leverage the precarity of our experiences to help our students.

We have presented our stories of being queer faculty during the global COVID-19 pandemic and, from a performative "I" perspective that unsettles the reader, we have described how being marginalized growing up queer surrounded by cis-heteronormative social structures and norms still evokes our outsider-within and consequent feelings of the uncanny. Unfortunately, for many queer folks, these are all too common experiences, leading to social isolation and disconnectedness. Through this collaborative queer inquiry we have come to realize more acutely how our experiences of marginalization have shaped our philosophies of teaching and been magnified, as seen through the prism of our COVID bubbles. Although our students may not have internalized the isolation of living a queer life, pandemic isolation challenges and invites each of us to draw on our creative potential to add something of our own to the common world. The time is rife to "share conceptual and purposeful affinities" between our personal narratives and queer inquiries (Holman and James 2016, 197), and in so doing to look into "the truth that every end in history necessarily contains a new beginning" (Arendt 1973/1951, 478).

Endnotes

1. In Halifax Nova Scotia, two school counsellors began the Metro Teachers Gay Straight Alliance to support LGBTQ+ teachers who may not feel safe disclosing their identities within the school setting, despite the fact that things have improved for LGBTQ+ students. See Blinn and McKay, 2020.

2. Nathaniel Hawthorne used Shakespeare's phrase "'twice-told tales" to name a collection of his stories, some of which had been told before. We use it in that sense and also to refer to the line from Shakespeare's *The Life and Death of King John* (Act 3, scene 4, ll. 8-9): "life is as tedious as a twice-told tale, / Vexing the dull ear of a drowsy man." This suggests the tedium of isolation many are experiencing due to pandemic-imposed social distancing, and alludes to the fact that we met and told each other our stories of queer isolation before deciding to re-

tell them in this paper.

3. Led by Fern Pellerin whose work can be seen at: https://fernpellerin.wixsite.com/artist. Accessed 30 Jan 2021.

4. The first adoption of "queer" as a positive self-label is attributed to the group Queer Nation, founded in the early 1990s to combat violence against homosexuals. It was an offshoot of ACT UP (AIDS coalition to Unleash Power), founded in 1987 to demand more action to solve the AIDS crisis (Perlman, 2019).

5. Collins (2009/2000) creates a new kind of theory in this work, extending the concept of *'intellectual work'* to include the centering experiences of one's own life as well as engagement in coalitions with others (xi) and contending that, though group histories are relational (266), coalitions with some groups are impossible because "while group experiences are interdependent, they are not equivalent" (267). She claims that despite varying distributions of privilege and oppression across marginalized groups, dialogues across "multiple angles of vision that accompany multiple group standpoints" promise new directions for "transversal politics" (268). Though being Black and being queer have different histories and geneologies, the experiences of those so categorized share relational positions *vis à vis* their respective subordination to hegemony. As Barbara Smith (1982, 171) points out, the intersecting nature of oppressions do not produce absolute oppressors or pure victims.

6. Leslie Stephen (1832-1904) literary critic, editor, and father of Virginia Woolf and Vanessa Bell, wrote three volumes called *Hours in a Library* (1879) for *The Cornhill Magazine*, which distinguished him as one of the first serious critics of the novel. See https://www.britannica.com/biography/Leslie-Stephen. Writing about the relationship between poetry and philosophy, a relation we take to be central to a judicious balance of story and analysis, Stephen says, "All that can safely be said is that a man's thoughts, whether embodied in symbols or worked out in syllogisms, are more valuable in proportion as they indicate greater philosophical insight; and therefore that, *ceteris paribus*, that man is the greater poet whose imagination is most transfused with reason; who has the deepest truths to proclaim as well as the strongest feelings to utter" (Stephen 1879,180).

7. For example, philosophers of education, such as Greene (1978), VanManen (1989), and Roland Martin (1992), broke with traditional concepts of curriculum in the last decades of the 20th century, as did curriculum theorists Grumet (1978), Schubert (1986), and Pinar & Reynolds (1991).

8. See Davis and Heilbroner, 2010 and Gilbert, 2011.

9. The term "defamiliarization" is a translation from the Russian term *ostranenyia* coined by Viktor Shklovsky (1990/1929) to refer to the role of art as a device for making the "stone stonier."

10. "Merch" is an informal abbreviation for "merchandise" marketed to a particular fan base. In this case the fanbase is that of RuPaul, a drag queen TV personality who is known for bringing the lives of LGBTQ+ people to mainstream media. For episodes of RuPaul's Drag Race see https://www.crave.ca/en/tv-shows/rupauls-drag-race.

11. Nova Scotia did not have high infection rates during the first and second waves and collaborated with nearby provinces to put in place an Atlantic bubble to allow for travel. Of the 65 deaths in the first wave, tragically 53 were elders in Nova Scotia's largest long-term care facility in Halifax where the virus spread before it was understood the extent of infection control needed to protect against COVID-19. See McPhee, 2021, accessed on 15 Mar. 2021 at https://www.thechronicleherald.ca/news/local/northwood-halifax-had-53-deaths-when-pandemic-started-heres-how-theyve-changed-546700/. At the time of initial submission in April 2021, one more death from COVID-19 had occurred, a woman over 80 years of age. As of July 12, 2021, Nova Scotia has weathered a third wave, bringing the total COVID fatalities to 92. See Government of Nova Scotia, accessed on 12 July 2021 at https://novascotia.ca/coronavirus/data/. The population of the province as of the second quarter of 2021 is 982, 326. See Statistics Canada, accessed on 12 July 2021 at https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/t1/tbl1/en/tv.action?pid=1710000901

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Research

"It feels a bit like drowning": Expectations and Experiences of Motherhood during COVID-19

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Abstract: What is the result of bringing unrealistic and overwhelming conditions of motherhood into the context of a global pandemic? This article aims to explore the impacts of maternal expectations and experiences in the context of COVID-19. Through first-person accounts of eighty self-identified mothers parenting through COVID, we aim to explore "good" mother myths, feelings of failure, and the paradoxical freedoms that occur under pandemic time.

Keywords: COVID; gender roles; matricentric feminism; motherhood; pandemic

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Introduction

Motherhood is not for the faint of heart. At the best of times, in privileged circumstances, motherhood can be depleting, overwhelming, and extreme, thieving identity and time. The total immersion of motherhood may be exponentially more demanding at the intersections of identities—for single mothers, mothers who experience racism, homophobia, transphobia, or oppression based on disability or madness (O'Reilly 2007).[1] Much of the overwhelming impact of motherhood is rooted in the extent to which maternal parenting is established according to a set of scripts setting out specific behaviours which draw upon key expectations that govern the maintenance and expression of a challenging relationality between mother and child (Ennis 2014; O'Reilly 2004). While the specifics vary across social contexts, maternal expectations, as a byproduct of colonialism, have festered into many Western and colonized spaces including Canada. Motherhood is accompanied by conditions that guarantee failure and that negate attempts to "succeed."Indeed, success is elusive and undefined, ensuring that hegemonic motherhood entails endless self-governance and punishing guilt and shame (Hays 1998; Warner 2005). What is the result of bringing unrealistic and overwhelming conditions of motherhood into the context of a global pandemic? This article aims to explore the impacts of maternal expectations and experiences in the context of COVID-19 through first-person accounts of eighty self-identified mothers. We aim to explore good mother myths, feelings of failure, and the paradoxical freedoms that occur under pandemic time.

Setting the Stage: COVID, Mothers, & Mothering

Limited data is emerging which explores the impacts of COVID (especially lockdowns of schools, and other childcare settings) on parents and caregivers (O'Reilly and Green 2021; Sodha 2020; Cohen and Hsu 2020). We aim here to bring the specific *experiences* of pandemic parenting into dialogue with the preexisting *expectations* of parents, and in particular, of mothers (O'Reilly 2020). We use the term "mother" deliberately, aiming to avoid degendering the often very gendered landscape of caregiving labour; at the same time, we aim to understand "mother" as a porous term encompassing anyone who chooses to describe themselves in this way.

This study and our findings are rooted in the robust literature of motherhood studies (O'Reilly 2007;Takseva 2018), and matricentric feminism (O'Reilly 2019) that consider the ways the institution of patriarchal motherhood—the expectations and expertise which crowd around maternal labour—may limit maternal "agency, authority, autonomy and authenticity" (O'Reilly, 2004, 15). Literature around maternal expectations and good mother myths (Nathanson and Tuley, 2009) suggests that mothers, in particular, are blamed for myriad social ills (Caplan 1989; Ladd-Taylor 2004) and, furthermore, that mothers internalize this blame and seek to control the maternal environment to avoid social sanction (Hays 1998). This pressure, while widely critiqued, has not abated in contemporary contexts, suggesting that we should ask, "[I]n a world which values independence, why are we still engaging in 'intensive mothering,' why does it prevail, and what other models are additional possibilities or alternatives?" (Ennis 2014, 3).

