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APRIL 2014

undergraduate
student-run
feminist art
and art history
publication

Yiara was an indigenous mythological Brazilian queen, legendarily beautiful, but also a mighty warrior. She thus embodies many different issues of interest to feminist art history: sexuality, power, exoticism, cultural identity and more.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

- | | | | |
|----|--|----|---|
| 02 | LETTER FROM THE EDITOR -
Tess Juan-Gaillot | 21 | BUS STOP - Sophie Morro |
| 03 | ANONYMOUS PORTRAITS OF
WOMEN, WORK, AND SPECTACLE:
FROM DEGAS TO LAUTREC -
Katerina Korola | 22 | A GIRL WALKS INTO A BAR:
THE FEMINIST POTENTIAL FOR
RAPE JOKES - Anna Frey |
| 08 | DEAR VAGINA - Fannie Gadouas | 27 | BOUNDARIES - Alysia Piatkowski |
| 09 | MY BODY IS A STATE -
Camille Cléant | 28 | GENDER MENDER: AN XXY REVIEW -
Miia Piironen |
| 10 | THE CONFUSION AND IDEALISM
MONOLOGUES -
Leilani Fraser-Buchanan | 32 | BEADING NEW WORLDS: NADIA
MYRE, CHRISTI BELCOURT, AND
INDIGENOUS WOMEN'S ART OF RE
SURGENCE - Claire Stewart-Kanigan |
| 11 | SWEET EIGHT-LEGS -
Hannah Materne | 39 | LET ME COUNT THE WAYS... -
Naakita Feldman-Kiss |
| 12 | STILL LIFE - Emily Karcz | 40 | GAZING BACK: SPECTACLE AND
SPECTATOR IN JOYCE'S
"NAUSICAA" - Rudrapriya Rathore |
| 13 | LAS VEGAS SERIES -
Jonah Migicovsky | 43 | SORCIÈRES - Gabrielle Brais Harvey |
| 14 | INTERVIEW WITH JESSE HARROD -
Valérie Frappier | 44 | YIARA'S STAFF |
| 18 | BUST- Julie Villeneuve | | |
| 19 | COSMOPOLITAN MAGAZINE
2007-2012 - Megan Moore | | |
| 20 | AUTO-IDENTIFICATION -
Laïla Mestari | | |

LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

Dear Reader,

This year has been about expansion on all fronts: magazine production, membership, community outreach, and content scope.

Thanks to the financial support from the Fine Arts Student Alliance and the Concordia Council on Student Life, I am proud to say we have doubled our magazine production while maintaining a steady level of quality since last year. Membership also doubled in size, resulting in a much more efficient and dynamic team. These changes contributed to yet more expansion in the form of community outreach. In February 2014, we held our first ever art exhibition showcasing a variety of works by undergraduate artists (most of whom are featured in this magazine) at Café l'Artere. The successful month-long exhibition was celebrated with a well-attended vernissage open to the Montreal public.

You may notice that we have expanded our understanding of what being an art and art history magazine entails. In addition to including purely art historical essays that deal with generally accepted forms of visual art, you will find pieces dealing with comedy and literature as art forms. In many ways, however, you will find Ylara to be a continuation of last year in terms of its inclusions. Once again, poetry, performance, film, and scriptwriting pieces are placed alongside

more sculptural and painterly works. The rich range of perspectives never fails to impress me, even after working on the editing process for the last two issues.

If there is one thing I have come to learn so far, it is that we, as individuals, are fluid. Our capacity for change and growth is infinite. I believe that the content of this magazine reflects this organic mentality. Ylara does not and cannot encompass one singular form of feminism, since feminism is arguably as multifaceted and organic as those who practice it.

I would like to extend my thanks to all contributors, Ylara team members, and supporters without whom this magazine would have never seen the light of day. Your dedication and passion for your work and Ylara Magazine has shown every step of the way.

Congratulations,

Tess Juan-Gaillet
Editor-in-Chief
Ylara Magazine, April 2014

ANONYMOUS PORTRAITS OF WOMEN, WORK, AND SPECTACLE: FROM DEGAS TO LAUTREC

Katerina Korola

Montreal, Quebec

Concordia University

Major in Art History and Film Studies

2013

Avec un dos, nous voulons que se révèle un tempérament, un âge, un état social; par une paire de mains, nous devons exprimer un magistrat ou un commerçant; par un geste, tout une suite de sentiments.

Edmond Duranty¹

For Edgar Degas, the 1874 *Exposition de la société anonyme des artistes peintres, sculpteurs, graveurs, etc.* was primarily a Realist exhibition.² Degas would never adopt the Impressionist label, preferring to consider himself a “Realist” or “Naturalist.”³ If history has nonetheless cast him as such, it is most certainly for his relentless determination to portray the denizens of fin-de-siècle Paris. This urban contemporaneity, however, is by no means the exclusive domain of Impressionism. In fact, it is precisely this aspect of Degas’s oeuvre that would be later developed upon by the younger Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec. The lives of these two singular individuals offer many parallels to biographers: Degas and Lautrec were both born into financial security, students of academic training, extremely fond of Japanese prints, and accomplished draftsmen. More importantly, the two artists shared a common repertoire of themes, including laundresses, jockeys, performers, prostitutes, and bathers, all drawn up from the human world of nineteenth-century Paris.

Focused on depicting this world sincerely, both artists turned to portraiture, a genre nearly as stigmatized as landscape in the mid nine-

teenth-century. Women, although they often remain anonymous, come to dominate the portraiture of both Degas and Lautrec. This is especially true of the working woman who is always inextricably tied to spectacle, be she a laundress, milliner, prostitute, or performer. Although both committed Realists, with Degas and Lautrec we see a Realism of abbreviation, a Realism that would transform portraiture into the quintessential modern genre. Neither of the works discussed in this investigation are typical of their creator: Degas’s *Au théâtre: femme assise sur un balcon* (1877-80) [fig. 1] is one of the few instances of the artist turning his attention to the spectator and Lautrec’s *Waiting* (1888) [fig. 2] is far more subdued than the energetic prints for which he is famous. Nonetheless, it is precisely for these atypicalities that these works offer a unique vantage point into the oeuvres of these painters. Similar in tone and composition, *Au théâtre* and *Waiting* provide a counterpoint to the boisterous images of performers that immediately leap to mind at the mention of either Degas or Lautrec. Contemplated together, these anonymous portraits reveal a sustained concern with the working woman and her place in an urban society increasingly defined by spectacular diversions.

Before discussing these two paintings further, it is important to briefly outline the status of portraiture in the nineteenth-century. In his essay

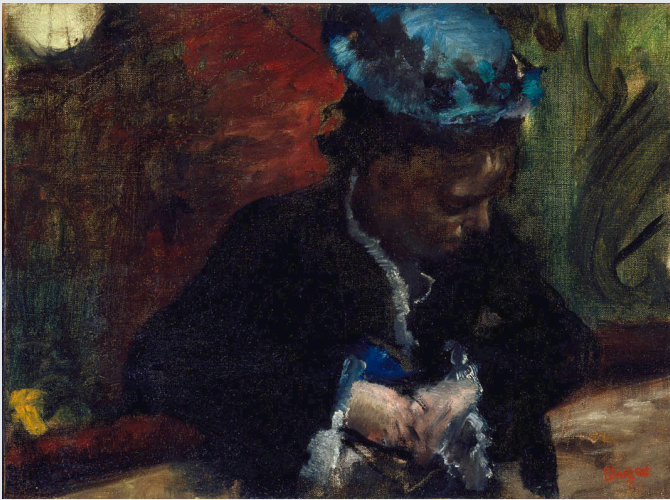


fig. 1 - Edgar Degas (Paris 1834 - Paris 1917), *At the Theatre: Woman Seated in the Balcony*, c. 1877-1880, Oil on canvas. Coll. The Montreal Museum of Fine Arts, gift of Mr. and Mrs. Michal Hornstein. Photo MMFA, Brian Merretti, inv. 1999.18.

on the subject, Pierre Vaisse notes that, within the academy system, portraiture was considered a subordinate art, based in imitation, and was taught only as an aid to history painting.⁴ Maligned as a strictly commercial endeavour that catered to the taste and wallets of the middle classes, portrait pieces that appeared in the salons were frequently attacked for their ugliness and inconsequentiality.⁵ It is no coincidence that these were precisely the same criticisms most often levelled at Degas, whose work increasingly came to represent the middle and working classes.

It was Baudelaire who first observed portraiture's potential to go beyond mere imitation. In his review of the Salon of 1846, Baudelaire distinguishes two notions of portraiture: the portrait as a historical record and as a novel.⁶ With the latter, it is the artist's task to reveal the invisible personality and history of the sitter, a feat demanding ingenuity beyond the capacity for straight imitation. Baudelaire's thoughts on modern painting are elaborated in his later essay, "The Painter of Modern Life." Written nearly twenty years later, this influential essay calls for painters to render the "gait, glance, and gesture" particular to their age.⁷ Portraiture thus becomes the obvious vehicle for rendering the "beauty of circumstance" unique to each contemporaneity.⁸

The specificity of the late nineteenth-century lies in the phenomenon of accelerating urbanism: Paris, like other

European urban centres, increasingly became the locus of social, economic, and political activity. New forms of leisure emerged, as did a new social class: the urban proletariat, which significantly included a large number of women, whose work was ever-present behind the leisure activities of the urban bourgeoisie. Degas was one of the first artists to turn his attention to this emergent subsection of Parisian society. His depictions of laundresses, milliners, and café-concert servers and performers blur the line between portrait and genre. The plain features of his subjects (so often criticized for their ugliness) authenticate the realism to which Degas aspired,⁹ while their anonymity (the names of sitters and models were rarely recorded by the painter)¹⁰ relegate these women to representatives of their type, the working woman.

As the art historian Emil Maurer notes, Degas did not take portrait commissions.¹¹ He chose his own subjects, and in the case of his portraits of working class women, demonstrated an interest in "turning the expressive head into a study of modern sensibility."¹² In *Au théâtre*, we see this process exemplified. The small canvas reveals an intimate portrait of a working class woman. Unlike Degas's milliners and laundresses, this woman is not at work, but in the penny gallery of a theatre, spending her leisure time rapt in the performance below. Although only shown from the elbows up, in keeping with the tenants outlined in Duranty's *La nouvelle peinture*, the woman's "temperament, age, [and] social condition"¹³ are nonetheless clearly legible. Her working class status can be identified in her simple clothes, the drabness of which lend the whole work a sombre tone. Her slumped pose reveals physical exhaustion of a full day's work, her bright turquoise hat suggests a flirtatious streak, and her downcast look testifies to a touching desire to forget herself in the spectacle below.

The impact of the work is due in large measure to Degas's mastery of abbreviation. The background of the painting is highly abstracted, only barely implying the red and green velour of the theatre interior. The eye is drawn immediately to the slumped figure of the woman, to the somewhat sad tension between her drab dress and bright hat, to her white hands clutching the railing as she looks below. Even the specific features of the woman herself are abbreviated. Although the woman's downcast eyes and snub nose are clearly delineated, her exact expression is cast in shadows, and must be read in the posture of her body. The painting, in this sense, represents not

only the working class woman but also the obstructed and perhaps even distracted gaze of the *flâneur*, another specifically modern (male) sensibility.

Baudelaire discusses the *flâneur* at length in “The Painter of Modern Life.” Baudelaire’s *flâneur*, as the masculine form of the noun indicates, prescribed a specifically gendered gaze as well as a social practice generally barred to women. In the paintings of Degas, this gaze is developed into an aesthetic, one which would be formalized in the writings of Duranty. In *La nouvelle peinture*, Duranty insists that the modern painter must leave his studio and seek his subjects “amongst men, in the world.”¹⁴ Direct observation of human beings in their social milieu has direct implications upon composition, since in reality the subject never appears against a “neutral background” or “at the centre of a canvas.”¹⁵ This last point was almost certainly developed in collaboration with Degas, a close friend of Duranty and a silent presence throughout the manifesto. Asymmetrical, arbitrarily cropped compositions form a key component of Degas’s brand of realism, emphasizing the fugitive, fragmented, and accidental nature of fast-paced modern urban life.

This compositional strategy is clearly at work in *Au théâtre*, a perfect example of what Maurer calls Degas’s “directorial approach.”¹⁶ The woman is depicted from above, slightly off-centre, against the strong diagonal of the balcony railing. This conspicuous cropping reinforces the accidental element of observation. The viewer has the impression of having caught the woman unaware, in one of those rare fugitive moments when sincere emotion surfaces. Degas’s striking division of red and green by the body of the woman attests to this drama of the moment, available only to the dedicated observer of modern life.

It is pictorial decisions like these that allowed Degas to elevate the portrait to the prestige of an authentic work of art, expressive of the modern sensibility that preoccupied his mature career. For today’s viewer, however, Degas’s abbreviations and compositional choices cast a problematic light on his depiction of women. In a statement that may as well have been written with *Au théâtre* in mind, feminist cultural studies scholar Elisabeth Bronfen notes that in many of Degas’s paintings, the woman “seems caught in the process of absenting herself.”¹⁷ Bronfen elsewhere writes:

While many of his portrayed women seem to pose as typical figures for what is specific about the late nineteenth-century individ-

ual, they are in fact removed from their concrete historical context and relocated as actresses in a multifarious spectacle of urban modernity.¹⁸

Although Bronfen ultimately concludes that Degas’s tendency to blur or otherwise obscure significant details celebrates the artist’s “disempowerment” before the inaccessible subjectivity of the female model,¹⁹ her critique nevertheless raises an issue that cannot be ignored when speaking of Degas’s depictions of working class women: the abstracting movement of the male gaze. In *Au théâtre*, where the stolen glance reveals the woman as the unwitting object of scopical consumption, this issue is especially portentous. Although on the one hand protecting her sovereign individuality by obscuring her facial expression, Degas nonetheless abstracts his model by denying her name and by positioning her as an object of spectacle. The attention placed on her hat, the brightest point of the composition, is especially important, since, as noted by art historian Werner Hofmann, the hat was the primary attribute of the fashionable nineteenth-century woman.²⁰ This coquettish hat, then, at least implies a desire on the woman’s part to be looked at.

The element of the intruding gaze is also a key component of Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec’s *Waiting* (1888). Painted roughly ten years after *Au théâtre*, this early work by the twenty-four year old painter builds upon the stylistic innovations pioneered by Degas, whom Lautrec acknowledged as an especially influential forerunner.²¹ As in Degas’s *Au théâtre*, in *Waiting*, Lautrec employs a downward axis of entry, an angle he would favour throughout his career.²² The space of the picture is quite flat, demonstrating again the influence of Degas and Lautrec’s own affinity for Japanese prints.²³ This flatness is intensified by the painting’s uniform and earthy palette, which heightens the viewer’s proximity to the woman depicted.

Here again the viewer approaches an anonymous working class woman, this time seen from behind. Although her features are hidden, her slumped back betrays her weariness, realizing down to the letter the words of Duranty in *La nouvelle peinture*. The woman’s downcast gaze is absent as she waits before a yellow café table, not touching the glass in front of her. Melancholy pervades the image, and the viewer has the distinct impression of having infringed upon a moment of private introspection.