It is difficult to consider the impacts of motherhood on women's autonomy without exploring other ideological underpinnings. This article thus contextualizes contemporary motherhood by borrowing from analyses of neoliberalism and feminist political economy. While an exhaustive engagement with this literature is beyond the scope of this article, we consider the ways that "Mothers are the primary producers, consumers and reproducers of the neoliberal world" (Vandenbeld Giles 2014, 1). In the limited scholarly and popular materials which explore the impacts of COVID-19 on mothers, the economic ramifications of caregiving labour and the tensions between mothers as carers and paid workers are overwhelmingly discussed, suggesting, as feminist economist Silvia Federici states in the *New York Times Magazine*, "[T]he morass of America's social ills might be traceable to an incorrect relationship to work and the question of whose work is valuable" (Kisner 2021, para. 7). Andrea O'Reilly and Fiona Joy Green, in their timely and comprehensive collection on mothers and COVID-19, put it succinctly: "Despite the cataclysmic upheavals of the pandemic, one fact remains unchanged: Motherwork remains invisible, devalued, and taken for granted" (2021, 22). Our exploration of mothers' experiences is thus grounded by matricentric feminist analyses informed by discussion of the gendered dimensions of public and private labour.

We open by describing the conditions of our study which was undertaken over three and a half months in summer 2020. We consider the demographic limitations of our sample, as well as the methods we used for ana-

lysis. Following a discussion of methods, we explore key themes, including the expectations of participants for good motherhood, feelings of failure engendered by pandemic parenting, and the interesting ways that COVID has, in some cases, allowed for a shift or reduction in maternal expectations. We root these themes in the literature and scholarship of motherhood studies.

Methods

Our study was conceived as COVID lockdown conditions began in spring 2020 and was funded through a small COVID Rapid Response grant through Ryerson University. We responded to our own experiences as well as calls such as the following, published at the onset of the pandemic:

> We are not aware of any gender analysis of the outbreak by global health institutions or governments in affected countries or in preparedness phases.… We call on governments and global health institutions to consider the sex and gender effects of the COVID-19 outbreak, both direct and indirect, and conduct an analysis of the gendered impacts of the multiple outbreaks, *incorporating the voices of women on the front lines of the response to COVID-19 and of those most affected by the disease*. (Wenham, Smith and Morgan 2020, 846, emphasis ours)

Because we wanted to prioritize individual narratives and acknowledge some of the tumultuous experiences we were hearing about (and living through), we created an anonymous online survey with open-ended questions that allowed for fairly substantial long-form written responses. This survey was shared through social media including a range of mothering Facebook groups. While some of these groups were more generalized geographically, some had a specific focus on Toronto and southern Ontario. Recruitment began on June 13, 2020 and ran until the end of September 2020 (a period which was characterized by lockdown and school/childcare closures in most of Canada, as well as in many other jurisdictions), generating a total of eighty responses. While the survey did not explicitly capture information about the physical location of respondents, an examination of responses suggests that the majority were from people residing in Canada, with an overrepresentation of Ontario, Quebec, and British Columbia residents.

The overall range of respondents showed a relatively high degree of diversity around some axes and was more homogenous in other regards, particularly in regards to race and class, with a sample that skewed heavily toward white and middle-class participants. Importantly, the survey deliberately avoided any type of identity rubric, instead inviting respondents to identify any aspects of their social location or lived experiences that felt relevant. Mindful of the intersectional nature of identities, we decided that providing a checklist for identities, such as race and class, felt reductionist and instead invited participants to reflect on their own multiple and complex identities in their own words. As a result, we cannot describe the overall demographic makeup of the group with precision, but we can draw some broad strokes about the grouping.

The eighty respondents ranged in age from 26 to 62 years old and while not all surveys revealed the ages of children, those that did showed parenting of children from newborn to age 26. As mentioned above, the sample overrepresented white-identifying participants, with approximately 85 percent of respondents self-identifying as white. Among those responses which explored family configuration, more than 80 percent were in male-female partnerships, although approximately a third of the respondents in partnerships with men self-identified as queer, bisexual, pansexual, and otherwise not straight. Approximately 7 percent of respondents were single mothers and others lived in blended families, or multigenerational households. The sample skewed toward the middle class, with the vast majority of respondents, over 90 percent, identifying as middle class or higher. Respondents were mostly employed in paid labour with approximately 85 percent suggesting that their work had moved to the home as a result of COVID, in stark contrast to only about half of male partners having moved toward home employment. Meaningfully, almost a quarter of the sample reported lost work or lost hours due to COVID, with male partners of respondents significantly less impacted by reduced employment.

This sample does not adequately address the range of possible maternal experiences of living through COVID; the sample is relatively homogenous and more problematically, insufficiently representative of racial and ethnic diversity, highlighting experiences of white middle-class families with one female-identified and one male-identified parent. The responses of this survey do not address the much greater impact of COVID among communities of colour (Golestaneh et al 2020) or the heightened

impacts for people and families living in poverty. We wondered if, despite robust recruitment efforts in a range of contexts, including targeted outreach to online groups for mothers of colour and queer mothers, underrepresented mothers might have been so besieged by the initial impact of lockdown that a survey like this might have seemed overwhelming. Furthermore, our online survey required a threshold level of entry: access to the Internet, sufficient bandwidth to run the survey, and sufficient functionality in English—this also excluded some potential respondents. There is no question that further research is required in order to broaden this sample and understand the impacts for mothers who live in a range of intersections. That said, the themes which emerged from this dataset nonetheless show some important trends in the ways that expectations of motherhood are used to judge mothers and furthermore are internalized by mothers.

The research team spent fall 2020 reading and re-reading responses and undertaking a collective thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke 2006). Key themes emerged around the ways that mothers were experiencing upheaval due to the changed balance in caregiving and paid employment roles, confirming that "gender disparities in households with children have been amplified as a result of the pandemic" (Johnston, Mohammed and van der Linden 2021, 1132). In addition, perhaps in reaction to a question asked about what the performance of a good mother would look like during COVID, many respondents considered the ways that expectations of intensive motherhood were playing into their experiences as well as their internal expectations of themselves. We explore some of the themes which emerged from the survey responses around good motherhood, feelings of failure, as well as unusual or paradoxical shifts in stressors experienced in the time of COVID. The quotes offered below were emblematic of broader themes that emerged from the research; they were included as exemplars of themes and ideas which were evident across a range of responses.

Key Themes and Discussion

"The 'good mother' is not me":[2] Articulating good motherhood

In colonial and western cultures, mothers have long been seen as the architects for children's success or failure (Caplan 1989). Mothers are meant to ensure that children are healthy, ambitious, and successful. In other words, mothers are meant to ensure a neverending supply of functional neoliberal capitalist citizens (Vandenbeld Giles 2014; Ennis 2014). When children do not meet these standards, physiologically or temperamentally, mothers receive blame and sanction (Friedman 2015). As Vandenbeld Giles notes, "While it is true that women and mothers form the productive, reproductive and consumptive base to ensure neoliberalization, mothers are still a long way from claiming collective power and material gain for themselves and their children" (2014, 5).

In some cases, particularly for Black and Indigenous mothers as well as mothers with disabilities, families are brought under child protection scrutiny. The overrepresentation of Black and Indigenous kids under the surveillance of child welfare agencies reflects multi-pronged racist and colonial attacks (Pon et al. 2017). Black and Indigenous families, as well as other families of colour, face unending racism that limits opportunities for "appropriate" parenting, and are then accused of neglect. This hearkens back to a colonial history in which Indigenous land was pillaged and then starving Indigenous people were maligned for asking for state support (Fortier and Wong 2018). In other words, patriarchal motherhood creates impossible expectations (especially for particular people and identities) and then judges and polices mothers when these expectations cannot be met.