Upon closer inspection, however, the whitened edge of a canvas reveals itself in the upper left-hand corner and the supposed café dissolves into the artist's studio. Known as a painter who "limits himself to the bare essentials,"²⁴ this inclusion is no accident on Lautrec's part. Because of it, the anonymous woman depicted cannot simply be understood as a seamstress or a milliner on her day off, but must be acknowledged as a model whose work consists in transforming herself into an image of another. Lautrec freezes his model in the midst of this transformation, yet another form of "absenting" oneself.²⁵ Although the woman remains anonymous, by drawing attention to this moment of transformation, Lautrec's painting ennobles the work upon which his own profession is contingent.

More than any painter before him, Lautrec delved into the world of spectacle that entertained both elites and masses of the late nineteenth-century and his artwork soon became an important part of that spectacle.²⁶ It is therefore important not to underestimate the important relationship between the model, her work, and spectacle. In this respect, the comparison of *Waiting* to another Lautrec painting undertaken during the same year is illuminating. *The Hangover* (1887-1889) [fig. 3], which would be featured as a lithograph in the periodical , depicts Suzanne Valadon, one of Lautrec's favourite models at the time, sitting before a similar round yellow table and a similar glass.²⁷ Even the bench behind her can be identified in *Waiting*, where it sits to the left of the model. But where *The Hangover* depicts the degradation of lower class female morality, *Waiting* is a tongue-in-cheek document to the artifice implicit in any artistic representation. More importantly, the work acknowledges the important role of the working woman (the model) in the anonymous portraiture of the late nineteenth-century. Lautrec depicts her as not only the subject of a work of art, but as a key partner in its production.

As two artists obsessed with the human world and its social realities, Degas and Lautrec took up the portrait genre and, through their work, made significant contributions to the promotion of portraiture to the status of high art. Through portraiture, both Degas and Lautrec not only exercised the distinctly individual styles for which they are remembered today, but also cast visibility on a subsection of the population whose invisible presence defined the urban world of the late nineteenth-century. Although many of Degas's depictions of women retain the latent trace of objectification symptomatic of his age, his commitment

to the representation of this group (especially as workers) speaks to an almost proto-feminist sensibility. Degas's desire to depict contemporary society alone does not account for the overwhelming predominance of women in his work. Three quarters of his portraits represent women,²⁸ and although the majority of these will remain forever anonymous, Degas's decision to paint them has given these women a presence in history. Indeed, in Degas's work, as in the later work of Lautrec, the working woman is revealed behind the spectacle of nineteenth-century leisure and diversion. Lautrec's entire artistic career would come to revolve around this spectacle and the role of women within it. Building upon the groundwork set by Degas, Lautrec's portraits of women shed light on their often-marginalized roles in the world of art and entertainment. His later works have preserved the names of numerous female performers whose short careers lit up Montmartre during the end of the nineteenth-century.

fig. 2 - Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec (French, 1864-1901), *Waiting*, c. 1887. Oil on canvas, 22 1/8 x 18 9/16 in. (56.2 x 47.2 cm). Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute, Williamstown, Massachusetts, USA, 1955.564. Image © Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute, Williamstown, Massachusetts, USA (photo by Michael Agee).

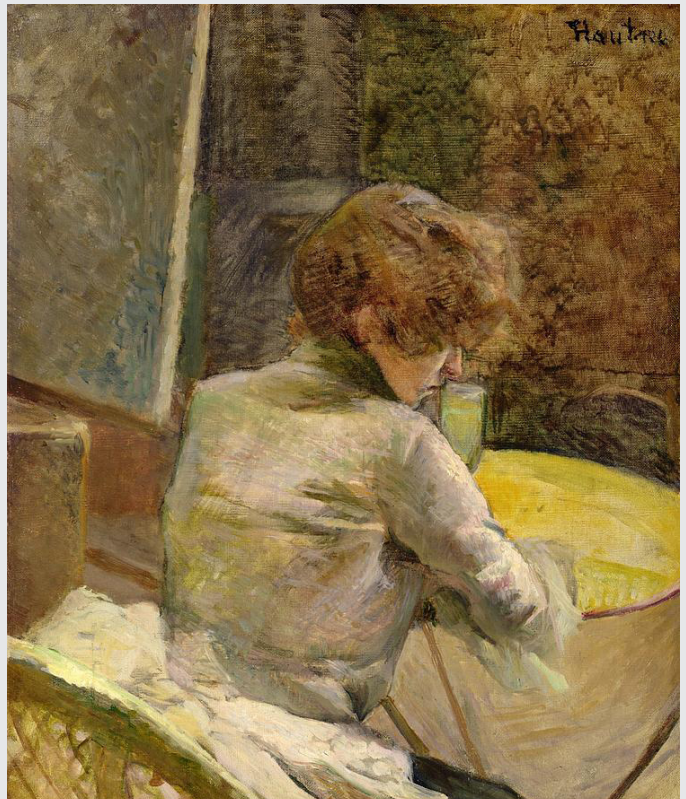




fig. 3 - Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec, *The Hangover (Gueule de bois)*, ca. 1887-1889, Oil and ink on canvas, 47.1 x 55.5cm, Fogg Art Museum, Cambridge, Mass.

1 Edmond Duranty, *La nouvelle peinture* (Paris: Editions du Boucher, 2002), 19.

2 John Rewald, "The First Group Exhibition (1874) and the Origin of the Word Impressionism," in *The History of Impressionism* (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1973), 313.

3 Genevieve Monnier, "Degas, (Hilaire Germain) Edgar," in *The Dictionary of Art*, ed. Jane Turner (London: Macmillan Publishers, 1996), 621.

4 Pierre Vaisse, "Between Convention and Innovation—the Portrait in France in the Nineteenth Century," in *Degas: Portraits*, eds. Felix Baumann and Marianne Karabelnik (London: Merrell Holberton Publishers, 1994), 119.

5 *Ibid.*, 120.

6 *Ibid.*, 118.

7 Charles Baudelaire, *The Painter of Modern Life and Other Essays*, ed. and trans. Jonathan Mayne (London: Phaidon Press, 1995), 14.

8 *Ibid.*, 13.

9 Emil Maurer, "Portraits as Pictures: Degas Between Taking a Likeness and Making a Work of Art (Tableau)," in *Degas: Portraits*, eds. Felix Baumann and Marianne Karabelnik (London: Merrell Holberton Publishers, 1994), 105.

10 Elisabeth Bronfen, "Facing Defacement: Degas' Portraits of Women," in *Degas: Portraits*, eds. Felix Baumann and Marianne Karabelnik (London: Merrell Holberton Publishers, 1994), 234.

11 Maurer, "Portraits as Pictures," 100.

12 Degas, quoted in Maurer, "Portraits as Pictures," 102.

13 Duranty, *La nouvelle peinture*, 19. My translation.

14 *Ibid.*, 20. My translation. Duranty's use of the word 'men' to designate society at large is indicative of the invisibility of women in the nineteenth-century world. Interesting to note, however, is that the majority of Degas's portraits feature women rather than men.

15 *Ibid.*, 21-22. My translation.

16 Maurer, "Portraits as Pictures," 112.

17 Bronfen, "Facing Defacement," 242.

18 *Ibid.*, 236.

19 *Ibid.*, 248.

20 Werner Hofmann, "Bodies Adorned and Used," in *Degas: A Dialogue of Difference* (London: Thames & Hudson, 2007), 148.

21 Julia Bloch Frey, "Toulouse-Lautrec (Monfa), Henri de," in *The Dictionary of Art* (Volume 31), ed. Jane Turner (London: Macmillan Publishers, 1996), 213.

22 Horst Keller, *Toulouse-Lautrec: Painter of Paris*, (New York: Harry N. Abrams, Incorporated, 1968), 17.

23 *Ibid.*, 37.

24 *Ibid.*, 31.

25 Bronfen, "Facing Defacement," 242.

26 Bloch Frey, "Toulouse-Lautrec (Monfa), Henri de," 214.

27 Keller, *Toulouse-Lautrec*, 31.

28 Maurer, "Portraits as Pictures," 99.

DEAR VAGINA

Fannie Gadouas



*Cheney, Ontario
Concordia University
Major in Photography*

*Digital print
80" x 120"*

2013

Dear Vagina is a large-scale digital print composed of patchwork images of the artist and her fellow females' vulvas. The assemblage of these images into a large wallpaper connotes decorative art and the interior of the home (realms typically associated with the female) while simultaneously confronting the viewer with explicit imagery. Beyond this pink surface lies the artist's aim to address the limited ways the female body is often represented by depicting the unique and diverse appearance of each vulva. Gadouas truly believes that art should engage with one's community and actively question societal norms. *Dear Vagina* reflects these beliefs as the work advocates ownership over one's body, as well as defiance towards perpetuated stereotypes in contemporary culture of what ideal female genitalia should look like. Gadouas thus challenges these bodily expectations delineated by society, all the while using the power of her dear vagina.

MY BODY IS A STATE

Camille Cléant (née Brisson)



Montréal, Québec
Université Concordia
Majeure en Print Media

Médiums mixtes sur papier
10" x 5"

2013

Camille Cléant est une artiste qui explore ce qui la compose en tant que femme et en tant qu'artiste. Dans son œuvre *My Body Is a State*, elle aborde les dualités entre le monde des apparences et le monde de l'intérieur. En déconstruisant son corps pour saisir ses enjeux et mettre en lumière sa politique, elle l'infiltr

dans le paysage d'une carte de Montréal, sa ville d'origine, créant un lien entre son corps et les lieux physiques qu'elle côtoie. Le corps féminin devient un terrain explicitement politique, comme le mentionne le titre de l'œuvre et sa forme. Un rapprochement peut alors se faire entre *My Body Is a State* et l'ensemble des réglemen-

tations contraignant le corps même de la femme (on peut penser entre autres aux droits reproductifs). Les écrits parsemés à travers l'œuvre reflètent le dialogue intérieur de l'artiste, similaires aux confessions retrouvées dans un journal intime, pour nous rappeler que le personnel est politique.

THE CONFUSION AND IDEALISM MONOLOGUES

Leilani Fraser-Buchanan

*Pender Island, BC
Concordia University
Major in Theatre and Development*

2013

All: To Whom It May Concern,

Reader Number One: First of all, this was supposed to be about mens rights activists on reddit and the Good Girl Gina meme. Then, after hours of demoralizing, rage-inducing research, I asked myself why I was spending my time trying to write about guys at their computers who think that all women are going to vindictively steal their sperm and then spend their lives languishing in the oh-so-luxurious world of being a single mom living off child support. *Right.* Either that or essentially proclaim that the ideal woman delivers blow jobs and sandwiches and not much else. What's the point? I know these views exist, I know they're damaging, but mocking them for my own enjoyment does not seem productive at all, besides being a way for me to pat myself on the back for recognizing misogyny. What follows may not be productive either, but it feels more hopeful, and that is important to me.

Reader Number Two: So, Number Two. Recently one of my teachers spoke about a playwright who, at the end of their career, stopped writing because even one single word was too powerful. I should probably remember who the playwright was, I don't, and google isn't offering any answers.

I have a problem. I'm terrified of saying anything. There are moments of light, moments of insight,

moments of understanding in the wake of reflection, moments of expression that feels true. Mostly there is a lot of fear. Fear that what I say, or try to create, will be at best boring, unintelligible, or saccharine, and at worst, support the very systems that I try to deconstruct. Do I get it? Do I care enough? Am I smart enough to deserve self-expression, or at least brave enough to fuck up honestly? Does it even matter?

Does this sound self-pitying? I recognize this place of privilege- I am actually being *asked* what I think, in a space where my words are given such gravity that they actually are examined.

So. Upon further inspection of the inner contents of my psyche, my conclusion is inconclusive. I obviously must have something to say, because the thought of silence makes me want to scream, and though I fear the ramifications of what words can do, I suppose that the possibility of illumination makes them worth the risk.

Reader Number Three: When I burst into tears trying to describe to you why feminism is: A. valid and B. important to me, it was not because, as a woman, I am so emotional that my brain has no room for intelligent thought. Fuck that. It's because this affects me in a way that lies deeper than what can be put into quantifiable boxes.

Reader Number Four: I sense that something, maybe many things, are broken in the world. I

SWEET EIGHT-LEGS

Hannah Materne

*Toronto, Ontario
Concordia University
Major in Design, Minor in Sustainability*

2012

don't know how to fix it. I also feel such an immense, overwhelming joy at the fact that I am alive, that I do not know how to express it. I feel that the two are perhaps connected. In my terribly young, idealistic mind, I think love is my deus ex machina.

Reader Number Five: I would love to be fearless. I am not. I would love to live in a world where I don't feel inherently threatened by a stranger, simply because the sun has gone down, and we are both walking down the same street. I would love to feel at ease at a job where I am the only female in a kitchen of men. I would love to only ever believe in the best in people. I would mostly love to never have to feel that my body is a weapon against my soul that inspires hate, violence, vulgarity and un-wanted attention.

But for every hurled proposition at 3AM on St. Laurent, and for every moment that the presence of someone's eyes makes me want to curl up in a ball and disappear, there are touches that inspire, words that empower, and smiles that make me believe that I am worth nothing less than the entire universe. For these, and the people whom which they belong, I would like to make my life a valentine, dedicated to thanking them for making me believe that a broken world is still a world worth trying to change.

candied
wrapped for the world
this lacquered façade
fickle frenzied flashy
encases
one pinch insecurity
one pound insincerity.
her candy floss spiderweb
covers in the corners of her shell
and sweet eight-legs
scratches from the inside.

STILL LIFE

Emily Karcz



*Mississauga, Ontario
Concordia University
Specialization in Fibre and
Material Practices & Painting*

*Oil on oval canvas
16" x 20"*

2013

Emily Karcz's artwork is an oil painting that uses the language of art history's longstanding still life tradition, a style canonically dominated by male artists, to speak to the subject of contemporary sexual technology. The artist's portrayal of a "taboo" subject, being modern-day toys used to pleasure oneself, in a classical realist

manner reminiscent of Dutch still life paintings results in a glorification of women's sexuality. By literally placing this issue on a pedestal, Karcz chooses to address female self-intimacy and masturbation, issues often absent in public platforms, instead of referring to the intimacy experienced with another partner. She here un-

dertakes the study of a sexual object without resorting to the objectification or representation of the female body. By focusing the viewer's attention to these tools for sexual pleasure, Karcz creates a colourful commentary that celebrates women's sexuality and independence.

LAS VEGAS SERIES

Jonah Migicovsky

*Montreal, Quebec
Concordia University
Major in Photography*

*Inkjet prints
16" x 20" per photograph*

2012

In this series, Jonah Migicovsky undertakes a photographic study of the infamous vacation spot Las Vegas. More present than the casinos and nightclubs is the ever-looming promise of sex and nude female bodies, as documented in Migicovsky's photographs. By using the camera as a tool to examine the sexual culture of the city, the artist asks important questions about how women are objectified in advertisements for sexual interaction and in such occupations as stripper and escort. The notion that sex sells is paramount in Las Vegas, and ultimately in contemporary media and culture, which is largely depicted here. Viewed through a feminist lens, the artist conveys the objectification and loss of identity women as well as men undergo in the media, and the process of reducing a person to a simple "type."