Against this backdrop, participants were asked to discuss how a good mother would behave in the midst of pandemic parenting and to explore their reactions to those expectations. Responses to this question were explosive, with respondents articulating shame, rage, frustration, and grief. Importantly, the majority of responses were unhesitating in providing a clear description of good motherhood, suggesting that the archetype of effective maternity is unsubtle and pernicious. Even when respondents rejected this performance, they were quickly able to describe it, as in this succinct response: "[A] good mother would be doing daily crafts/activities, homemade meals and super clean house. It started off that way, but has slowly decreased as the time has gone on." A composite good mother thus emerged from the range of responses describing a selfless, patient, innovative nurturer who is capable of endless improvisation and is impervious to provocation. Like a unicorn, this beautiful creature is utterly mythical, which some respondents noted:

> It seems like we should be homeschooling, not working, making sandwiches shaped like whales, baking bread, and watching

> movies with partners (and we should have partners). It's ok [for] us to make the sacrifices for our kids' health and safety. Ours is not in question or supported. Forget how we make money, we should have husbands out working while we go back to the 1950's and stay home and devote our whole being to our children. It is so much pressure and sending my kids to school feels like it's announcing my 'bad mom' status to the world. I feel guilty. I also feel angry. I want to work and I also have to work.

This response names the archetypal good mother (creative and resource rich) and, while articulating guilt, also notes the economic limitations which make stereotypical good motherhood an impossibility for most people. Notably, however, the majority of responses articulated a good mother ideal and often grieved the inability to reach that ideal in the midst of COVID. One mother noted, "Last year, I considered myself a good mother. I made my son's food, I limited screen time, ensured we got out of the house, engaged in playdates and mothers' groups. None of that applies during the pandemic." While the pandemic altered maternal capacities, it is meaningful to observe that the expectations of good motherhood articulated in these answers seems to require intense effort even outside of COVID times.

Responses reflected the expectation of maternal selflessness. For example, one respondent who was working as a teacher at the same time as caring for young children stated, "I've always struggled with the idea of a 'good' mom/parent being one that puts the needs of their child above all else. No matter what's going on, the child always comes first. This ideal caused a lot of anxiety for me when I had to choose between spending my time with my children, and spending my time on my students/work... not to mention on myself, which was basically nonexistent." This mother's view exemplifies many responses in which participants spoke to anxiety and grief about shortchanging children and work, with only cursory acknowledgement of their own needs. The extent to which maternal emotional labour was taken for granted was notable; a few respondents noted that pragmatic and emotional caregiving labour (i.e., planning for and worrying about children) was largely in the maternal domain, especially for women parenting with men. When self-care was articulated as part of the domain of good motherhood, it was still in aid of children's well-being, as in the following response: "A good parent… [is] setting a good example by eating healthy and engaging in meaningful activities with and without the kids. I don't think I'm meeting this ideal at all. I'm frazzled and stressed and worried all the time. I want to chill and play, but I also want to lock myself in the bathroom and be alone. It makes me feel terrible."

Importantly, there was a deep degree of internalization of good mother ideals: respondents were extremely hard on themselves for failing to match idealized expectations. One mother noted, "'Good' moms are in control, positive, have time to listen to their kids and make sure meals are cooked and the [ability to] try to keep the house in order. I feel I am doing none of these things and often disappointed in myself." Another similarly noted, "A good mother is creating structure for their kids, is patient with their feelings about all of this, is engaged with them, making sure they are still connected with friends, nature, etc. I feel I would get a D or E [failing grade] in this if I were being graded. It makes me feel sad, regretful, lost, guilty, VERY anxious, sick to my stomach." Overall, it was evident that participants had no problem describing what constitutes good motherhood, and that this benchmark was often used as a way to measure maternal shortcoming.

"I am not a good mother even though I try so hard to be": Failing maternal expectations

As Sharon Hays (1998) and Judith Warner (2005) articulate, mothers know what good mothers should be doing and are deeply critical of the places where they fall short. So, what are the expectations of good mothers? Some respondents suggested that mothers need only be "good enough," however, many indicated that they felt themselves falling short of even "good enough." While participants in this study generally indicated that their children's basic needs were met, there was still a great deal of judgment for the places where mothers understood themselves to be inadequate. In other words, participants in general indicated that more than basic care is required for children to thrive. They named a lack of engagement and mental presence as their chief failing, suggesting that in the contemporary moment, good motherhood is predicated on a deep degree of maternal attention (Hays 1998; O'Reilly 2004). Secondarily, the study indicated that good motherhood requires material resources, noting that games, educational toys and crafts, as well as time free from paid employment, were necessary for children's sustenance. Mothers noted the ways that "the backdrop for intensive mothering is consumer-

ism" (Ennis 2014, 2). This classed and heteronormative view sets all mothers up to fail, even those who parent under privileged conditions, but it is especially pernicious for mothers parenting outside of mainstream or expected frames.

Mothers named the tensions between wanting to maintain a standard of functionality in employment settings and the need to provide adequate childcare. This cognitive discomfort was extraordinarily high in virtually all responses but notably, many respondents internalized this discomfort and positioned dropped standards, both professionally and in the home, as a personal failing. For example, one mother explained, "I think this experience has forced me to realize that I am stretched in an unhealthy way, that maybe doing it all and having a fulfilling career and less debt aren't as important as I've believed, and that I may have to surrender my wish for a partner that will stand beside me in the business and challenges of our life and make ways to support and fulfill my personal needs." Another mother similarly noted, "Being the parent who is mostly in charge of child care (and home schooling) while also trying to work part time has meant that I am pulled in all directions, never feeling like I can excel at anything. I miss having dedicated hours for paid work versus for parenting." Responses indicated predominantly guilt rather than rage, suggesting that participants have successfully internalized expectations of mothers as superheroes who are meant to effortlessly shoulder unimaginable burdens.

In the context of paid employment, COVID-19 has exposed the frayed infrastructure supporting working parents, landing many families in impossible situations (Fraser 2016). Working parents, and others with caregiver requirements such as elder care and support of families with differing abilities or health needs, have been expected to stay afloat with full or part-time work while also taking on full-time care responsibilities. This is a structural and ideological problem: caregiving labour is underestimated and caregivers are expected to shift and morph to ensure that no balls get dropped on personal and societal levels. Practically, however, this approach has engendered a crisis for caregivers who are genuinely being asked to accomplish more than twenty-four hours worth of labour in any given day. For example, one respondent stated, "The impossible math of trying to work full time and manage two young kids was impossible." Another mother wrote, "No matter how we would try to negotiate it, I always felt it was unbalanced." Another respondent alluded to the ways that balance was barely achievable before COVID, stating that she "was already treading [water] furiously but now feel[s] close to drowning." It is notable that multiple respondents used the analogy of drowning to describe their present circumstances, corroborating the following statement: "Women with child care obligations have seen a dramatic and disproportionate increase in invisible labor as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic" (Johnston, Mohammed and van der Linden 2020, 1133).

While mothers without external labour expectations were not juggling the same tensions as those blending caregiving with paid work, the lack of social supports, including additional caregivers and activities outside the home, has increased caregiving expectations while eliminating any respite for mothers. One respondent presently on parental leave noted, "My mental health has declined immensely. I am submersed in my role as full-time breastfeeding mother, nothing else happens in my life. I barely get a minute alone to shower these days." Some mothers who experienced this tension articulated feelings of guilt for not enjoying intensive time with children more completely. One mother noted, "I find that too much time together leaves me with a short temper, and I feel like I am not parenting the way I would like to be!" Another stated, "As a mother I feel I am less patient and feel myself struggling more daily than previously." While these mothers' responses partially indicate that better supports would allow them to parent in a way more aligned with their own expectations, it is also notable that there is limited acknowledgement that the primary problem is not a personal one but rather, it is dictated by the structures that ignore the demands on a household created by non-stop parenting.

In addition to tensions between employment and caregiving labour, respondents specifically singled out discomfort at having to take over responsibility for children's education. Many respondents felt guilty and uncomfortable at suddenly needing to pivot toward home schooling in addition to other demands. Mothers noted that they were feeling "anxiety around children having to learn from home. Feeling like I'm not doing enough to facilitate their learning." Respondents reported that pedagogical options offered by school boards were quite limited at the same time that mothers reported intense pressure to keep children's educational trajectories moving along, often at a high personal cost. Respondents reported virtually no support or materials although there were high expectations that school-aged children use the time productively, suggesting that "While neoliberalism iden-

tifies women only as economic actors, the work of mothering must still be performed and is in fact integral to the reproduction of future neoliberal workers" (Vandenbeld Giles 2014, 6).