Ways of Being Done and Doing
sculpture, embellishments, masonite, cloth, paint, metal pipes

INTERVIEW WITH JESSE HARROD

February 5, 2014

Originally from Toronto, Jesse Harrod obtained her MFA in the Fiber and Material Studies Department at the School of The Art Institute of Chicago and she also holds a BFA from the Nova Scotia School of Art and Design University. Now living in Virginia, Harrod is an Assistant Professor of Fibers at the School of Art and Design and Art History at James Madison University. Valérie Frappier, Ylara's Head Writer, had the chance to talk with Harrod over the phone about her fibre-based art practice and discuss the political and social facets of her work.

Valérie Frappier: First off, could you describe the themes that you explore in your art practice?

Jesse Harrod: I think there's a variety of things that I'm exploring. But ultimately, I'm often thinking about this idea of becoming, and as that relates to gender expression, identity, puberty, class, labour, and colonization—as referenced

through a lot of the textiles that I work with. And then, I'm also interested in the materials themselves and what kind of role they play in transcending or questioning: What is art? What is good taste, what is bad taste? What is appropriate or inappropriate?

VF: It seems that notions of value are being addressed through the use of DIY culture and

kitsch aesthetics in your work. How are these questions of hierarchies important to you?

JH: They're so important to me. I think that there are these ideas around what is art and what isn't art, and a lot of that is really entrenched in patriarchy. It's very much related to gender and to these notions of where value is placed, and how we prescribe value to objects and to modes of making. This is really linked to issues around feminism, and gender and so on and so forth. So I think that when you think about hobbyist materials or when people talk about hobbyists in a contemporary context, and they speak about them disparagingly—which people often do, particularly in the art world—oftentimes, were talking about women in rural settings and women that are making for pleasure. But oftentimes, it's also a form of escape, and so it becomes a critique on class and on gender. And I think that that gets overlooked when people make those kinds of assumptions or make those kinds of sweeping statements. Ultimately, I think that your material choices, the way in which you approach making and the techniques that you use all relate back to issues of class and issues of gender. And because the art world is so steeped in this notion of the canon, which is inherently white men, it becomes this critique of the Other.

VF: Your work fluctuates between simultaneously vast and intricate installations and smaller detailed pieces. How do you find scale affects your work?

JH: Scale is huge and I like huge scale (laughs). Ultimately, I'm happiest when I'm working at a really large scale because I really want the work to consume the viewer. I feel that sculpture only exists in relationship to the body, and that your body becomes a part of the work. When the work forces the body to respond in different ways—whether that's stand back, look up, look down, move around—you are ultimately interacting with the work in a physical way, which is really important to me. And I like when one's body feels enveloped, or immersed, or overwhelmed by the work, particularly when I'm making work that's of questionable taste. I feel like it can be unsettling for the viewer in a way that a discreet little painting can't be. I like to work as big as I can work—that lends itself to all sorts of other challenges.

VF: Was the 1970s the golden age for feminism and feminist art? If not, when do you think it was?

JH: Oh, I don't think it was. I mean, I think that it was a turning point in terms of the art world and I think that

there were probably other turning points. But, in fibres in particular, the feminist art movement of the 60s and 70s is really significant because we saw fibre coming into the contemporary art world. And we saw the inclusion of work that had fibres directly challenging what was considered art. I think that that's a really significant point in fibre history in particular, and there were lots of men and women who were doing that work at the time, and that's not my era—I'm too young for that. But I think that in general, particularly in North America, it is a very interesting time to look back on with what was happening politically and socially. There were just so many massive shifts. It's easy to sort of overlook those now, but when I do the research and think of what sorts of things have changed... You know, this is sort of a grim fact, but in the early 70s, it became illegal for a husband to rape his wife. And that's something we just take for granted now. Or as a woman, you couldn't rent an apartment on your own, or have a credit card. So, I find that that shift happened so so quickly and so dramatically. But in terms of a golden era for feminism, I think that's yet to come. I think that that hasn't happened yet. We haven't seen a truly inclusive form of feminism. I think it's still predominantly a white movement, and the historical relationship that feminism has with issues around race is well-documented and obviously hugely problematic. And I think there's still a really really long way to go.

VF: Part two of this question is: Why do you think the world still needs feminism today? Perhaps if you could point towards that.

JH: Oh wow, because we have a long way to go! When I think of feminism today, it is much more inclusive and I think that there are—or at least I hope, I really hope—more and more young women and men embracing the ideas of feminism. And I certainly know a lot of young men and women who see it as being important, and valid, and valuable in their work in regards to what they're doing. You know, living in America is so different than being home in Canada. Not to say that Canada is perfect by any stretch of the imagination—I know that there are all sorts of problems that are happening there. But being sort of new living in America, the amount of derogatory problematics—I mean, just with the recent election and the ideas around a woman's body were just unbelievable. And there are obvious instruments for people to address those kinds of comments that are being made. I don't know... I think that there is so much room for improve-

ment. And I could get into the nitpicky things like: women are still not paid the same as men, access to health care, access to child care—all those kinds of things are still very much up for debate. I feel like abortion is always possibly on the chopping block. And I feel like there is this particularly strong right-wing backlash over the last few years that is really scary. It's also like living in the South is a whole other thing.

VF: And you've been in the States now for quite a few years?

JH: I've been here for five years. I've been in Virginia for a year and a half, and then I was in Chicago before that.

VF: Do you consider your art to be activism? And do you think that art can ever be divorced from politics?

JH: No. I don't actually think that art can ever be divorced from politics. As much as a lot of people would like it to be or think that their art is not political, I think it's always political on some level or another. And sometimes it's more obvious and more in your face, and other times it's more subtle. But ultimately, I think it's always political. And I think that that is something that's really hard for some people to wrap their heads around and come to terms with. And is my art activism? I mean, it's hard because I have done activism. I have participated and continue to participate in activism when it's sort of more obvious and direct. But I think yes, ultimately in my work, I'm taking into consideration all of the things that I think about in relationship to the activist work I do, the social justice work I do. And my work is questioning and thinking about all of those things in a visual way—manifesting themselves in different ways than participating in a protest or the other ways I've done community work.

VF: How important is teaching and collaboration to you in regards to art making?

JH: Oh, I love teaching (laughs). Which is really nice, because you spend a certain amount of your life thinking, "Okay I'm going to do this thing," and when you finally get there, and you do it and you're like, "Oh, I like this." Okay, that's good because sometimes you don't know. It could be really terrible if you get there and you're like, "God, this sucks." No, I love teaching. I love being with students. And I feel that through my teaching—and I could really see this in the last couple of years—when you're working adjunct, it's hard because you're sort of moving all over the place. When I was working adjunct, I was teaching four,

five or six classes a year which was really challenging. But being full-time now, I'm able to really guide into my research for a class. So a lot of my practice—the work that I'm making in my studio—is so connected to the research that I'm doing for my teaching. It's such a gift, you know, to be able to see that connection. And I think that whenever I'm teaching people how to do a technique or to think about a process, it's just forcing me to consider how I'm using that process or technique. And so I think that that's enriching in ways that I never knew it would be.

VF: Is there a piece of advice that you give to all of your students and could you share it with us?

JH: That's a big question (laughs). Well, there's a piece of advice that I was given. I think that when you're in school, just to be a sponge and try to take every opportunity to learn, participate and just engage. Someone told me to say yes to everything when I was in grad school. They told me, "For the next few years, just say yes to everything." And I did. And it was such a good piece of advice. At a certain point, you have to stop saying yes to everything but for those first couple years after grad school, it was really helpful to just be open in that way. I guess that the other thing is to find good friends, good people that will be honest with you about your work and be hard on you. And oh, there's so many things that I want to say. And just to be kind. I know that sounds really cheesy, but I really believe that the art world can do with a lot more kindness and generosity of spirit, rather than of objects or money. I mean, that's not a spirit. What else would I say? I guess one of the things that I hear a lot from my students when they graduate is, "Oh, thank God I don't have to read anymore" (laughs). You know? "I can stop thinking for awhile." And it's just so depressing to hear that. You have to be constantly engaged with your practice.

VF: Who are some artists, either historical or contemporary, that have influenced you?

JH: Wow, okay. Faith Wilding. I think she's amazing. She has a big show in Chicago right now. Tanya Aguiñiga, she's an American artist. She was raised in Tijuana, and she does a lot of community-based work. She'll make art objects, and she also does furniture stuff—she has a very varied art practice. Who else would I say? Allyson Mitchell has been the biggest influence on my life, personally and creatively. I think she definitely takes incredible risks and has this really interesting background as not being trained as an artist. And she's Canadian.



Pensile Arrangements 1, 2, 3
paracord, metal rings, beads, cock rings

2013/14

VF: Yes! Woohoo!

JH: Yes, she's awesome. There's so many people. I really love John Waters. He doesn't make objects—he's a filmmaker and a writer—and I truly love his work, and his persona, and his sort of performance of himself. If he started a religion, I would join it (laughs). And there's a lot of musicians. I know this is so cheesy, but David Bowie... Like, I love David Bowie. I wrote my thesis on David Bowie. (Laughs). I think he is a god. There are a million more but that's maybe a good sampling.

VF: This is a great sampling, yes.

JH: I would also say that when I think of artists that I love, there are poets, and writers, and filmmakers, and musi-

cians, and visual artists. I really try to engage in that kind of circular way and think about how someone like David Bowie could influence my work. Or how Chris Kraus, who's a writer. Or, you know, Jess Arndt—she's a poet and a writer in New York—she really influences my work. This kind of myriad of places that I'm thinking from.

VF: And how you can get inspiration from really any kind of artistic expression.

JH: Exactly.

VF: I have one last question, maybe the most important one. If you were a mythical creature, which one would you be?

JH: Are there options for me to choose from?

VF: Nope.

JH: Oh wow, I don't know! (Laughs). If I was a mythical creature... I think I would definitely be something in the water. I would definitely be some kind of water-bound mythical creature.

VF: Maybe like a mermaid?

JH: Maybe a mermaid, yeah. The water is the place that I belong.

Jesse Harrod currently has her macramé series "Pensile Arrangements" on display in the "Queer Threads: Crafting Identity and Community" exhibition at the Leslie Lohman Museum of Gay & Lesbian Art in New York until March 16th. In April, she will be exhibiting new works in both a show at the American University Museum in Washington, DC and at Charlotte Street in Kansas City.

BUST

Julie Villeneuve



Montreal, Quebec
Concordia University
Specialization in Fibre and
Studio Arts, Specialization in
Ceramics

Porcelain and earthenware
12" x 18" x 23.6"

2013

While both a testament to the traditional craft of ceramics and a nod to fibre practices, *Bust* is an investigation of the implications of fashion towards women. Villeneuve is interested in the ambiguity of the corset, as a constraining garment during its historical pinnacle on the one hand, and as a contemporary symbol of sexual empowerment on the other. This detailed work invites the viewer's gaze to admire its craftsmanship and material process, the artist here implic-

itly paralleling the way we admire women for their appearances and their bodies. The viewer's gaze is then confounded by the embellished painted vulvas that adorn the porcelain surface, at first glance appearing to be mere floral motifs, which address the historic repression of female sexuality. Villeneuve's work thereby conveys the "beheading" legacy of oppression towards women, while also pointing to the double standards that continue to afflict women today.

COSMOPOLITAN MAGAZINE 2007-2012

Megan Moore

Montreal, Quebec
Concordia University
Marjor in Photography

Embroidery on cloth
(2x) 15" x 12", 16" x 11",
11" x 8.5"

2013

Moore's series is a collection of headlines from Cosmo, a magazine geared towards young women that speaks of relationship advice, sex tips and beauty regimes. These works make use of feminized modes of production; namely embroidery, to mimic the aesthetics of home decor and the domestic qualities of textile art. Moore draws on these elements of domesticity to reconsider the gender roles they imply and the societal construct of femininity. By demonstrating the ways Cosmo reinforces heteronormativity and female body image anxiety, the artist points to the distorted ways femininity is represented in the media. Juxtaposing the decorative and "girly" aesthetic of the embroidery with the sensationalist nature of the headlines, Moore probes into what it means to be feminine and looks at how our society teaches these ideals to its young women.



AUTO-IDENTIFICATION

Laïla Mestari

*Casablanca, Maroc
Université Concordia
Majeure en Fibres and
Material Practices,
Mineure en Women's Studies*

*Impression sur tissu
50" x 30" par pièce*

2013

Cette œuvre de Laïla Mestari présente deux autoportraits photographiques imprimés sur tissu. Le tissage étant l'une des plus anciennes formes d'identification de l'humanité, elle cherche à créer un dialogue entre ce code visuel ancestral et les modes d'identification propres à aujourd'hui. Le type de textile utilisé provient des campagnes environnantes de Tanger au Maroc, où les femmes de la région le portent comme un pagne. Ce lien entre le tissage et le lieu d'origine de l'artiste est juxtaposé avec l'apparence de passeport de ses autoportraits. Le fait qu'elle semble être emprisonnée derrière les bandes colorées met en relief l'encombrement de la nécessité de classification, que ce soit par le genre, la sexualité, la culture, l'origine ou le statut social. Laïla Mestari subvertit les codes visuels sur lesquels nous formulons nos hypothèses et notre confort identitaire, et espère encourager une réflexion critique sur les mécanismes qui les construisent.