A notable number of responses named lowered vigilance with regard to screen time as a key maternal failing. Mothers reported an increased reliance on use of digital media in order to try to keep children quiet while undertaking other tasks. In addition, mothers named the need to provide a constant parade of healthy foods (and the avoidance of "junk" foods) as necessary for proper parenting. One mother noted, "I feel so guilty for the amount of time my kids spend on tech. They are in their rooms so much and I want them to be out, but if they are out of their rooms, they interfere with my work. It is really hard and stressful." This comment was echoed by many participants, a large number of whom expressed a lot of anxiety about the implications of screen time on the physical and mental health of young people. For example, one respondent noted, "The kids have been on screens at rates much higher than I'm comfortable with and I feel constant anxiety about the long-term damage of them being isolated and glued to a screen." The relative ease offered by screen use as a stop gap for limited childcare seemed to contribute to parental guilt; mothers felt strongly that children would be far better served with greater parental engagement. The virulence of reactions to screen time was notable; one participant exemplified many responses in stating, "I read about how other families have become closer and I think, 'I must be doing this wrong.' I am just more stress[ed], anxious, irritable, and burnt out. No, I have not started baking bread. I think if we didn't have technology or smart phones, our lives would be so much better."

While the research on the impacts of screen time on children's development is ambiguous and often contradictory (Cerniglia and Cimino 2020; boyd 2016), it is notable that, as with convenience foods, as mothers gain time through efficiencies in the household, these options are quickly and deeply maligned. In other words, the fact that even relatively young children can keep busy using screens is quickly re-storied as evidence of maternal failing. Mothers who rely on so-called shortcuts, such as screen time and junk food, are harming their children—not necessarily because of the intrinsic danger in these materials, but rather because they betray the mothers who use them as insufficiently caring and selfless.

"While we hate the virus, we love that we get to spend extra time together": Exploring alternate expectations

While the overwhelming tenor of maternal responses was around guilt, rage, and being overwhelmed, a paradoxical finding did emerge among a smaller but significant range of responses, sometimes alongside parallel experiences of discomfort. Specifically, mothers reported the ways that the pandemic and lockdown eliminated particular sources of tension in family life. For example, one respondent noted that avoiding heavy expectations to display her new baby was quite freeing, stating, "I did appreciate the quiet after the baby was born and less pressure to have visitors. Our family could take the time to bond with the new baby without others around." Another noted, "Being able to mother/parent from home has made life MUCH less hectic for us and allowed us to spend more family time together." These hidden benefits of COVID were important to note but also need to be considered within the broader context of maternal expectations and the burdensome demands placed on mothers outside of the pandemic.

Mothers discussed the infinite pulls on their time in pre-pandemic life, citing the expectation of endless programming and extracurricular involvements. The escape from the rush of contemporary parenting was noted by many respondents as a significant benefit to the present time. For example, one mother noted,

> I believe the pandemic has had [a] great benefit on my mothering. It has allowed me to focus more on my child instead of being torn in many different directions—one of which is work, but also running around to play dates and programming. I have felt very freed by the lack of outside (although mostly self-imposed) demands on my time. It has allowed me to relax and enjoy the time with my child and play with him when he asks instead of putting him off because we have places to get to and I have to get preparations done.

Other mothers spoke to the idea that COVID has led to an alteration in maternal expectations. For example, one respondent noted, "Increased family time due to not having to shuttle the kids to sports and other activities has been a bonus." Another stated, "I personally have enjoyed not having to meet social demands (e.g., weekends full of play dates, plans, etc.) As much as these activities

are important for our whole family, it can get quite exhausting, for me, if I am unable to recharge by myself." On the one hand, these responses may be considered as hidden benefits to the pandemic which has interrupted some aspects of the endless trajectory of success and productivity of neoliberal societies. A more critical look reveals some of the very high expectations placed on parents (specifically mothers) to function as endless schedulers, chauffeurs, researchers, and programmers: it is notable that only a global pandemic allows these expectations to be contested without significant guilt. The stranglehold of maternal expectation suggests that mothers cannot opt out of a full social schedule simply because they are exhausted or require time to recharge, but should instead persevere, stopping only in the extreme instance of the entire world shutting down. While responses show pleasant side-effects to the present situation, such as one mother who stated, "I do feel less stressed and have been taking a little more time for myself during the pandemic," they must be critically assessed for the ways they reveal the burden of expectations placed upon mothers in "normal" times.

While maternal expectations played a part in the endless busyness of pre-COVID life, the fundamental tension between paid employment and caregiving labour was exposed in these paradoxical reactions as well. In many respects, the choice to participate in extracurricular and other social activities is extremely class based: for many working-class parents, paid work is endless and parenting time must be stripped to necessities. Some respondents noted this painful paradox and acknowledged the ways that COVID, by eliminating some forms of paid employment, allowed for rare opportunities for families to connect. For example, one mother noted, "In a lot of ways, the pandemic has been very freeing to us and gives me a new perspective on what I would like our lives to look like. However, the CERB has played a big part in feeling that freedom." This respondent reflects on the Canada Emergency Response Benefit which allowed workers who lost employment due to COVID to receive benefits for a period of time. Responses such as these speak to the desire for many families to pare down the congestion of racing between paid and unpaid labour demands. While virtually all families rely on parental income, the feeling of precarity that thieves time from families is especially acute for working-class and solo-income families. While COVID benefits have thus provided a small silver lining for some families, it is notable that here again, only a pandemic allows the conditions for parents to choose to be with their children as they see fit. Furthermore, as pandemic benefits in many jurisdictions including Canada have withered, these rare opportunities have basically been eliminated, leaving workers with limited flexibility resulting in painful choices each time a child is home sick or childcare is otherwise disrupted in this altered new reality.

Displaying a profound resilience, many respondents noted benefits from COVID but often with deep qualifications. For example, one mother noted that pleasure in having her family gathered was mitigated by concern for her kids' development: "Having my adult kids around more is nice but I feel like it's a limitation for them so not 100 percent enjoyment for me." One mother was more stark in her view of the cost-benefit analysis: "I see very little benefit to mothering/parenting because of social distancing. I try to appreciate the increased time with my son, but it has come at a significant cost to my independence and sense of self worth." Ultimately, the majority of responses could only speak to qualified benefits from the present situation, exemplified in this mother's response: "After six months, I do feel much closer with my children and mostly appreciate the changes in our relationship, although I'm very excited to send them back off to school."

While the study did suggest that mothers internalize a great deal of guilt, there was a notable thread of rage throughout responses. Respondents took on a great deal of responsibility for both children and home, but they also articulated the ways that the current situation is evidence of systemic failure. The rage and frustration which emerged in these responses, while showing evidence of anguish, also displays the profound resilience and resistance put forth by mothers who are experiencing overwhelming conditions, as in this example: "There is no 'good' right now. As long as your child is safe and healthy I think this is the only expectation right now." As noted by Sonia Sodha in *The Guardian*, there is a paradoxical hope which may be wrung from the intensity of the present situation: "That's the thing about this pandemic: it has revealed deep structural inequalities in class, race and gender that we have long swept under the carpet and without concerted and radical action will undoubtedly make them worse. But the very act of exposure provides an opportunity for change if only we had the imagination" (2020, para.8, emphasis ours). Respondents in this study displayed rage and frustration but also offered glimpses of the imagination required for an altered future.

Conclusion

The web of supports for families and mothers are gossamer-thin, providing the barest scaffold for maternal labour. By contrast, the expectations placed on mothers are suffocating, drowning out agency and instinct. It is unsurprising that these tensions are exacerbated in the present moment, even in a relatively privileged sample, such as that found in this study. While we can't guess at how a wider range of mothers might have responded to this study, communities hardest hit by COVID—Black and Indigenous communities, people with disabilities, for example—communities, not coincidentally in which mothering is under greatest scrutiny—will experience heightened impacts of the expectations of motherhood (Friedman and Satterthwaite 2021).

This study suggests that good motherhood requires a state of constant self-abnegation, and that this state has been exacerbated, in many cases, by the present context of COVID. Mothers who prioritized their needs reported a great deal of ambivalence and uneasiness and often they qualified their attempts as necessary for them to ensure they could care for children appropriately (for example, doing a workout to reset in order to be sufficiently patient with children). In light of this need for total abasement, it is not surprising that pre-existing tensions around working motherhood are amplified in the current pandemic in which workplaces require total commitment and reliability at the same time that parenting is meant to be constant and all consuming. O'Reilly and Green argue,

> It is more specifically mothers who are most impacted by the pandemic because it is mothers who are doing the necessary and arduous carework to sustain our families and communities. However, few are recognizing, let alone supporting, mothers as frontline workers or acknowledging and appreciating what mothers are managing and accomplishing in their homes under unimaginable circumstances. (O'Reilly and Green 2021, 18)

In other words, mothers are set up to fail in the present capitalist and patriarchal context (Ladd-Taylor 2004; Fraser 2016).