BUS STOP

Sophie Morro

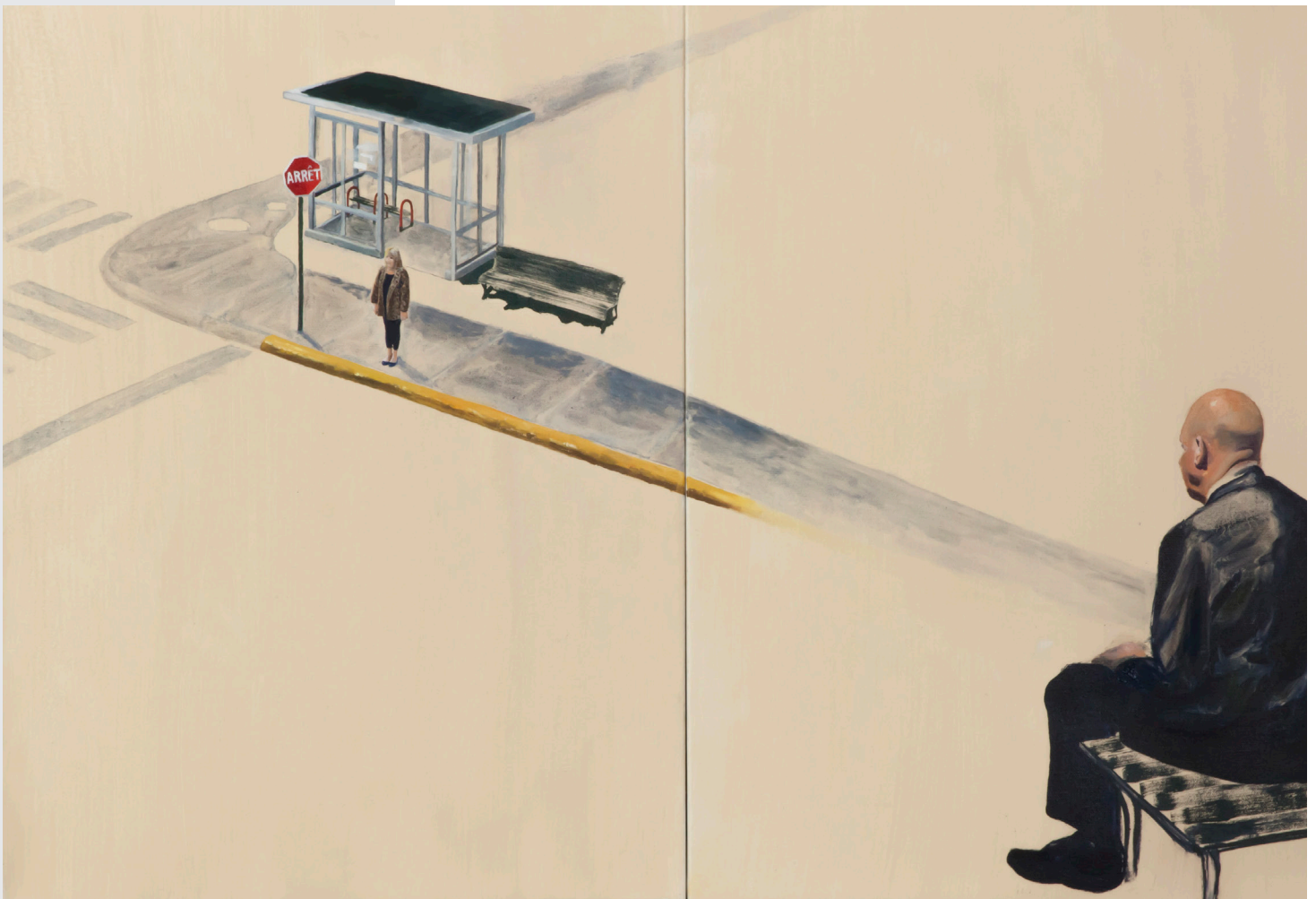
*San Clemente, California
Concordia University
Major in Studio Arts*

*Oil on canvas
18" x 24" per panel*

2013

Interested in channelling the nuances of everyday life, this painted diptych by Sophie Morro depicts a middle-aged man observing a faraway female lost in thought. This male figure can be interpreted as preying on the oblivious solitary woman from his high vantage point, however he can also be interpreted as being lost in an innocent reverie of his own, conjuring the woman from his imagination. In contemporary society, women are largely taught to be aware of poten-

tial male sexual predators, especially when in public spaces, and the violating threat they may pose. Depending on the viewer, and perhaps even on their gender, *Bus Stop* can represent a menacing situation to one viewer and a completely ordinary scene to another. The way in which this scene can severely shift in its meaning is reflective of how one experiences the world around them, and how gender delineates these experiences.



A GIRL WALKS INTO A BAR: THE FEMINIST POTENTIAL FOR RAPE JOKES

Anna Frey

*Montreal, Quebec
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Cultural Studies*

2013

Introduction

In the study of communication, humour has been theorized to be a socially acceptable outlet for complicated or unpopular feelings that would otherwise have no available release.¹ However, the question is often raised whether all topics should be available for comedians to cover, or whether the moral weight of certain subjects is too heavy to be dealt with through laughter.² I am speaking here, in particular, about rape. In the case of misogynistic rape jokes, the divisive power of humour is especially poignant. Given that, I argue that feminist rape humour has the potential to unify and empower all people to be aware of and work to end rape culture.

Through a comparative analysis of two rape jokes—one negative, one positive—the function of humour regarding rape will be discussed. First, I will present the controversy surrounding Daniel Tosh’s use of a rape joke in response to a heckler during one of his sets at a comedy club. I will explore the question of whether rape jokes can ever be considered funny by studying the major actors of these arguments. Drawing extensively from Dr. John Meyer’s article, “Humour as a Double-Edged Sword: Four Functions of Humour in Communication,” I will dissect Tosh’s jokes which centre on rape and elucidate their theoretical framework. The second example of rape humour will be taken from stand-up

comic and comedy writer John Mulaney. I will unpack the differences between the two jokes and ultimately explain how feminist rape jokes can work to dismantle rape culture if they follow Mulaney’s example.

Rape culture

Before discussing the jokes themselves, however, a brief contextualization of the topic and its relevance to our current cultural climate is in order. Rape culture is most easily understood as a culture in which sexual assault is normalized, expected, and excused.³ Sexual assault can be perpetrated against and by people of any gender, but the context of this paper will focus on heterosexual acts where a man aggresses a woman. Men do not typically live with the same fear of sexual assault as women do, and therefore are not as negatively affected in their everyday lives by rape culture. Indeed, the prevalence of sexual violence against women in North America is staggering: reports have stated that a rape occurs in the United States every two minutes.⁴ Even more disturbing is the notion that, due to the vast amount of non-reported rapes, statistics like these are considered to be on the low end of the spectrum.⁵ When we consider the humiliating ways in which many sexual assault survivors are treated when they do report their experiences to the police, such as by being

asked how many sexual partners they have previously had or how much alcohol they typically consume, it is not surprising that less than half of all rapes go unreported.⁶

Cases which have recently gained major media attention, such as the Steubenville trial and Rehtaeh Parsons' suicide, illustrate the cruel and sexist ways in which women can be treated after an assault.⁷ In our North American cultural community, some of the most pervasive myths concerning rape are "the idea that 'no' really means 'yes'; that women can resist rape if they wish; that in most cases the victim is promiscuous; and that women falsely report rape to protect their reputations or because they are angry at someone."⁸ These myths are harmful because they shift the blame from the attacker to the survivor, simultaneously silencing the (statistically female) survivor and reinforcing the notion that rape is not a serious crime. This, as well as other factors, contributes to the normalization of rape.

Daniel Tosh

It is in this overwhelming social context that Daniel Tosh, a stand-up comedian, emerged on the comedy scene in Montreal in 2000, landing himself a spot on *The Late Show with David Letterman* a year later. Since then, Tosh has developed a reputation for insensitivity in his routines. One particularly crude joke of his details how he pranked his sister by swapping the pepper spray in her purse for silly string, a switch she only discovers when trying to ward off a male attacker. He mimics her calling him after being raped, saying that he really got her, and "that really hurt."⁹ Tosh claims that he and his sister both have sick senses of humour, implying that she would appreciate the comedy in her own assault.¹⁰ In this instance, which can be found on YouTube, the joke ends with the audience laughing approvingly along with Tosh.

Those who became familiar with Tosh's abrasive presence on-stage were not surprised when, in the summer of 2012, a blog post surfaced detailing an insult hurled by Tosh to a female audience member during a live performance. There is no video of this event, but multiple news sources report that Tosh was expanding on the notion that rape jokes are "always amusing" when one woman in the audience shouted out that rape jokes were, actually, never funny.¹¹ Tosh retaliated immediately, asking the audience: "wouldn't it be funny if that girl got raped by, like, five guys right now? Like right now? What if a bunch of guys just raped her?"¹² It was in the middle of this

speech that the heckler and her friend left the club, stopping to complain with the manager on their way out. The manager apologized for the verbal assault and offered the heckler and her friend free tickets to any future show at the Laugh Factory, though allegedly stated they would understand if the two women never returned.¹³

A number of tensions developed as a result of this event. The five main actors were Tosh, the heckler, the rest of the audience, the manager of the Laugh Factory comedy club, and—later—Internet commenters. Tosh's comedy history makes it clear that this was not an isolated incident of misogyny, but just one example of a worldview developed over his lifetime and career. Though relatively little is known about the heckler, her frank objection to Tosh's content was certainly a feminist act, whether she self-identifies as a feminist or not. The shocking inertia of the remaining audience members demonstrates Dr. Meyer's claims that laughter is a social action that can unify a group of people around accepted norms.¹⁴

It was these norms that were called into question in the weeks after the incident, as details and opinions spread across the Internet. The two major camps of commenters were those who supported Tosh and who believed that comedy could be used to handle any topic, no matter how polemic; and those who identified as feminist, mainly women, and who believed that such sensitive material should be treated with respect. Dr. Elise Kramer has found, after conducting an intensive study of Internet conversations about rape jokes, that these exchanges, "quickly develop, in many cases, into [arguments] over free speech."¹⁵ In fact, she reports that all participants, whether they are pro or anti-rape jokes, will admit to the disturbing nature of sexual assault.¹⁶ It is only in the communicative representations of the act that disagreement is found: "The distinction being made is one between the joke and the contents of the joke. The framing of a joke, [pro-rape humour] commenters argue, somehow transforms a disturbing image into a funny one, without changing the image's inherently disturbing nature."¹⁷ It would seem, then, that this transformation from a physical act to a communicative act occurs more easily for some people than others. An individual's personal experience with sexual assault may greatly affect this, as those with bodily memories of an event might find it difficult to treat that event as purely hypothetical. People who have questioned the misogyny implicit in rape culture, whether they have survived rape or not, will be more likely to view rape humour as a destructive social force.

What does humour do?

In his essay "Humour as a Double-Edged Sword," Dr. Meyer states that, "laughter produces simultaneously a strong fellow-feeling among participants and joint aggressiveness against outsiders."¹⁸ Although we may believe this to be true in theory, it takes quantitative studies like those conducted by Katheryn M. Ryan and Jeanne Kanjorski, and Mónica Romero-Sanchez's team, to translate Dr. Meyer's statement into concrete data. Both of these studies tested whether a higher enjoyment of sexist humour in men would correlate with a greater likelihood of self-reported aggression and rape proclivity. In line with Dr. Meyer's understanding of laughter as a social phenomenon,¹⁹ Ryan and Kanjorski found that "men who were high in the likelihood to sexually harass and who enjoyed the sexist cartoons together were likely to model each others' sexually harassing behaviour when given the opportunity."²⁰ Conversely, both investigations concluded that men who reported less amusement when faced with sexist humour presented a lower likelihood to support or practice sexual aggression against women.^{21,22} Placed in the context of a comedy nightclub, this research lends itself to the theory that pro-rape ideologies would have been fostered and encouraged among the crowd at Tosh's show. According to Romero-Sanchez, constantly reinforcing the positive valuation of sexual assault through humour has the danger of reinforcing the normalization of rape and sexism in the social sphere.²³

In light of these two studies, which helped establish the link between the enjoyment of sexist humour and the performance of sexist behaviour, it becomes valid to explore the existence of feminist rape humour. Ryan and Kanjorski suggest that, "one avenue for reducing sexual and physical relationship violence may be in expressing intolerance for sexist humour and rape-supportive beliefs,"²⁴ but shy away from any discussion of anti-rape comedy. I suggest that by nurturing feminist humour, communities have the opportunity to create a social context that lessens the prevalence of sexual assault and increases support systems for survivors.

In "Dissecting the Frog," an online article by Whitney Phillips, the author claims that "what a person laughs at reveals who that person is."²⁵ If laughter is used as a form of social control, as Dr. Meyer suggests it can be, are we not responsible for what we choose to laugh at? If, as Ryan and Kanjorski and Romero-Sanchez have shown, laughing at sexist humour produces conditions in which

men feel comfortable admitting to non-consensual desires, do we not have a duty to shift our laughter and our humour away from the victims, and towards those who choose to do them harm? In his description of superiority theory, Dr. Meyer writes, "[Gary Alan] Fine has described how sexual humour sets and enforces the relevant social norms in a culture by ridiculing 'lower' forms of behaviour or language from the perspective of society's mainstream."²⁶ He offers no elaboration on what type of "lower" behaviour is being referenced here, but the assumption is that jokes targeting homosexuality, transsexualism, and sex all work to increase stigma around marginalized groups, and to deter anyone from joining them. There is no reason why rape can't also be included in the list of "low" sexual behaviours that deserve to be derided. If humour can be such an effective tool of alienation, perhaps comedy can intervene as a driving force of feminist social change. But what can we consider to be a feminist rape joke?

John Mulaney

As a stand-up comic and former writer for *Saturday Night Live*, Mulaney offers an excellent example of a feminist rape joke. In one monologue he recounts the anecdote of walking through a New York City train transfer corridor at 2:00 a.m., accompanied only by a woman he didn't know, who was walking a few paces ahead of him.²⁷ Mulaney comments on the woman's uneasiness as she began looking over her shoulder at him and quickened her pace. In this joke, Mulaney positions himself as a man of such small stature that it is inconceivable to him that anyone would perceive him as dangerous. The joke climaxes with Mulaney chasing this woman down the corridor, only to realize once he caught up to her that she was, in fact, running away from him, and not, as he had thought, towards an approaching train. He finishes by poking fun at himself, reiterating the obliviousness with which most men perceive rape culture: "In her eyes, I'm an adult. And adults rape each other, kind of a lot... But I'm not like that. [Mimes a stabbing motion, and a pelvic thrust.] I'm not a man."²⁸ It is his own ignorance that is being mocked here, while he completely rationalizes the woman's behaviour.

Though Mulaney's depiction purports an absolute unawareness of the effects of rape culture within the context of the joke, the humour wouldn't work without the crucial insight he offers near its end. His emphasis on "man" shows an understanding of the conditions of rape culture, which positions all men as aggressors and all women as

victims. As Dr. Kramer suggests, “according to this perspective, women are inherently rape-able, which leads to a certain blurring between the categories of ‘rape victim’ and ‘woman.’”²⁹ When Mulaney states, “I’m not a man,” he is pleading against the cultural positioning of all men as potential rapists in the eyes of women. However, his assertion of un-manliness is served to the audience as a joke, and their laughter works as an acknowledgement of the essentializing nature of rape culture.

Not once in Mulaney’s skit is the woman the butt of the joke. Although he describes the woman’s fear, it is the clueless man who is the target of the joke specifically because he does not understand why the woman is justified in being afraid. In this way, the monologue is heavily informed by Meyer’s superiority theory of humour. Instead of positioning himself as the superior party, Mulaney uses his own faulty behaviour as an example of what not to do, while the woman is represented as adhering to the social norms created by rape culture. In one joke under three minutes long, Mulaney manages to highlight the pervasiveness of rape culture, shame men who rape, and deplore the fact that women are forced to live in fear of even the most harmless men.

Similarities and differences between instances

When we look at the similarities between Tosh and Mulaney’s jokes, it becomes clear that stand up comedy is a highly variable medium that has no inherent ideological position. Both Tosh and Mulaney are straight, white men under 40, living in North America. They both benefit from a certain level of success, and are generally well known across the continent. The performances detailed above both took place in comedy nightclubs in front of live audiences. Those in attendance were people with expectations of laughter, and who may or may not have had previous knowledge of the type of humour they would be encountering, but nonetheless paid to enter. Tosh and Mulaney both employ generally casual modes of address, and neither of them is known for any major use of physical humour.