It is imperative to note that many mothers have always worked, that the judgment of working motherhood is classed and raced (Hill Collins 1993) and indeed, is almost irrelevant in the present day in which reliance on two adult incomes in many households is barely adequate to meet burdens and expectations of contemporary life. Nonetheless, it was notable that the cognitive burden of worrying about children and of feeling inadequate for failing to be constantly available for children's needs was deeply gendered and was discussed across all diversities and intersections within this study. This echoes findings from Johnston, Mohammed and van der Linden: "Despite continued gendered disparities in average employment earnings, the persistent asymmetric allocation of caring work between women and men is not solely a reflection of relative differences in income. Rather, it belies social constructions of gender roles that position the primary role of women as caregivers and nurturers" (2020, 1133).

The extent to which the current paradigm around families rests on neoliberal expectations of self-reliance and outdated racist, classist, and homophobic expectations around male breadwinner/female caregiver models has been exposed by the present moment. As educational spaces have opened up as public health guidelines changed, the "choice" to keep children home unambiguously heightens poverty for families with the thinnest margin of economic security (O'Reilly 2020); for some families this may increase involvement with child welfare agencies under the guise of "protection." The mothers in this study, while skewing toward privileged social locations, are still experiencing the calcifying of gender expectations, the annihilation of agency, and the erasure of endless hours of unpaid labour. We note the following: "Motherwork intensified for mothers when support systems and relational connections dwindled or stopped completely due to the restrictions imposed by pandemic protocols. Not only did intensive mothering become more intense, but it also became unsupported and more isolating" (O'Reilly and Green 2021, 26).

Sara Peterson notes in the title of her 2020 article, "After the pandemic, we'll finally have to address the impossible state of motherhood." This "impossible state" is characterized by the burdens of neoliberalism, sexism, and other oppressions and is exacerbated by overwhelming self-blame and the burden of expectation of how good mothers should behave. We argue that the material conditions of motherhood must be altered but that such a shift must be accompanied by a concomitant shift in thinking, one that understands motherhood as overwhelming and dynamic. Such an approach would, at the very least, allow mothers to forgive themselves for failing to meet an impossible and oppressive set of standards.

Endnotes

1. In keeping with the Mad Studies movement, we use the term "madness" here as "a term reclaimed by those who have been pathologized/psychiatrized as 'mentally ill,' and as a way of taking back language that has been used to oppress.… We are referring to a movement, an identity, a stance, an act of resistance, a theoretical approach, and a burgeoning field of study" (Poole and Ward 2013, 96).

2. All quotations in section headings are drawn from survey responses.

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Literary Work

Prescription

by Tanis MacDonald

Tanis MacDonald is the author of four books of poetry and one of creative nonfiction. Her personal essay, "Mondegreen Girls," won the Open Seasons Award from *The Malahat Review* in 2021. She was a finalist for the Gabrielle Roy Prize in 2013 for her study *The Daughter's Way*, and was the recipient of the Robert Kroetsch Teaching Award in 2017. She is co-editor (with Rosanna Deerchild and Ariel Gordon) of *GUSH: menstrual manifestos for our times* for Frontenac House Press. Her fourth poetry book, *Mobile*, was longlisted for the City of Toronto Book Award in 2020. She is Professor of Canadian literature and creative writing in the Department of English and Film Studies at Wilfrid Laurier University and the Editor of the Laurier Poetry Series for Wilfrid Laurier University Press. She lives in Waterloo, Ontario, with her reptile brain.

Patient: Author, scholar, occasional madwoman.

Medication: Quotidian pedestrianism.

Common uses: Temporarily relieves symptoms of overt humanity, extremities of affect, mental spiralling, inferno awareness, overthinking, hyperventilation.

Frequency: As often as you can stand it.

*

You know the story of March 2020: a last in-person class or meeting, news trickling about other universities and colleges shutting their doors and then it's you and your institution, your colleagues, your students. Then the scramble of the following weekend: writing instructions for students, trying to anticipate their questions, moving all teaching material online. As for me, I re-wrote and adapted an eighty-minute interactive lesson into a thirty-minute recorded lecture and online discussion. With my inexperience with the technology, the planning for a single remote class took a whole day. My birthday disappeared, unnoticed and uncelebrated. It didn't occur to me that I could have cancelled classes; the more fool me. I prepped and taught online using technology I hadn't heard of six days previously, and answered many anxious emails. Whenever I stood up from my desk, my back snapped like unfed alligators in the world's most obscure reptile park. My students and I finished the teaching term. Some of them wrote to thank me for taking such good care of them. I only wish I had taken better care of myself.

I have disintegrating disk disease and a shrieking sciatic nerve. When advised by my doctor that, for day-to-day

pain control, I was to stand up every twenty minutes, my first thought was not for my aching bod; it was instead about how standing up so frequently would interrupt my work flow. But chronic pain seems like exaggeration or impossibility, even when you are in it. I catch myself thinking "Again?" as pain shoots down my leg, as though I haven't lived for more than a decade with it, as though ease of movement is my right. My chronic pain ebbs and flows, allows some activities one day and not the next. It circumscribes my choices and forces me to consider mundane details that contribute to—or decrease—my mobility on any given day: what I'm wearing, where I'm sitting and for how long, what I'm carrying, how I'm bending or standing. I believe in good days and bad days; I believe in the alleviation of pain, for an hour, a day, a week. But being a professor—the long hours in front of a screen or bent over books and papers, the constant needs assessment, my machine-like habit of forgetting that I need rest—has never been kind to my body.

When I leave my massage appointment, my RMT says, *Drink lots of water and go for a short walk if you can*. I walk onto the paved trail of a creekside park, striving to keep the benefits of deep massage. My legs feel like they are the same length for the first time in weeks and the ping of my glutes is good ache and not tearing pain. My feet are firm and flexible on the ground. But the moment I see other people, I shift slightly away from my newly-perfected balance, tipping back into old bodily habits. And this signals that the after-treatment walk is over: time to go home and drink lots of water. Italo Calvino, in his amazing book *Invisible Cities*, reminds us: "Seek and learn to recognize who and what, in the midst of inferno, are not inferno, then make them endure, give them space." The ability to identify who is not inferno is a consummate human skill. In other words, hell is other people, except when they're not.

*

Directions: Open door and leave house. Walk away from house for fifteen minutes. Breathe. Keep your eyes open. Walk back to house for fifteen minutes. Go back in house.

Some days, you may look at the sky either from the backyard or from the side of the house where no one else goes. Your neighbours' tall fence and the raspberry canes will hide you.

Patient allergies: Simple solutions to complex problems.

*

I often mistype "grade" as "garde": good evidence of semantic slippage. To grade is to guard: standards, the institution, evaluative methods that may be outmoded. We stand on grade for thee.

April 2020 began as relief from anxiety prep and technology risks, but there was suddenly a new and intense form of online coaching to get my students through finals month. As papers came in, I dove into grading, and received multiple emails about how, when, and why to grade from the administration, many of whom had neither taught nor graded. Finally, after the traditional three-week grading period had stretched to seven weeks, I graded my final student paper, posted the grades, and did not feel relief. Instead, I felt dread move in me like a tapeworm.

Like one out of five women in Canada, I'm a sexual assault survivor and, like many women, I am adept at burying myself in work. But as soon as I was untethered from support tasks in the spring of 2020, I started to have nearly day-length panic attacks. For weeks in May, they rolled over me in waves that yanked me from sleep at 3 a.m., weakening around noon and abating in mid-afternoon. I would arrive at 2 p.m. sweating as though I had run ten km, but grateful to be back, even for a few hours, to "normal." Panic attacks weren't a new part of my life, but before this, they had always been relatively short-lived: bad two hours plus a jittery day. But I ignored the lay of the land; I had completely glossed over the rough autumn of 2019 when I twisted myself into knots over the release of my book. In other words, I was already depleted.

The pattern of waking at 3 a.m. moved from a few days into a week, and I couldn't get my doctor on the phone. Left to my own devices with the global pandemic numbers growing, I tried a lot of things: increased Vitamin B, CBD oil, quitting caffeine cold turkey. I stopped listening to the news. I dropped off social media. I rode a stationary bike for hours. I withdrew two articles that were scheduled for publication because I couldn't recognize the person who had written them. I couldn't concentrate long enough to read because the inside of my head was a fiery loop. If the hospitals hadn't been full of COVID patients, I would have admitted myself.

I called a drop-in clinic and was told by the doctor on call that he couldn't prescribe to me because I might be an addict. (And you, *Sir*, might not be a doctor and yet we're both going to have to trust each other.) He asked if I was in danger of killing myself. I said, "Just the opposite; I think someone is coming to kill me." He said okay and hung up.

Okay?

*

How to use this medicine: Take once daily. Pay no attention to the step-counters behind the curtain. Raise one foot, lean forward, catch yourself. Raise the other, lean forward. Repeat.

Take this medication for a full course of treatment. Do not skip days because you are bored or too cold or too hot or crying too much. Do not skip because everything is the same. Do not skip because you are the same. Do not skip because you'll never be the same.

Active ingredients: Vitamin D; hope; sweat; obedience.

Before using this medicine: *^?

*

If you've never had a panic attack, I'll say first that I wouldn't wish it on anyone. The experience for me has always been feeling hyper-present and adrift at once, floundering in quicksand, kicking and not finding the bottom of the pit. Because my body is convinced that I am dying, it flushes blood to where it seems to be needed the most: the brain, or more specifically, the primal or reptile brain. My Anxiety Kraken awakens, unfurls its tentacles, and then I have a fight (or flight) on my hands. I've just described a panic attack with imagery drawn from Warner Brothers cartoons and old episodes of *Sea Hunt*. Trauma descriptions often default to images consumed at the time of trauma: in my case, early adolescence. Panic attacks are awful, because while they fixate on a material circumstance, they defy the logic of that circumstance. Statements that the sky is not falling are not reassuring to people who have had the sky crack open their skulls. Body logic is immensely strong.

To enumerate the entangled causes of my panic attacks would be to suggest that they are explainable, or that they obey an accessible logic. At the start of the pandemic restrictions, I was admittedly a little smug, because suddenly everyone was going to experience what traumatized women all over the world have experienced: restricted freedoms, the need to keep a distance, the feeling of being a little trapped all the time, the understanding that what others think is invisible could kill you. But living under official restrictions that mirrored in so many ways my unofficial life, I slipped and then I was in deep and sputtering for breath. I was afraid to go outside and afraid to stay in. When I was outside, I felt the sky reaching into my brain. When I was inside, I felt the walls pressing in on me. There was nowhere to go. Fresh out of strategies, I sat in the passenger seat while my partner drove me around the country roads north of where we lived. Sometimes the distraction of passing open fields and farmhouses helped, sometimes it didn't.

On one of those long country drives, I couldn't feel my legs. I slapped and pinched my thighs; I could feel a bit of sensation, so they weren't totally numb, but they didn't feel like the supporting columns of my torso. My legs were like Slinkies, weirdly uncontrollable. They felt unstable even though I was sitting down, and I wondered how I'd get out of the car. Would my legs slip out from under me and dump me onto the ground? Maybe I would careen upwards like an untethered Macy's parade balloon: out of control and headed for the stratosphere. When I told John, he looked over at me and said something brilliant: "Would you like to have a bit of a yell?"

My decision-making skills were at an all-time low, but I sat up straight because I knew how to do this. We looked for an open field on a minor road, one with houses or barns nowhere near. I got out, John made sure I could stand, and then I staggered twenty metres up the road to get a little space away from the car. It was about 7:30 a.m., and the lonely road was all browns and greys under cloud cover; on my right was a field backed by a long windbreak of conifers. As I wobbled on my wet-spaghetti legs, I started to stomp my boots into the gravel as hard as I could. I put all my weight into it, trying to dent the gravel with big footprints. And it worked, a little: I could feel my muscles in my thighs start to tingle. I stopped and faced the field; I lifted my knees as high as they would go and slammed down my feet. The jolt rode up my body and rattled my torso. I looked back at John, who sat in the driver's seat and discreetly pretended to watch something across the road while keeping one eye on me. I kept stomping, trying to move the sen-

sation into my calves. With every thud I shouted a syllable. I had done such things years before in acting workshops. However, it is one thing to shout at your scene partner in a timed exercise and another to stand on the edge of a field alone and shout *I. Can't. Feel. My. Legs*.

I shouted a lot more, and the phrase I kept returning to is a gold standard among assault survivors: "It's my body." And was it ever. It was my body in all its pain and numbness; it was my body driving my brain crazy, and vice versa. I shouted it over and over on that roadside, aiming my voice at the trees. I heard the mashing noise my boots made as they displaced tiny stones. If I heard a car coming, I feigned a casual stroll until the vehicle passed, then I started stomping again. No one pulled over. No one even slowed down. No one wants to know about a woman yelling by the side of the road.

It ended with a bird. I was taking in breath to shout when a small hawk swooped over the field. I laughed and shouted at once and that spontaneous sound told me that I had made it back to a working body. There was no point in scaring away all the mice: that hawk had to eat. I walked back to the car.

Later that day, I found a name online for what afflicted me. "Jelly legs" are common symptoms in panic attacks when the blood is shunted elsewhere in the body to find the threat and defeat it. The treatment is, no surprise, exercise, even though stomping and yelling into a field was not mentioned. However, I recommend it.

The relief was temporary, but it was an important discovery. Getting my body back on a more permanent basis was going to take effort, and noise, and a willingness to perform some social effrontery. Yelling into a field was going to be the least of it. I was going to have to rest; I was going to have to say no to opportunities. I was going to have to figure out how to be the scholar I was, rather than the scholar that the patriarchy wanted be to me: the always-available but always-inadequate mother. In case of emotional labour, break this glass.

*

Do not use this treatment: If you are currently experiencing spiking professional paranoia. In case of the latter, contact your physician, herbalist, therapist, sisters, partner, and best friends. You need all hands on deck.

Additional possible side effects: Ability to identify birdsong. Ability to nickname neighbourhood kids. Expanding definitions of public art. Burrs. Scratches. Blisters.

*

My doctor was unavailable for two weeks. This was in the early weeks of pandemic restrictions, and doctors had their hands full. But when I heard from her, she prescribed for me—along with an SSRI—a daily walk, speaking as though anti-anxiety drugs were a good idea, but the walk was essential. She stressed that the walk did not need to be especially athletic or goal-focussed, beyond leaving the house under my own power. Some people have been checking which routes through their neighbourhoods will earn them 10,000 steps, but my mental health was precarious and my standards were blessedly low.

Like taking medication at the same time every day, walking the same route every day suggests calm, routine, maintenance. It allows me to notice changes, small and large, in the neighbourhood and myself. I venture into green spaces like stormwater ponds, creekbanks, woodlots, and cemeteries. In these spaces where human presence is allowed though not encouraged, I take my reptile brain walking with a leash around its scaly neck. It goes almost willingly now, and sniffs at the edges of the grass. It opens its wide mouth and pants up at me. It can't smile but it does not roar.

*

Warning: Many days you will walk and walk and see nothing new. Many days you will do nothing but leave a trail of your own skin cells like breadcrumbs for dust mites.

*

All June in those green spaces, I felt like a big walking bag of chemicals. Science-minded friends reminded me that we are all big bags of chemicals, but so much time and effort had gone into balancing my chemicals that I felt the swish of them keeping my heart beating, keeping my brain working, the words scrolling past my eyes and making sense. And I walked every day. I rested every day. In July, I had a cup of coffee and didn't break out in a cold sweat. Emboldened, I wrote an article. I held my breath when it went to press. In August, I told a col-

league that I had cracked up over the summer. She couldn't have been more understanding, because as it turned out, so had she. In September, I Zoom-taught my regular course load. Much was not perfect, including me.

In the end, I lost eight weeks of 2020 to the Attack of Reptile Brain and I count myself lucky. Pandemic restrictions didn't cause my season of panic attacks, but they aligned with my trauma history and the sense of careening doom many people felt that spring. Walking helps to balance the unbearable, and this balance is delicate. Trauma survivors who are required to perform intense emotional labour in the academy and elsewhere need the ground beneath our feet. We need time alone where we don't have to explain anything to the creek or the fallen tree; we need to see that birds and rabbits fly and run from us because they know about self-preservation. Neither *en garde* or subject to grade, this kind of walking is not about fitness or even that elusive scholarly work/life balance; it's about the hard daily work of being present in the body I have now. It's the long work of giving space to what endures and is not inferno.