Despite these contextual similarities, Tosh and Mulaney experienced vastly different reactions to their rape jokes. It is clear, then, that the controversy occurred over the content of Tosh’s communicative act, and not over where, when or by whom the act was performed. Tosh’s language is considered to have *done* something in the crowd, and the larger audience of the Internet, to have garnered such

an impassioned response. Kramer expands on this theory of words producing action: “The performative nature of rape jokes and the arguments about them would not be possible without humour ideologies that allow jokes to go beyond individually instantiated pragmatic acts and enable them to carry social and political valence.”³⁰ In encouraging his fans to critically and specifically laugh at women who have been raped, Tosh positioned himself as a certain type of person, and forced the audience, in their choice to laugh or not, to also position themselves on the subject.³¹ In this case, the audience’s public reaction defined what they considered to be acceptable behaviour.

Choosing not to laugh, or choosing to openly oppose a joke, can be a risky political act. The heckler at Tosh’s show suffered significantly more emotional duress having verbalised her displeasure than she likely would have had she remained silent. Perhaps, especially in the context of a comedy show, “the person who does not merely fail to laugh but refuses to laugh is violating a sacred social rule by failing to cooperate with [their] interlocutor.”³² Being a woman in a room full of men laughing at the image of you “being raped by, like, five guys right now,” is not a safe position to be in, especially considering the studies that prove that those men would rank high in the likelihood to be aggressors of sexual violence. This circumstance is evidence of the concept of misogyny as norm created by Tosh in the Laugh Factory.

According to Dr. Meyer, “differentiation and enforcement humour show the violation, though laughable, to be an unacceptable violation that needs to be focused on, corrected, or avoided in the future.”³³ We can easily apply this quote to Mulaney’s anecdote, which uses humour to take down rape culture. Sexual violence is an unacceptable violation of a woman’s body. What is laughable is the continued reinforcement of this rape culture as “normal,” a perspective that certainly needs to be corrected.

Conclusion

The dissection of two jokes told by stand up comedians Daniel Tosh and John Mulaney make it clear that there is a wide diversity in humour concerning rape. Misogynist rape humour, as I have labelled it, uses laughter to mock the experiences of women in rape culture and, whether overtly or implicitly, promotes the use of sexual aggression by men. When people speak of “rape jokes,” this is typically the genre to which they are referring. By introducing Mulaney to the conversation, however, the

total feminist refusal of any humour involving rape is complicated. Through an analysis of his stand-up routine, we can see that all of the oppressive power wielded by misogynist rape jokes can be reversed onto the rapists themselves. Humour is a useful method of delivery for sensitive conversations, as it has the power to put people at ease and to create unity within a group.³⁴ I call for the creative use of humour and jokes to bind women and feminists of all genders together to denounce the critical level of rape in our communities.

1 John C. Meyer, "Humor as a Double-Edged Sword: Four Functions of Humor in Communication," *Communication Theory* 10 (2000): 318.

2 Elise Kramer, "The Playful Is Political: The Metapragmatics Of Internet Rape-Joke Arguments," *Language In Society* 40.2 (2011): 138.

3 Ann Burnett et al., "Communicating/Muting Date Rape: A Co-Cultural Theoretical Analysis Of Communication Factors Related to Rape Culture On a College Campus," *Journal of Applied Communication Research* 37.4 (2009): 466.

4 *Ibid.*, 465.

5 *Ibid.*

6 *Ibid.*

7 Marco Oved and Laura Kane, "Rape Culture: What Do Steubenville, Rehtaeh Parsons and Frosh Chants Have in Common?" *The Star*, accessed Nov. 9, 2013, http://www.thestar.com/news/insight/2013/10/19/rape_culture_what_do_steubenville_rehtaeh_parsons_and_frosh_chants_have_in_common.html.

8 Burnett, "Communicating/Muting Date Rape," 466.

9 "Daniel Tosh - rape," 2012, video clip, accessed Nov. 1, 2013, YouTube, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=isSJwdXgho>.

10 *Ibid.*

11 Hollie McKay, "Comedy Central Star Daniel Tosh Slammed for Gang Rape Joke, Tweets Apology," *Fox News*, accessed 01 Nov. 2013, <http://www.foxnews.com/entertainment/2012/07/11/comedy-central-star-daniel-tosh-slammed-for-rape-joke/>.

12 "So a Girl Walks into a Comedy Club..." *Cookies for Breakfast*, accessed Nov. 1, 2013, <http://breakfastcookie.tumblr.com/post/26879625651/so-a-girl-walks-into-a-comedy-club>.

13 *Ibid.*

14 Meyer, "Humor as a Double-Edged Sword," 317.

15 Kramer, "The Playful Is Political," 157.

16 *Ibid.*, 141.

17 *Ibid.*, 142.

18 Meyer, "Humor as a Double-Edged Sword," 317.

19 *Ibid.*, 310.

20 Kathryn M. Ryan and Jeanne Kanjorski, "The Enjoyment Of Sexist Humor, Rape Attitudes, And Relationship Aggression In College Students," *Sex Roles* 38.9/10 (1998): 745.

21 *Ibid.*, 753.

22 Mónica Romero-Sánchez, Mercedes Durán, Hugo Carretero-Dios, Jesús L. Megías and Miguel Moya, "Exposure To Sexist Humor And Rape Proclivity: The Moderator Effect Of Aversiveness Ratings," *Journal Of Interpersonal Violence* 25.12 (2010): 2345.

23 *Ibid.*, 2340.

24 Ryan and Kanjorski, "The Enjoyment Of Sexist Humor, Rape Attitudes, And Relationship Aggression In College Students," 753.

25 Whitney Phillips, "Dissecting the Frog," *The New Inquiry*, accessed Nov. 1, 2013, <http://thenewinquiry.com/essays/dissecting-the-frog/>.

26 Meyer, "Humor as a Double-Edged Sword," 315.

27 Lindy West, "How to Make a Rape Joke," *Jezebel*, accessed Nov. 1, 2013, <http://jezebel.com/5925186/how-to-make-a-rape-joke>.

28 *Ibid.*

29 Kramer, "The Playful Is Political," 148.

30 *Ibid.*, 163.

31 *Ibid.*, 138.

32 *Ibid.*, 153.

33 Meyer, "Humor as a Double-Edged Sword," 325.

34 *Ibid.*, 320 and 323.

BOUNDARIES

Alysia Piatkowski

Oakville, Ontario
Concordia University
Major in Studio Arts

*Pouring medium
with acrylic on canvas*
42" x 15", 36.5" x 14", 43" x 15"

2013

Noticing the manner in which she was becoming more reserved as she got older, Alysia Piatkowski wanted to address the suppression of emotions she was experiencing. Influenced by a specific ideal of what womanhood should aspire to be, the artist wanted to address the notion that women should repress their ideas and emotions in order to be successful in society. In this painted triptych, Piatkowski renders colourful and fluid imagery as a reminder to herself and to her fellow women to allow for the flow of feelings in everyday life and to value the importance of self-expression. The vivid colours and overflowing manner of the paint off the canvas signify the inherent emotionality of beings and the breaking of set boundaries, whether those be gender, sexual or emotional barriers.





GENDER MENDER: AN XXY REVIEW

Miia Piironen

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2013

From a purely organizational standpoint, there are plenty of reasons for the gender binary. The system delineates male and female characteristics as separate and static, ostensibly facilitating a natural and sustainable social order, while readily assigning roles and packaging gender identity. It can be convenient, that is, when it works. The problem with the system is that it bifurcates an establishment with numerous variants. What should resemble a scale becomes more of a lineup. The question becomes how many individuals will be, or are already, wrongly condemned by this system each and every day?

For those who bravely feel that sex and gender are a scrambled egg, Lucía Puenzo's film *XXY* (2007) is a work of transformative power. What happens when a third sex is introduced, one without accompanying gender cues? The whole film exists in a sort of grey area, one so uncharted that expectations, or rather predictions, are next to meaningless. *XXY* tells the story of Alex Kraken (Inés Efron), a fifteen year-old living with an intersex condition in rural Uruguay. While she possesses both male and female sex organs, Alex has been raised as a girl, taking medication

to suppress her more male characteristics. Although androgynous, Alex is typically male in her behaviour, which is listless and incredibly aggressive. With puberty already underway, her mother Suli (Valeria Berucelli) grows increasingly anxious for Alex, especially when she stops taking her medication. Unbeknownst to both her husband Néstor (Ricardo Darín)—a marine biologist who cares for the region's endangered sea turtles— and Alex, Suli invites Ramiro, an old surgeon friend and his family, to stay with the purpose of convincing Alex to get the surgery that will physically affirm her as a woman. The distress is understandable. Alex's very sex is a scrambled egg. How then can her gender be defined? And what are her parents to expect of her future?

Being an intersex individual is not as rare as its almost complete lack of representation might lead one to assume. According to the Intersex Society of North America, the condition occurs once in every 1,500 births, making it a more common congenital disorder than Cystic Fibrosis.¹ Given that many people are still unfamiliar with the term intersex, this may be surprising. Society has long had an uncomfortable relationship with hermaphroditic figures. The condition's namesake, Hermaphroditus the revered son of Hermes and Aphrodite, embodies one of intersex's only positive representations which have historically been few and far between. Usually, hermaphroditism only makes an appearance in popular culture as something ethereal, alien, often monstrous. However, not all intersex people are hermaphroditic, and indeed, the latter is a term deemed dated by most of the community. There are many forms of intersexuality. The overarching definition is merely a general term used to describe a variety of conditions in which a person is born with atypical reproductive or sexual anatomy.² Perhaps intersex people are so feared in myth and culture because their condition is inherently subversive to a failing system.

As I have noted, *XXY* is something rare. It is one of the first instances in the realm of media I have seen to portray the subject of intersexuality with such thoughtful sensitivity. Indeed, it is the first film that I have ever seen on the subject. The story begins with Ramiro, his wife, and their teenage son Álvaro (Martín Piroyansky) arriving in the Kraken's bucolic island fishing village. Álvaro quickly makes the acquaintance of Alex who immediately proposes that the two of them have sex. He is alarmed by Alex's forthrightness and unnerved by it. What kind of girl acts this way?

In fact Álvaro and Alex are not too different. Both are young outcasts exploring their burgeoning sexuality and as Alex points out, their fathers are actually in the same line of work (well-meaning butchers is the gist). A mutual attraction develops between the two, but it is not the only one that Alex is fostering. She is also developing feelings for her friend Roberta, the daughter of one of Néstor's co-workers. We see this unfolding when Roberta gets in the shower with Alex and the two wash each other's hair. This is one of the film's most loaded scenes, in part because there is no dialogue. Theirs is not a merely homosocial engagement. What their interaction indicates is that Roberta is aware of Alex's difference, and her curiosity does not seem to be biological. Alex's gaze is likewise communicative of a queer discernment. The scene, carried through in a single take, is a disorienting one.

Álvaro's attraction to Alex complicates established notions of sexual orientation. As the film progresses, the idea that Álvaro is gay is raised several times. However, Alex is, to his initial comprehension, a girl. The eventual sexual encounter between the two – potentially the first for both characters – is just as confusing for him as it is for Alex, who may be gay herself. This happens in a scene interrupted by Néstor who is initially deeply distraught by what he witnesses. Alex is the penetrative partner, something neither he nor the audience had little way of anticipating. Thankfully, Alex is able to keep the reaction idle, which is more than can be said for those close to her; for instance, Vando, her best friend, spreads her secret at school. After a restorative visit with Scherer, a former intersex individual now living as a man, Néstor comes to view the event as his child making the choice to shed her female branding. Twice in the film's second act, he refers to her as "my son." It is not until Alex is sexually assaulted by the boys that Vando betrayed her to that Néstor realizes – as Alex does – that living falsely in one world is not a tenable reality. Not when Alex is straddling two.

Although the film is set in Uruguay, *XXY* is an Argentinian production; a country known to be the most progressive state on queer issues in all of Latin America. Of course, this was not always the case. While Argentina remains surpassingly Catholic in its demographic, a rapid secularization of government has seen many developments in the expansion of LGBT rights, several of which directly affect those in the intersex community. Most notably, a new national law now defines gender as "the inner and individual gender experience as each person feels it, which can coincide or not with gender assigned at birth time."³

This is arguably the most progressive legislation of its kind anywhere in the world. The Catholic Church has blocked many social reform bills in the past, underscoring how swiftly the remarkable shift in public perception has occurred. *XXY* certainly seems to have come at a historically opportune moment, and its fearless treatment of intersexuality is still, by any standard, exceptional. This is a quality Puenzo does not allow us to forget. The island village the Krakens inhabit reflects society's isolation of intersex people, whether well-meaning or not (the last thing Alex's parents want is for any harm to come to their child). They have relocated from Argentina so that Alex may grow up with more privacy, but soon learn that cultural anxiety about gender is pervasive and not just restricted to urban centers. "We came here to stop hearing every idiot's opinion," Suli says when Álvaro's mother attempts to goad her into agreeing to surgery.⁴ Suli knows that Alex is tired of being prodded at for the sake of medical curiosity, but she is also weary of constant relocation. Being forced into taking decisive action to situate Alex's gender is just another form of this.

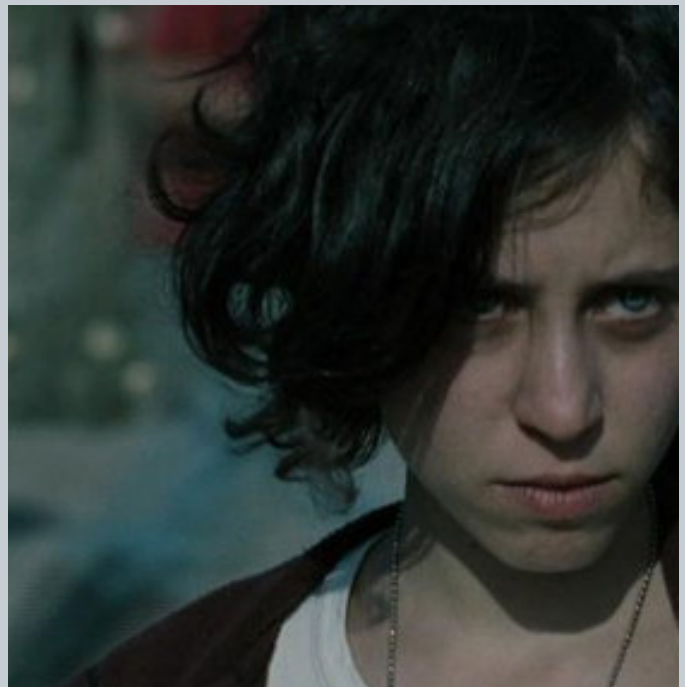
XXY is filled with sumptuous ocean imagery. The sublime nature of the island that surrounds Alex (most notably in the film's opening sequence) speaks to her condition, which is, though uncommon, natural. Puenzo often frames her protagonist with her father's live-in sea creatures, popularly the gender-fluid clownfish. The family name Kraken is another not-too-subtle nod to this sea creature motif. One scene in particular shows it best: Alex is floating in an inlet wearing only her underwear. The image is so tranquil it brings to mind an almost pre-birth stage in her development. She lingers here until she is interrupted by Álvaro who drags her back into a world where the human creations of gender and judgment are realities.