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Special Section: COVID & the Academy
Literary Work

Pandemic Pause: A Break from Sexual Harassment

The Safe Space of Virtual Conferences

by Rohini Bannerjee

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Indian author Arundhati Roy writes in her 2020 essay on how COVID-19 threatens India and the world that "nothing could be worse than a return to normality" (Roy 2020). I'm reminded of this line every time I think about the quotidian before March 20, 2020, the day when campus closed down and, with little strategy in hand, I loaded three boxes of books and papers into my car, uncertain of when I could return. I think about how our definition of normality has changed and perhaps evolved since we have been physically away from campus, from our offices, our colleagues, our students, and, with scholarship-related travel essentially suspended, away from meeting in person with our networks. More specifically, the new normal for conferences is virtual and for the reasons I describe below, I think this is a good thing.

I enjoy conferences—at least I used to. It is time set aside from teaching and service and from the daily demands of family life that is almost always welcome. I can step away from committee meetings, put a temporary halt on preparing lectures, and set up an automated email response. Conferences are a change of pace and of environment. I am grateful for the opportunity to focus on my research, put together a paper, read and re-read, write and edit, and eventually get on a plane and fly off somewhere outside of my every day to share my work with my peers. There, I take the time to remember that I am an active scholar and that my ideas and research are important and have impact. As a tenured, Associate Professor, now close to completing my thirteenth year at Saint Mary's University, this experience of conferences has been the norm for me. But after recent sexual harassment at a conference, one that took place before the pandemic hit, I am contemplating Arundhati Roy's statement that

nothing could be worse than a return to normal.

*

The sun was shining through the glass of the beautiful convention hall for the 9 a.m. opening panel of the conference, for which I was the first speaker. The coffee was strong and gave me the jolt of energy I needed after a long day of teaching the day before, a frantic last-minute packing of luggage, a quick peek at the homework schedule for my three sons, and a bumpy flight from Halifax the previous evening. I loaded my breakfast plate with fresh fruit and a mini croissant and uploaded my PowerPoint from my USB to the conference presentation computer. I checked with IT at least twice to make sure the film clips I had spent hours to prepare and edit would actually have sound when played, and only then did I begin to work the room. Conferences are social opportunities as well as intellectual ones, and I enjoy this aspect. I chatted with colleagues who had been in Mauritius with me just three months prior and others I had not seen since graduate school.

A colleague approached. Someone I have known for nearly twenty years, someone I trusted:

"Let's take a photo," he said. "It has been ages since we have seen each other."

I put down my coffee and walked over to where he was standing. At first, our backs were facing a number of conference attendees, all hovering in front of the plethora of patisseries and pitchers of orange juice, chatting about last year's conference, about their families, the latest grants denied, the terrible weather forecast, and the number of students in their intro classes. He suggested we move away from the crowd for the photo. I thought nothing of it. Our backs were now facing a wall, with no one behind us. Another colleague, a woman, offered to take the photo.

I moved closer to him and said, "It's great to finally see you after all these years." I looked him in the eyes, not lowering my gaze. We were friends, I trusted him. He nodded and smiled. His left hand landed on my left hip and then travelled towards my backside. My mind raced. There were over 150 people in the room. He must have just let his hand slip, I thought to myself. He will pull it back up. But he didn't.

"How do I take a photo?" our colleague with the camera said. "I can't find the button on your phone."

"Just the round button," I said. My voice quivered. *Press it quickly!* I thought.

As she fumbled looking for the button, seconds felt like centuries, and his hand did not budge. I adjusted my stance and shifted my hips, hoping that his hand would naturally fall off my backside and he would understand where he had "mistakenly" placed it.

Thankfully, his hand fell of my body completely as our colleague called out: "Allez, un grand sourire pour moi…."

But again, his hand crept back up onto my backside and he squeezed my body, unequivocally, without hesitation and without my consent. I froze in disbelief.

"Ah voilà!" declared our colleague.

The photo was taken. The force of his palm would leave a bruise.

I lunged forward and grabbed the phone. The photo was out of focus, much like my mind at that moment. In the picture, it appears that I'm attempting to move away whilst he maintains a poker face.

I turned back to look at him. I could say nothing. I was in shock. Was I just groped by another colleague, someone I considered a friend, at a conference packed with my peers? He walked towards me, as if nothing had happened and whispered:

"I look forward to introducing you as the first speaker."

Just like that, my body was violated. I collected my thoughts and slipped into the washroom. I felt nauseous and light-headed, angry, and embarrassed. I thought of all things I should have said and done. I wanted to call my husband, my friends, my mum, everyone on my support list. But I was the first speaker at the conference, and it was nearly nine o'clock.

Walking calmly to the podium, I opened up my presentation file and did the work I had promised to do. I took questions from the floor. But when I left the microphone and returned to my table, I tuned out for the rest of the morning. During the first refreshment break, he ap-

proached me again and I found a way to slip out of the room and call home. My voice quivered, just as it did when the photo was taken. I looked at the dress I was wearing and thought I would never choose to wear it again as it would remind me of this incident.

The rest of that day was a blur; I am unable to recall what papers were presented as my concentration levels were nil. I left the conference before the last panel was finished and went back to my hotel room. He texted to ask if I was going to the conference dinner and I declined. I wanted to say more but the fatigue of having to hide the fact I had been violated three minutes before giving my conference presentation gave me little energy. The next day he texted again, asking me if I was going to stay for the morning sessions. Again, I made an excuse that my flight was earlier than I had remembered and thought it best to get to the airport. He dared to add: "It's too bad you couldn't come over to the house and meet my wife and kids."

As I boarded the plane to return home, my thoughts were: If he could do this to me, then a 43-year-old tenured professor, then who else might have experienced this? Due to the pandemic, I have not attended a conference in person since the event described here. But I wonder, if and when I am able to attend a scholarly gathering in person, beyond mask compliance and frequent handwashing what will be *my* new normal?

*

Writing this essay was a struggle. I found creative blocks at nearly every paragraph as the personal and descriptive elements were challenging to elaborate. As soon as I realized that telling my story was empowering, however, the words arrived as needed. But what about moving forward from this? So much of our time in and out of lockdowns and staggered stages of re-opening has been about contemplation. We have been, in a sense, re-calibrating and re-assessing how things had been done before March 2020 and whether we need to see the pandemic as an opportunity. As Arundhati Roy notes, "pandemics have forced humans to break with the past and imagine their world anew. This one is no different. It is a portal, a gateway between one world and the next" (Roy 2020).

As most faculty, staff, and students are aware, many campuses have policies and initiatives around sexual harassment, including special events during welcome week, activities related to alcohol consumption and consent, connecting 2SLGBTQ+ students to support systems, and engaging with international students about risk-taking outside familiar cultural contexts. None of these policies explicitly address conferences. Many graduate-school orientation seminars talk about professional conduct as students are now assigned teaching and research assistantships, but there is no discussion about what to expect at conferences, other than presenting papers and networking for future job opportunities. Perhaps a session on the vulnerability attached to presenting one's research, in particular for those students whose identity is intersectional, might be of benefit. And within the definition of vulnerability, perhaps we need a reminder to call out unprofessional and unwanted sexual attention at conferences, thereby reinforcing the notion that conference spaces are still academic spaces.

Of course, online conferences may soon be the norm. Currently, virtual-conference organizers often remind participants to use chat functions to interact and to do so in a respectful manner. Should discussions on the safety of these online spaces also be raised and addressed with graduate students and amongst our colleagues? This is not just about internet trolls diving into online spaces and joining/bombing a Zoom meeting uninvited, but about the overall etiquette of participants in online conferences. I suggest that reminders for participants should include:

a) Keep direct messaging during a conference session to a minimum;

b) Use the same name at registration as on screen;

c) Identify your pronouns.

Let us ensure that "COVID and the Academy" remains part of conversations as we walk through this gateway toward a new normal, one that is more transparent, and, I hope, much safer.

And, by the way, I have decided that I will wear that same dress again—if it still fits! I'll wear it at my next Zoom conference and most definitely at the next in-person conference after the pandemic. Wearing that dress will remind me that his actions were *his* actions. While I did nothing to invite his behaviour, I will do everything I can to speak out against it.

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Book Review

Meat! A Transnational Analysis

by Élisabeth Abergel

Élisabeth Abergel is professor in the department of Sociology and the Institute for Environmental Science (ISE) at the Université du Québec à Montréal (UQAM). Her main area of study has been the link between Science and Technology Studies and Critical Food Studies. She studies how technological convergence and new life technologies construct the future of agriculture and food, revealing much about human/nature relations. Her current research centers around a critical analysis of cultured meat and the bioprinting of living tissues for food and/or biomedical use. She is also leading a research project in partnership with the the Secrétariat à la Condition Féminine (SCF) that aims to assess women's labour in agriculture.