As previously mentioned, the entirety of *XXY* exists in a grey area, reflected in Puenzo's choice of colour palette. Tints are cool and melancholic, creating a foreboding cinematic landscape. The approach is subdued, yet highly dramatic – a dormant energy charges every frame. Because dialogue is minimal in the film, many characters' emotions must be expressed visually. Certain shots, like Suli distractedly cutting carrots, are abrasive, but have their place in the narrative. It also follows an interesting pattern in terms of cogency. For example, when Alex says to Álvaro, *pre-revelation*, that she pities her parents because they are *waiting* all the time, Álvaro does not ask

why. He asks another question instead. The film's editing follows a similar pattern. Cuts are not made in favour of diegesis, but of mood, which results in a somewhat disjointed narrative structure, albeit one that always flows emotionally. Put simply, nothing comes pre-packaged in *XXY*. It is to the viewer to sort out the pieces that Puenzo is supplying.

Is the film successful in portraying intersexuality in a new and insightful way? There can be no doubt. However, this is not something the film establishes through its central character, because Alex is so fiercely cautious and off-putting she shuts out even the viewer. It goes without saying that few will identify with her. Rather, it is her parents, Suli in particular, that the audience can see themselves in. Their behavior, despite having been thrust into a difficult situation, is supportive and emblematic of new accepting currents of thought in regards to the intersex community.

Though uncommon for film criticism, perhaps *XXY* should have been longer. At only 91 minutes, the film lacks the screen-time required to create nuance in a protagonist that needed it. It is not to say that Efron is in any way deficient in her performance. She has an extremely challenging role and, for the most part, she triumphs. Her body is repeatedly scrutinized throughout the film. At one point she is shown inspecting it – as we can only imagine she has done countless times before. However, virtual-



ly nothing is revealed of Alex's life in Argentina, and she is rarely seen outside of her inner circle. Similarly, the discourse on her condition is frustratingly fragmented. Alex never speaks of it at any length with Álvaro or her parents, which is only undercut by the fact that we are never shown the critical exchange she has with Vando. Her journal provides us with a rare interior mirror. It contains crudely drawn images of mutant-like creatures with ambiguous and frightening genitalia, clearly indicative of Alex's tormented psyche regarding her condition. We glimpse her vulnerability here and, in a way, it is eerily prophetic of her sexual assault. Despite this, Alex is never fleshed out in the way she needs to be.

Also problematic is the film's assumption that the whole of its audience is readily familiar with intersexuality. Little is explained in the way of Alex's diagnosis and what we are given perpetuates the negative stereotype that intersex people are simple hermaphrodites. There is, however, a level of redemption to this. Puenzo must be commended for her refusal to show Alex in the full flesh. Such a shot would clearly be exploitative and possibly alienating for much of the intersex community in which variation abounds. In lieu, one of the film's final shots dwells on Álvaro's reaction to Alex's body, which communicates to us clemency, and even (dare I say it) empathy.

From her father's book Alex dully reads: "In all vertebrates, including the human being, the female sex is dominant in an evolutionary and embryological sense." This is one of several hints the film offers that Alex may be making the decision to reject her womanhood permanently. Between her already masculine comportment and Néstor's visit with Scherer, it certainly seems like a distinct possibility. The film's greater realization however, is that for an intersex individual, deciding on a gender is actually not the pressing decision that it first seems to be. Alex is like one of her father's sea turtles. Try though he may, there is little he can do to protect them while still allowing them to be free. In the end, Néstor learns that, one day, he has to let the turtle go. "Until you can choose," as he puts it.⁵ It is Alex, however, who cinches the film's most vital message when she says, "What if there isn't a decision to make?"⁶ It is visibly a new concept for Néstor just as it surely is for many. Here we are also able to see the significance of what her parents have done for her. As Anne Tamar-Mattis notes, Alex has the right to choose because her parents have not taken this away.⁷

XXY is an invaluable teaching tool for anyone with an essentialist view on sex and gender, without a trace of didacticism. Puenzo never lectures. She avoids the egregious exploitation of her subject matter, which is in itself an accomplishment, and she proves it is not always wise to eschew poetics for politics. *XXY* posits that intersex can be its own identity. Alex's sex is not something that needs fixing, and by proxy there is nothing in disrepair about her gender. Decidedly, the real scrambled egg is gender and anxiety. In problematizing an age-old social institution, *XXY* is able to offer a remedy.

1 Intersex Society of North America, "How Common is Intersex?" accessed 21 Sept., 2013, <http://www.isna.org/faq/frequency>.

2 Anne Tamar-Mattis, "Film Review *XXY* Offers a New View of Life in an Intersex Body," *Berkeley Journal of Gender, Law & Justice* 24.1 (2009): 69.

3 Roy Heale, "Argentina's Gender Identity Bill easily passes in Senate," *San Diego Gay and Lesbian News*, accessed 24 Sept., 2013, <http://sdg-ln.com/news/2012/05/14/argentinas-gender-identity-bill-easily-passes-senate>.

4 *XXY*, dir. Lucía Puenzo, 2007, Film Movement, Video.

5 *Ibid.*

6 *Ibid.*

7 Tamar-Mattis, "Film Review *XXY* Offers a New View of Life in an Intersex Body," 73.

BEADING NEW WORLDS: NADIA MYRE, CHRISTI BELCOURT, AND INDIGENOUS WOMEN'S ART OF RESURGENCE

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Michi Saagig Nishnaabeg writer Leanne Betasamosake Simpson posits that “[t]he act of visioning for Nishnaabeg people is a powerful act of resurgence, because these visions create *Shki-kiin*, new worlds ... [However, in] terms of resurgence, vision alone isn't enough. Vision must be couple with intent for transformation, re-creation, intent for resurgence [italics added].”¹ Art-making holds the potential to act as both an actualization of these visions through an intent-guided process of realization, and as an act of resistance through the generation of *Shki-kiin* through the process of creation and in resurgent responses to experiences of the final piece—a stone cast in the water radiating “more subtle waves of disruption that ... echo out from [the place of impact].”²

Nishnaabeg scholar Damien Lee describes ‘resurgence’ as the following:

...[C]olonialism has impacted our relationships to our territories and, by extension, to *Anishinabe-inaadiziwin* (our way of being). We must admit that over 500 years of colonial attacks have ripped holes in the fabric of our relationships within our places. But colonialism was unsuccessful in extermination: we are still here. And today we are darning those holes by reconnecting with our traditions, places and ways of being. Our resurgence is deepening these connections.³

Indigenous resurgence offers a complement to Indigenous resistance: while resistance focuses on the deconstruction and transformation of the Settler state, resurgence

turns this focus inward to the rebuilding of what Simpson calls “the Indigenous inside”⁴ (see Simpson (2013) esp. 24-35 for a more thorough discussion of resistance versus resurgence). Given Indigenous women of many nations’ traditional jurisdiction over certain visual/art-related skills—for instance, the beadwork and quillwork of *Anishinaabekweg* (Anishinaabe women)⁵, and Métis women’s jurisdiction over garment design and adornment⁶—women’s art-making can serve as means of reasserting Indigenous women’s traditional roles and responsibilities—a vehicle of resurgence.

Women’s art-making may also help build resurgence into resistance movements. Indeed, as Andrea Smith underlines, Indigenous feminist/womanist practices “simultaneously [critique] ... the logics of heteropatriarchy within the structures of colonialism and white supremacy, as well as within the structures of [Indigenous] liberation movements designed to dismantle colonialism and white supremacy.”⁷ Hence, Indigenous women’s art-making is helpful in strengthening internal decolonization, a process resurgence authors such as Simpson view as of paramount importance to an empowering resurgence.⁸ Further, Settler⁹ recognition of Indigenous women’s art-making may assist in the decolonization of the Settler gaze which erases the subjectivities of Indigenous women.



fig.1 - Nadia Myre, *Indian Act*, 2000-2002, Glass beads, stroud cloth, string, paper. <http://themedicineproject.com/nadia-myre.html#null>

However, mainstream discourse surrounding Indigenous resistance to colonialism is largely centred on combative, masculinized imagery. For example, Cherokee scholar Donna Hightower-Langston (2003) notes that during the American Indian Movement, Settler media became fixated on the image of the male warrior at the exclusion of other non-male participants (125), a tendency which continues today. Further, given the relegation of Indigenous women's art forms to a lower class than those of Indigenous men within the Settler art world—for instance, the market preference of Inuit sculpture over Inuit basket-weaving and treatment of the former as 'art' and the latter as 'craft'—as well as the treatment of women's broader contributions to decolonization as 'less than' or 'softer' than those of Indigenous men by Settler media and academia¹⁰, it is important to emphasize Indigenous women's contributions to resurgence.

As underlined by Indigenous feminists such as Smith and resurgence authors such as Simpson, this patriarchal categorization extends beyond Settler societies. In effect, "too often ... [Indigenous women's] contributions [to resistance and nation-building] go unrecognized, unappreciated and uncelebrated" by the Indigenous nations themselves who have internalized exclusionary Eurowestern heteropatriarchy. Thus, as Simpson states, "the interrogation of heteropatriarchy needs to become part of [Indigenous peoples'] decolonizing project"¹¹ to ensure that women's contributions to Indigenous resurgence, such as those offered by art-making, are recognized. This interrogation and recognition are also key in the Settler decolonization project, and it is the aim of this article to contribute to these imperatives

This article will discuss Indigenous women's contributions to resurgence through art and art-making while applying a framework informed by a Settler understanding of the Nishnaabeg theorization of resurgence outlined in Simpson's *Dancing on Our Turtle's Back*.¹²

As a Settler visitor on Kanien'kehá:ka territory, my understanding of these philosophies at present comes primarily through academic engagement, not sustained relationships to Nishnaabeg lands and peoples. Hence, my application of the Nishnaabeg concepts outlined by Simpson will be restricted to the extent that it is possible to embrace the pedagogical recommendation to "use Aboriginal processes to engage with Aboriginal knowledge"¹³ without over-reaching my current positioning in relation to this knowledge. Further, I acknowledge that the given definitions of the included Nishnaabeg concepts are limited, and highly advise engaging with Simpson's text for a fuller discussion of these theories. These concepts will be discussed through the study of two particular artworks which interweave traditional women's practices and resurgent action: *Indian Act* by Nadia Myre and *Walking with our Sisters* by Christi Belcourt.

Nadia Myre: *Indian Act* and Beading

Beginning with the *Indian Act* revisions of 1951, Indigenous women and their children were subject to the loss of their Indian Status and band membership if they married a non-Status man, Indigenous or non-Indigenous. As the daughter of a woman who lost her Status under these provisions, Nadia Myre's work has been shaped significantly by her mother's struggle to "prove she was Native" under the 1982 *Indian Act* revisions of Bill C-31, and her eventual reclamation of her family's status as Algonquin members of the Kitigan Zibi Anishnabeg in 1997. Myre cites this experience in combination with her exposure to an exhibition of Iroquoian beadwork in 1999 as the motivation for arguably her most acclaimed work: *Indian Act*.¹⁴

The piece is composed of all 56 pages of the *Indian Act* each printed on its own individually framed 8.5" x 11" sheet. Each page is mounted on stroud cloth, and covered either fully or partially by red and white glass beads (red covering the white portions of the page and white replacing the text) [fig.1]. From 2000 to 2002, Myre hosted 'beading bees' to which she invited over 230 Indigenous and non-Indigenous community members to teach, learn about, and participate in the beading process. The names of all contributors have been painted alongside the frames, underlining the value of collective creation in the artist's eyes.

“‘Beading is political,” says Myre of her work, “I really do see beading as an act of silent resistance.”¹⁵

However, Myre’s work is all but silent—it is an act of resurgence in process and product. *Indian Act* sits within Simpson’s framework of resurgence in its focus on vision, intentionality, and the practice of Nishnaabeg philosophies. Simpson underlines the responsibility one has of ‘acting on’ *Pauwauwaein* (“a vision that gives meaning to something previously obscure”) when one receives them.¹⁶

Though it cannot be ascertained that Myre regards her initial desire to bead the Indian Act as *Pauwauwaein*, it can still be said that she acted upon her ‘vision’ by literally realizing it. *Indian Act* creates *Shki-kiin* by depicting a world in which “language functioning as an arm of the state” is made illegible by those whom the text seeks to control—a world in which the scars of every “conditioned and controlled Indian [life]” are represented through the piercing and stitching of paper with beads and made beautiful.¹⁷

The replacement of a destructive colonial document with an Anishinaabekwe-led, communally-generated project is in itself a resurgent action which appears to move towards *mino bimaadiziwin* (‘living the good life’) through practicing *Aabawaadiziwin* (‘being together’).¹⁸

Resurgent intent is also clear in *Indian Act*, which Myre describes as a “communal ... act of rebellion ... [aiming

to obscure] the Law and [render] it finally illegible.”¹⁹

Like a stone cast into water, this piece creates resurgence in the actions of every Indigenous beader involved in its creation, as well as inspiring resurgence and resistance in its viewers. As a Settler viewer whose tangible interaction with the Indian Act has been limited to the invisibilized benefiting from the regulation of Indigenous peoples, I was led to examine the words exposed between the beads, and feel the overwhelming temporal and emotional weight of the thousands of beads. It is inescapable to be struck by the immensity of the work and the conviction required to complete the piece. From a Settler perspective, the result generated by this piece is an ironic re-visibility of the Indian Act itself achieved through its physical obfuscation*.

In David Cappell’s analysis of *Indian Act*, he states that “[t]he appropriation of the Indian Act, in material and in name, expresses a resistance to the subject-made-passive that the Act defines:” the Indian.²⁰ One of the ‘subjects-made-passive’ by the Indian Act are Indigenous women who were subjugated via displacement from governance and kinship responsibilities. Yet, the spearheading of the work by an Indigenous woman and the use of Indigenous women’s skills in appropriation, which give the work a gendered dimension, remains unaddressed by Cappell. Taiaiake Alfred and Jeff Corntassel emphasize colonialism’s use of “[confining] Indigenous identities to state-sanctioned legal and political definitional approaches”²¹ as a tool of conquest—a strategy epitomized by the state-defined membership provisions of the Indian Act.