Book under review: Chatterjee, S., & B. Subramaniam, eds. 2021. *Meat! A Transnational Analysis*. Durham: Duke University Press.

Animal flesh and its analogues (plant-based meat and cell-based meat) and the sociopolitical and cultural transformations of diets in light of the pandemic and the climate crisis have sparked the interest of scholars from different disciplinary fields. As it turns out, the study of meat as a product of material and symbolic culture is a powerful vehicle for understanding biopolitics. Feminist critical animal and food studies scholars, such as Carol J. Adams (1990), Elspeth Probyn (2000), Carrie Hamilton (2016), Lisa Kemmerer (2011), and Amie Breeze Harper (2010) have analyzed meat in relation to the body, masculinities, human exceptionalism, sexual identities, and subjectivities, as well as gender/species intersections. They have provided us with an interesting lens from which to make sense of the politics of eating and its complex gendered, classist, and racial dimensions. Recent works by these and other authors have tackled the meat issue with regards to human and non-human relationships in the context of climate change and the ravages of industrial farming as well as the central role that technology plays in agriculture and food. While all of these studies shed important light on the significance of meat as commodity and as the locus of social, ethical, and cultural processes, few books assemble critical writings from a transnational, intersectional, and postcolonial perspective. *Meat! A Transnational Analysis* fills this gap.

In a collection of twelve essays, part of the ANIMA Critical Race Studies Otherwise Series, editors Sushmita Chatterjee and Banu Subramaniam, both Women, Gender, and Sexuality Studies professors, tackle the topic of meat outside the usual contemporary framings as a means to engage readers with far-ranging topics such as race, class, gender, sexuality, ableism, empire, capitalism, nationalism, and sustainability. Moving beyond narrow conceptualizations of meat, the authors in this collection consider the topic as a constantly mutating social object: "a site for transnational flows, colonial circuits, and varied mediated significations of gender, race, and class" (2).

The introductory chapter, entitled "How to Think with Meat," challenges our thinking about meat as a continually evolving category within and across various political, social, geographical, cultural, and bodily contexts. Rather than focusing on the "politics of meat," the authors interrogate what they call the "politics of becoming meat," and delve into "its varied constructions based on social exigencies, disciplinary framings and economic rationalities" (3) from different epistemological perspectives. Posing the question *what and who becomes meat* opens up important transdisciplinary perspectives on shifting identities and global and local dimensions of meat political economies, as well as technologized forms of domination.

Turning to the issue of colonialism, imperialism, and post-colonial critiques, several authors provide interesting historical as well as social analyses of food histories. Two chapters, for example, deal with reindeer meat in the colonization of Alaskan natives and of the Sami people post-Chernobyl. In the Alaskan case, Jennifer A. Hamilton studies the transit of reindeer and frozen reindeer meat starting in the 1890s as a means of creating colonial subjects. By framing the reindeer as a tool of northern colonization, by turning native Alaskan hunters into herdsmen and the "unproductive" Northern landscape and vegetation into meat, Hamilton shows how this civilizing process took root in polar expeditions and US expansion into the Arctic. She retraces how the imperial transit of frozen meat to elite New York restaurants and establishments was permitted through freezing and cold storage technologies. She frames "Eskimo" representations in US advertising in order to highlight colonial discourse around Arctic and food imaginaries. Anita Mannur's chapter, also on the topic of reindeer meat, analyzes the effects of radioactive fallout from Chernobyl on the Sami people's traditional way of life as herders and the rise of the new Nordic cuisine as an expression of true Nordicity. By questioning the "complex relationship between consumption, culinary appropriation, indigeneities and environmental justice" (123), she opposes the invisibility of radioactive contamination, the Sami people, and their herds to the "fetishized" culinary use of reindeer meat in the context of postnuclear violence. Her piece shows how culinary trends such as the new Nordic cuisine perpetuate age-old colonial relations of power and race by framing the local as exotic and the exotic as local and by situating white Nordic identity outside threatened Indigenous practices, all the while ignoring the effects of consuming radioactive reindeer flesh.

Irina Aristarkhova's piece, "Eating the Mother," discusses the tensions expressed in Jess Dobkin's performance art-piece entitled *The Lactation Station Breast Milk Bar* (2006-16) in which the public is invited to taste donated breast milk. Drawing from previous work on the maternal body as matrix in relation to the concept of hospitality, Aristarkhova investigates the relationship between anthropophagy and cannibalism. In other words, the author asks, "Is the mother food? If, so what kind? And does the self, non-self relation to maternal body imply cannibalism, autophagy, anthropophagy or something else?" (9). This discussion sets up a feminist, postcolonial, and queer inquiry into the use and limits of maternal milk and its ambiguous status as food. Here, because the mother is seen as giving of her flesh during gestation and breastfeeding, she is construed as both fluid and meat, the original food. Gestation is "digestion and ingestion of the self by the self" (49), an act of cannibalism and autophagy. This text presents new feminist, critical, queer, and postcolonial readings of cannibalism, a category used by colonizers to dehumanize, exoticize, and racially oppress non-European others. Hence, positing the mother as food opens up new ways of thinking about the political and affective dimensions of the maternal body.

Angela Willey's chapter presents an engaging take on fake meat. The idea of "inauthenticity" as a personal and political issue allows for "thinking through a queer feminist and critical trans lens while being attentive to the work the supposed inauthenticity of fake sex/fake meat/fake masculinity and femininity does to naturalize the supposedly authentic original" (242). Hence, Willey uses fake meat as a conceptual maneuver to discuss the sexual and gender politics of resistance and representation.

Elspeth Probyn's discussion of white fish as "not-fishy fish" in the American diet is worth mentioning as it draws on her work on the future of oceans. Consumers' taste for bland-tasting fish started when seafood buyers marketed the Patagonian toothfish, an ancient deep-sea species that thrives in cold Southern oceans, as Chilean seabass. Much like toothfish, the example of slimehead fish, also known as orange roughy, reveals the disastrous ecological and social consequences of an insatiable appetite for white fish. Probyn sees the search for white fish as a product of racial and ethnic inequalities between the global north and south, signalling the ultimate demise of large and ancient fish species and fishing communities, as well as oceans.

Several chapters focus on Indian meat politics, tackling governance practices and meat bans (in particular beef and slaughter bans) as a strategy to advance Hindu nationalism and new forms of anti-Muslim politics. In her chapter, Chatterjee uses Stacy Alaimo's concept of transcorporeality to discuss meat and yoga as two aspects of the body politic in India. Beef bans and India's renewed interest in yoga produce different kinds of state-based corporeality: the violence of beef bans that target Muslims on the one hand and the pacifism of yoga, as a wellness and spiritual practice, that targets a transnational public (mostly European), on the other. In both cases, Hindu nationalist anti-meat politics and yoga as a multicultural symbol of India reveal how corporeal politics work by defining exclusion and inclusion of certain bodies broadly imagined as "meat." More than a set of body practices, Chatterjee argues that yoga is a symbol of health and non-meat-eating Indian masculinity, a cure against Western modernity, and transnational politics by other means.

Parama Roy's chapter, "On Being Meat: Three Parables on Sacrifice and Violence," poses the question of sacrifice and its relationship to violence in both animal sacrifice and human self-sacrifice. A survey of specific texts justifying animal sacrifice and rationalizing suffering provide the background for examining what Roy calls the paradox of self-sacrifice. Bishnoi women breastfeeding orphaned fawns offer insight into the moral processes of this paradox: when the women save gazelles but not the wild dogs threatening them, their self-sacrificial acts justify violence and the suffering of other species. Thus, Roy examines the notions of sacrifice, violence, suffering, and the moral processes that determine who becomes meat using Western philosophical and Vedic traditions, leading the author to conclude that "who eats and who gets eaten can then be flexibly contingent rather than unyieldingly predictable" (176).

By questioning the boundaries between human/animal/plant categories, and blurring those boundaries, several authors (see chapters by Neel Ahuja and Banu Subramaniam) expand the notion of meat not simply as commodity but within a process of becoming self, non-self, or other. The collection as a whole goes beyond the eater/eaten dichotomy to such an extent that, in some of the chapters, the issue of who or what is meat gets transposed. This complex and multilayered understanding of meat introduces readers to a wide range of methodological approaches and theoretical tools as well as the connections between different framings of meat and structures of domination beyond race, class, and gender categories. Even though chapters are uneven—some are more analytical and empirical, while others are more experimental and undertheorized—this is compensated for by the diversity of topics and the original epistemological directions taken by some authors. Readers of *Atlantis* and feminist scholars in general will no doubt find this edited volume useful and interesting.

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