Simpson argues that, given women’s traditional responsibility over marriage and adoption traditions through which individuals are brought into a community, women are the rightful determiners of *E-Dbendaagzijing* (‘those who belong’; an approximation of the Euro-western concept of ‘citizenship’).²² The Indian Act relocates this responsibility from Indigenous women to the state via status-defining provisions and to masculinized band councils via membership provisions. The Act further pacifies Indigenous women by excluding women from governance and from communities themselves, namely via the pre-C-31 exodus experienced by Myre’s mother.²³

Myre and the beaders’ appropriation of the Act thus provides a double challenge to the “subject-made-passive” of the Indian Act. *Indian Act* asserts not only Indigenous peoples’ right to self-determine their identity, but Indigenous wom-

fig.2 - Nadia Myre, *Indian Act*, 2000-2002, Glass beads, stroud cloth, string, paper. <http://artmur.com/en/artists/nadia-myre/indian-act/>

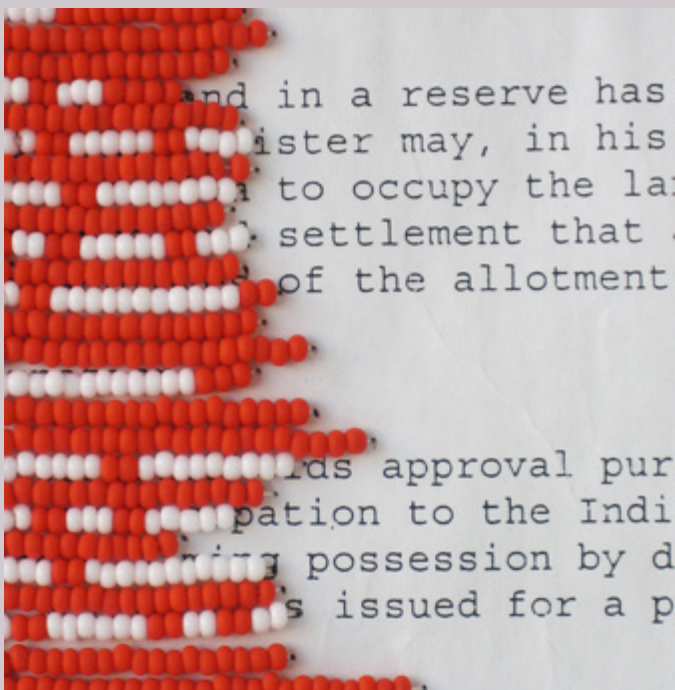




fig.3 - Charlene Touchette, vamp submission for *Walking with our Sisters*, 2013.

en's right to access their traditional responsibilities relating to citizenship and community participation more broadly.²⁴ By appropriating and obscuring the text of the Indian Act using traditional women's skills, Myre's piece is an act—note the titular pun—undertaken by Indigenous women which physically asserts the continuity of traditional female roles onto a document that sought to erase these very roles and, by extension, Indigenous women themselves—an Indigenous act on a document seeking to make Indigenous action impossible.²⁵

Christi Belcourt: *Walking with our Sisters* and Sewing

Walking with our Sisters is a collaborative art project spearheaded by Métis visual artist Christi Belcourt composed of 1,725 moccasin vamps (tops or “uppers,” see fig.3) created by over 1,300 Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples across Turtle Island (fig. 4).²⁶

The project honours the lives of missing and murdered Indigenous women across Turtle Island—the 600+ pairs of vamps are intended to reflect the 600+ Indigenous women reported missing or murdered over the last 20 years.²⁷ The incompleteness of the moccasins is intended to represent the incomplete lives of these lost women.²⁸ The project is displayed as an interactive installation:

The work exists as a floor installation made up of beaded vamps arranged in a winding path formation on fabric and includes cedar boughs. Viewers remove their shoes to walk on a path of cloth alongside the vamps.²⁹

This project also possesses the markers of Simpson's framework of resurgence: the materialization of a vision fuelled by intention and the fostering of individual resurgence supported by group participation. Similarly to *Indian Act*,

Walking with our Sisters conceptualizes a world in which trauma is visible and recognized, and those who have experienced trauma are acknowledged and honoured. Thanks to the installation's participatory element, viewers are drawn into the *Shki-kiin* generated by *Walking with our Sisters*. It is through the viewer's experience that the artwork's 'new world' is actualized. In the piece, the vamps are the lost women. When viewers walk the path alongside the moccasins, they are forced to physically acknowledge the lives of each woman by twisting their steps around the vamps which embody the victim's experience. Viewers are invited to admire the intricate beauty of the moccasins; this admiration is in turn extended to the women the vamps represent. The bowing of the head necessitated in order to appreciate the piece also compels viewers to adopt a physical positioning of respect and discourages eye contact with others during the experience.³⁰ By creating a posturing of aloneness, *Walking with our Sisters* encourages viewers to reflect introspectively on their position in relation to the disappearance and murder of Native women, to consider those affected by the issue, and perhaps even propel them to action.

Shki-kiin was created for contributors to the piece as well. Over 65 new beading circles were established following the initial project call-out, and the number of individuals who learned or re-engaged with sewing and beading thanks to the piece cannot be calculated.³¹

With the formation of each beading group, a 'new world' is created, shaped by Indigenous women practicing their skills for their own peoples and purposes. In her contribution to *Honoring Indigenous Women: Hearts of the Nation*, multi-ethnic interdisciplinary doctoral student Saya Bobick emphasizes the significance of the reclamation of beading and 'handy-work'—such as garment sewing—for Indigenous women. Bobick interviewed several elder women from Eastern Woodlands nations who expressed that they found reconnecting with traditional skills on their own terms empowering. Many were still haunted by the memories of forced artistic production—for some of these women, their first contact with 'craft' was during their stays in residential schools where children were obliged to produce craftwork that was later resold by missionaries. To the contrary, the creation process of *Walking with our Sisters* serves as a site of collective self-determination where Indigenous women can assert their right to work for their own people and can affirm their agency by harnessing traditional skills.^{32,33}

Bobick also discusses that the reclamation of traditional women's skills is a challenge to the relegation of women's artistic contributions to a 'second-class' status—devalued as 'craft' versus high 'art.'³⁴ By choosing to use traditional women's skills—sewing and beading—to express a response to one of the most significant, serious realities of colonialism, Belcourt affirms the value of Indigenous women's art forms. This, in combination with the stated intent of the work—honouring the lives of lost Indigenous women and pushing for action to prevent further loss³⁵—it may be read as a broader affirmation of the value of Indigenous women. The physical and emotional space occupied by the work deterritorializes Settler space; dismantling the institutionalized invisibility of Indigenous women while criticizing historical and ongoing gendered colonial violence.^{36 37} The presentation of the piece in urban spaces also challenges "the relegation of Native authority exclusively to reserves and traditional land bases [which serves to impoverish] the complexity of First Nations subjectivity." Settler art historian Elizabeth Kalbfleisch discusses the importance of mediating spatial occupation in the context of decolonization, particularly in relation to the complications of the 'urban Indian.'³⁸

Walking with our Sisters asserts the presence of Indigenous women in city spaces, stating that Indigeneity is not erased by urban life. In this way, it challenges the erasure tactics used by the media in depictions of missing and murdered Indigenous women, which serve to atomize and erase Indigenous women and minimize the significance of their loss.³⁹

The temporal space of *Walking with our Sisters* vis-a-vis the immense number of collective hours required to create the project visually and literally asserts that Indigenous women are worth labouring and giving time to. The act of 'giving time' may be seen as a tribute to the time lost by the women at the hands of colonial violence.

Conclusions and Questions

"When resistance is defined solely as large-scale political mobilization, we miss much of what has kept our languages, cultures, and systems of governance alive⁴⁰ ... Our social movements, organizing, and mobilizations are stuck in the cognitive box of imperialism and we need to step out of the box, remove our colonial blinders and at least see the potential for radically different ways of existence."⁴¹

Leanne Simpson's convictions about the necessity of 'stepping out of the box' of colonial conceptions of resistance speak to the centrality of Indigenous women's

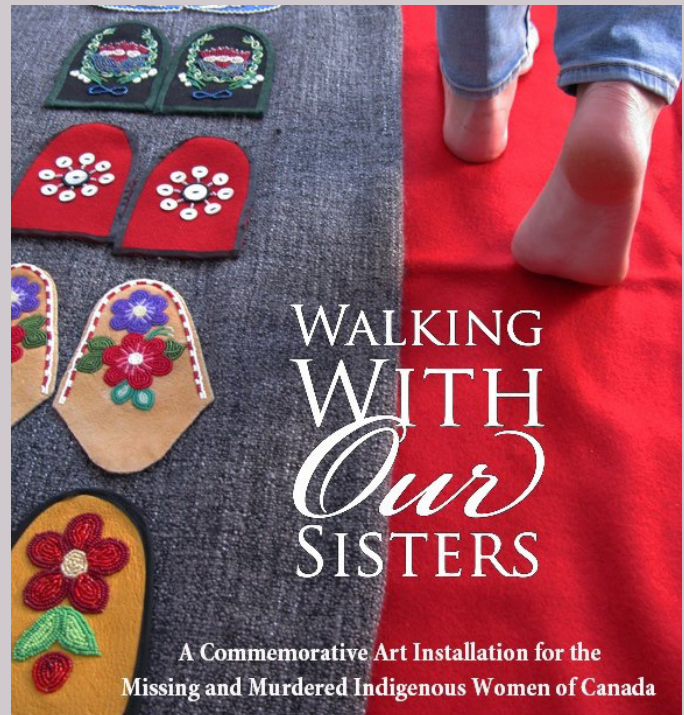


fig.4 - *Walking with our Sisters*, promotional poster, 2013. <http://walkingwithoursisters.ca/about/>.

art-making to decolonization. The Indigenous artists discussed in this essay engage in what appears to fit Simpson's articulation of *resurgence* through a returning to the self not only through the practice of traditional art forms, but through engaging in these practices in a way that re-creates individual and collective 'flourishment' of culture.⁴² Both artworks engage in fostering *Aabawaadiziwin* (togetherness) and thus move towards the collectivization of action which they stress as essential to building re-emergence.⁴³

However, as emphasized by Simpson, this articulation of resurgence is not representative of all resurgent conceptualizations within her own nation, let alone the entire scope of Indigenous nations across Turtle Island. It is possible that non-Nishnaabeg artists, such as Christi Belcourt, may object to being discussed in reference to a framework that was not generated by her own nation. Furthermore, as a Settler referencing a philosophy that is not my own, my discussions of these concepts come from an outsider perspective that lends itself to the misinterpretation of said concepts. I chose Simpson's framework as a lens given it's commitment to anti-fundamentalism, and because it was formulated by an Indigenous woman of Turtle Island. However, should access

have been available to a Métis discussion of resurgence, this may have been more appropriate for the exploration of Belcourt's work.

It is nonetheless important to remember that both of the works examined here were created by hundreds of individuals with hundreds of different backgrounds. In keeping with *Eniigaanzid* principles of non-authoritarian, non-singular leadership, it may be inappropriate to subsume all of these identities under one national framework.^{44 45} Further, given the pan-Indigenous bent of *Walking with our Sisters* and inclusion of Settlers in the creation process, Belcourt opens the project to the representation of multiple identities.

Another question that emerges in regards to the methodology of this essay is its focus on objects fitting the Settler definition of 'high art' (art able to be exhibited in galleries and analyzed by art critics as opposed to sold in tourist shops). While beading and moccasin-making alone are regarded as more craft than art, Myre and Belcourt articulate these practices in a format that elevates them to high art status. Is this version of art accessible to Indigenous peoples? Galleries and other formal spaces can act as zones of exclusion for many Indigenous peoples who face racism and socioeconomic oppression. Although both projects invited individuals from all backgrounds to participate in their creation, this invitation presupposes availability of time and access to the knowledge of traditional skills, both of which may serve as limiting factors to Indigenous peoples without either.

However, given the 1,725 pairs of vamps collected to date from individuals and beading groups across Turtle Island for *Walking with our Sisters* and thousands of beads beaded to Myre's Indian Act, it appears that collaborative art has the potential to transcend these barriers. Additionally, it may be argued that if those with access to art and art-making continue to build re-emergence through experiencing and creating intentional, resurgent art, these limiting factors could be eventually eradicated, resulting in a re-strengthening of nations and an increased ability for Indigenous peoples to exist outside the divisions imposed by colonialism. Myre and Belcourt—as well as every Indigenous woman who contributed to the projects discussed—are taking steps towards this by challenging individualized Settler conceptions of artistic creation, and moving towards the collective reclamation of skills. Indigenous women's ongoing commitment to the building of resurgence and moving beyond the boundaries of high art

allow us to hope that the transformative potential of such endeavours will continue to create space for the honouring and empowerment of Indigenous women in both Settler and Indigenous societies.

1 Leanne Simpson, *Dancing on our Turtle's Back: Stories of Nishnaabeg Re-creation, Resurgence and a New Emergence* (Winnipeg: Arbeiter Ring Publishing, 2013) 146-147.

2 Simpson, 145.

3 Damien Lee, "Coming Home through Active Presence – Project Introduction," Dibaajimowinan: Four Stories of Resurgence in Michi Saagig Nishnaabeg Territory, posted August 30, 2011, <http://dibaajimowin.wordpress.com/>.

4 Simpson, 27.

5 see "I am known for my quilts" by Minaachimo-Kwe/Alice Olsen Williams in *The Strength of Women: Âh-kamêyimowak* edited by Priscilla Settee (2011) for a fuller discussion of the distinctions between Anishinaabe women and men's art forms.

6 Yvonne Vizina, "Métis Culture," Kinanskomitin: Cree History at the University of Saskatchewan Archives, posted 2008, http://scaa.sk.ca/ourlegacy/exhibit_metisculture.

7 This is not intended to equate Indigenous feminisms with Indigenous womanisms. However, the discourse between Indigenous feminisms and Indigenous womanisms are outside the scope of this paper. See Kahente Horn-Miller's "Otiyaner: The 'Women's Path' Through Colonialism" (2005) for a critique of Indigenous feminisms in favour of womanism.

Andrea Smith, "American Studies without America: Native Feminisms and the Nation-State," *American Quarterly* 60 (2008): 312.

8 This importance is expressed by Simpson's emphasis of practicing Aanjigone (non-interference/focusing inwards), making internally focused resurgence central. See "Queering Resurgence: Taking on Heteropatriarchy in Indigenous Nation Building" for further discussion of Simpson's (2013) emphasis on deconstructing sexual axes of internal oppression within Indigenous resistance movements and nations.

9 Borrowing the definition offered by Adam Barker (2010) in "From Adversaries to Allies," 'Settler' refers to "any non-Indigenous individual who is living on Indigenous lands and participating in contemporary Euro-American society ... For a more complete discussion of the nature of Settler identity, please see *Being Colonial* (Barker, 2006)" (229-330).

10 Leanne Simpson, Wanda Nanibush, and Carol Williams, "The Resurgence of Indigenous Women's Knowledge and Resistance in Relation to Land and Territoriality: Transnational and Interdisciplinary Perspectives," *InTensions Journal*, issue 6, Fall/Winter 2012, <http://www.yorku.ca/intent/issue6/notefromtheeditor/notefromtheeditor.pdf>, 2.

11 Leanne Simpson, "Queering Resurgence: Taking on Heteropatriarchy in Indigenous Nation Building," leannesimpson.ca, posted June 1,

2012, <http://leannesimpson.ca/2012/06/01/queering-resurgence-taking-on-heteropatriarchy-in-indigenous-nation-building/>.

12 Simpson, *Dancing on our Turtle's Back: Stories of Nishnaabeg Re-creation, Resurgence and a New Emergence*, 50.

13 Tyson Yunkaporta, "Aboriginal Pedagogies at the Cultural Interface," http://www.truworld.ca/__shared/assets/Yunkaporta_draft_report29338.pdf, 28.

14 Nadia Myre, "About 'Indian Act,'" interview with Indigenous Foundations UBC, accessed December 2, 2013, <http://indigenfoundations.arts.ubc.ca/home/culture/artistic-expressions/nadia-myre/about-indian-act.html?type=123&filename=About%20%22Indian%20Act%22.pdf>.

15 Martin.

16 Simpson, 146.

17 Richard William Hill (Cree), "The Unreadable Present: Nadia Myre and Kent Monkman," *C Magazine*, September 2002, <http://kentmonkman.com/images/press/cmagazine-sept02.pdf>.

Nadia Myre, "Artist Statement," Canadian Heritage Information Network, 2007, accessed December 2, 2013, <http://www.museevirtuel-virtuallmu-seum.ca/edu/ViewLoitDa.do;jsessionid=6E87709401C6B7F3C-1C4F709572DC3EA?method=preview&lang=EN&id=15030>.

18 Simpson, 122.

19 Myre, 2007.

20 David Cappell, "The Invention of Line: Nadia Myre's Indian Act," *Parachute* vol.111, September 2003, 101.

21 Taiaiake Alfred and Jeff Corntassel, "Being Indigenous: Resurgences against Contemporary Colonial-ism," *Government and Opposition* 40 (2005), accessed September 30, 2013, <http://web.uvic.ca/igov/uploads/pdf/Being%20Indigenous%20GOOP.pdf>, 600.

22 Simpson, 90.

23 For example, until 1951, women were denied the ability to "vote, run for leadership, or even speak at public meetings" within the band council governance system created by the Indian Act. Although these provisions have been altered, masculinized political cultures persist in many communities.

Kim Anderson, *Life Stages and Native Women: Memory, Teachings, and Story Medicine* (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 2011) 136.

24 Problematic associations with the term 'right' have been noted. Indigenous frameworks of nationhood as defined by 'responsibilities' rather than 'rights' have received ample scholarly attention.

25 Simpson states that "to have a Nishnaabeg identity, one must live that identity" (Simpson, 26). Indigenous identity is described by members of multiple nations as defined by the fulfillment of relationships and responsibilities. Hence, by removing the ability to fulfill these, full access to actively being Indigenous is limited.

James Martin, "Nadia Myre's art project is already at the McCord," *Concordia's Thursday Report Online*, June 6 2002, http://ctr.concordia.ca/2001-02/June_6/08-Myre/index.shtml.

26 *Walking with our Sisters*, "About: A Commemorative Art Installation for the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women of Canada and the United States," *Walking with our Sisters*, 2013, <http://walkingwithoursisters.ca/about/>.

27 Ibid.

28 Ibid.

29 Ibid.

30 I cannot speak to the 'traditional' meaning of bowing one's head in Indigenous cultures or Belcourt's Métis culture in particular. However, given the piece's intent to also speak to non-Indigenous viewers and invite their participation in the honouring, the association non-Indigenous people have with the bowing of the head may have been considered.

31 Robert Everett-Green, "Moccasins with a message: Art project honours lost aboriginal women," *Globe and Mail*, October 1, 2013, <http://www.theglobeandmail.com/arts/art-and-architecture/moccasins-with-a-message-art-project-honours-missing-aboriginal-women/article14649936/>.

32 This is not to deny the agency of Indigenous women in participating in trade using their own skills for survival and adaptation to colonial realities. The language used reflects Bobick's representation of the statements of her interviewees.

33 Saya Bobick, "Effects of Participation in Cultural Practices on Elder Women," *Honour Indigenous Women: Hearts of Nations*, vol.2, 2012, http://thesoundofmyheart.weebly.com/uploads/1/5/3/1/15317854/honouring_indigenous_women_vol2.pdf, 66.

34 Ibid.

35 *Walking with our Sisters*.

36 Vis-a-vis the physical and visual confrontation of the issue—and one's positioning in relation to it via the forced aloneness of inward-facing posturing—that must be consciously navigated via the path-walking process described earlier.

37 This concept of 'deterritorialization' and 'dismantling' is borrowed from David Capell's discussion of Nadia Myre's Indian Act. See Capell (2003) for further discussion in its original context.

38 Elizabeth Kalbfleisch, "Bordering on Feminism: Space, Solidarity, and Transnationalism in Rebecca Belmore's *Vigil*," in *Indigenous Women and Feminism: Politics, Activism, Culture*, ed. Cheryl Suzack, Shari M. Huhndorf, Jeanne Perrault, and Jean Barman, Vancouver: UBC Press, 2010, 288.

39 *Missing Justice* Montreal, presentation to Indigenous Traditions, Women, and Colonialism at Concordia University, Montreal, 2013.

40 Simpson, 24.

41 Ibid., 148.

42 Ibid., 53.

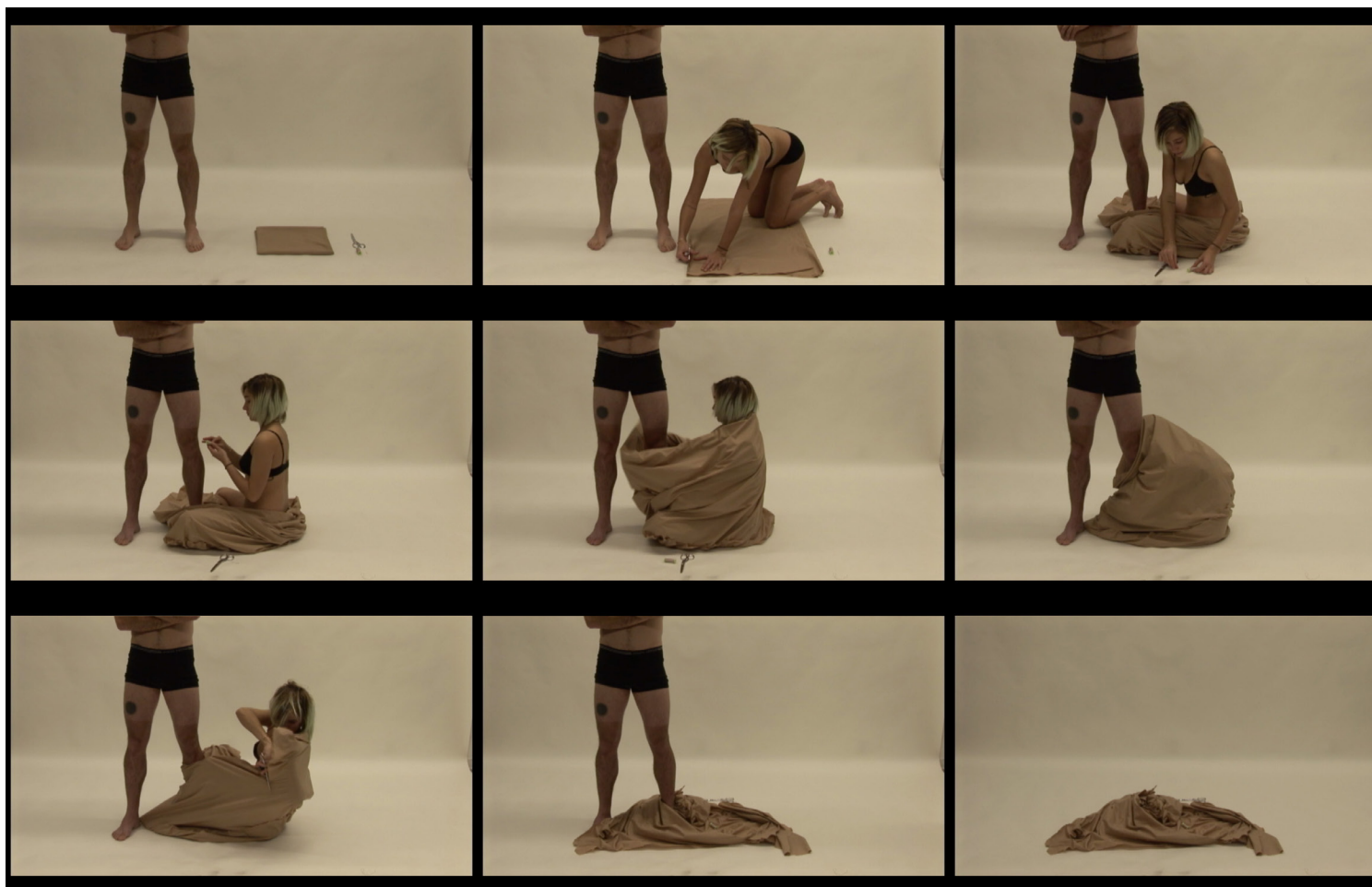
43 Ibid., 147.

44 Ibid., 121.

45 It is noted that not all Indigenous nations are non-hierarchical.

LET ME COUNT THE WAYS...

Naakita Feldman-Kiss



*Ottawa, Ontario
Concordia University
Major in Intermedia/Cyberarts*

*Video performance
53:19 minutes*

2013

In this durational video performance, Feldman-Kiss creates a shared skin by sewing herself with a cloth around her male counterpart's leg. During this process, the artist removes herself from her environment while giving herself to her partner, the intimacy of this gesture informed by patriarchal power structures. As a young girl, her grandmother instilled in her the value of craft art and the artist's mother taught her to value her self-worth and to be auto-

nomous. The work acts as both a meditation on what the artist has learned from the matriarchies she has been exposed to, and a portrayal of her own discovery of the significance of feminine fragility. Feldman-Kiss is seen negotiating the vulnerability and intimacy that occur when entering into a co-dependent relationship with her own need to assert herself as independent and strong, offering a thoughtful reflection on traditional gender roles.

GAZING BACK: SPECTACLE AND SPECTATOR IN JOYCE'S "NAUSICAA"

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Concordia University
Major in English and Creative Writing*

2013

Embedded within the structure of James Joyce's "Nausicaa" – the thirteenth chapter of his *Ulysses* masterpiece – are various dualities that split and layer the episode. The chapter depicts girlish Gerty Macdowell, tomboy Cissy Caffrey and her twin brothers on the beach at sunset along with the novel's lone protagonist, Leopold Bloom. The focal interaction between Gerty and Bloom involves no direct conversation but is extremely wrought with gendered conflict – as Bloom watches from afar and masturbates, Gerty positions her skirt, legs and hair to exhibit herself to him. The episode is halved into the two characters' distinct interior voices, resulting in very different literary styles and narrative concerns. The shift in point of view is especially interesting when one considers the Gilbert schema – a table created by Joyce and Stuart Gilbert that organizes the structure of *Ulysses* so that each chapter corresponds with an organ, a colour, a symbol, an art and a literary technique. One of the organs associated with "Nausicaa" is the eye, emphasizing the importance of the act of looking and the subjective nature of representation. While scholars have argued that Gerty is not meant to be a character of flesh and blood but rather a stylistic sum of the fragments of patriarchally constructed femininity, this interpretation fails to acknowledge the effects that reductive constructions of gender have in this text upon both herself and Bloom.

Joyce does not seem to be feminizing "bad" or "commercial" literature in order to contrast it to the supposedly unsentimental style of Bloom's narrative voice. Nor does he seem to *only* be pointing to the plight of working-class, disabled women like Gerty and attributing her problems to misogynistic, oppressive social discourses on gender. Rather, his characterization of Gerty emphasizes the way in which Bloomian thought is also aestheticized. The filtered, representational jumble of her thoughts reveals the ways in which she too constructs Bloom as a gendered object. Through an examination of the characters' subjectivities and sexual exchange, it can be argued that "Nausicaa" is structured on a gender-normative binary of oppressed woman/oppressive man – yet, this chapter troubles and complicates the assumed boundaries of that binary by investigating the multilayered implications of represented desire.

Undoubtedly, both characters act and think within a set of power relations tied to their social contexts: Gerty is plainly concerned with every minutiae of her appearance, scandalized by a body that betrays her with its urges and inner mechanics. She is also deeply influenced by consumer culture's singular vision of desirable womanhood. Though Bloom is also preoccupied with the ways in which the opposite sex perceives him, he does not police his thoughts and desires

according to cultural constructions of propriety. The overarching issue with the interiors of both characters has to do with the ways in which their subjectivities are represented on the page. Because Gerty's thoughts are written in the third person, it is assumed that she does not speak for herself but is merely focalized, either by a separate narrator or by Bloom. Bloom, on the other hand, identifies himself with the phallic, masculine "I". This gendered difference is also reflected in the very ways they reference themselves: Gerty by her first name and Bloom by his surname. Suzette Henke argues that as "a Bloomian projection of the 'woman,' Gerty MacDowell is [...] a male sculpted figure of female desire...a blank screen for the inscription of male masturbatory titillation".¹ This interpretation assumes that Gerty is in fact successful in assembling herself as a "panoply of fetishistic images"² that are fed to her through magazines such as the "Princess novelette".³ However, this view neglects to examine the distinct breakages in Gerty's sentimental, idyllic, maternal voice that reveal a selfish irritation with her friend's younger twin brothers playing nearby. If one sees instead the first half of the episode as narrated by a Gerty who speaks in the third person because she is narrating herself from an outsider's perspective, having internalized a misogynistic discourse that demands she perform her femininity for others, the breakages in voice become indications that Gerty is more self-aware than a first glance gives her credit for.

By allowing Gerty to narrate herself seemingly from above, Joyce reflexively points to an inherent problem in feminist thought: he allows us to see the extent to which she has internalized the discourses of "winsome Irish girlhood"⁴ while simultaneously pointing to the ways in which she manipulates this discourse. In the text, she is presented as a victim of a pervasive ideology that dictates that in order to validate herself, she must marry and in order to marry, she must exude nothing but "ivorylike purity"⁵ and "a languid queenly *hauteur*."⁶ This victimhood, however, does not deny Gerty all agency, nor does it wash clean her own gendered presumptions of the world around her. In her cinematic narrativizing, Gerty actively turns herself into a spectacle and thus entirely controls the reader's perception of her. We have no choice but to believe what she presents to us, from "her hands of finely veiled alabaster"⁷ to her opinions on "Madcap Ciss."⁸ Everything is told deliberately and with the careful calculations of a young woman who has been effectively taught by society how to manipulate the gaze of others. Just as Bloom later

feels that "there was a kind of language between [himself and Gerty],"⁹ there is a genuine communication – filtered carefully through the third person – that is established between Gerty and the reader. She describes Cissy both as "sincerity itself, one of the bravest and truest hearts [...] not one of your two-faced things"¹⁰ and later on as "the tomboy [...] a forward piece whenever she thought she had a good opportunity to show off,"¹¹ displaying that she is able to twist those definitions to serve her own purposes, whether they are to seem wife-like, kindly and generous, or to make herself look more attractive and feminine by contrast. Similarly, the twins go from being "darling little fellows"¹² to "little monkeys common as ditchwater"¹³ when they begin to interfere with Gerty's aims to attract Bloom's attention. These instances expose the fragility of her girly, consumerist rhetoric as well as its incapability to express what she really means.

The noted suppression of bodily acts such as defecation and menstruation call attention to the voice as constructed, communicating under the guise of feminine euphemisms; the "certain purpose"¹⁴ (defecating) that Gerty goes to "that place"¹⁵ (the lavatory) for is made more obvious by the forbidding undertones she uses – a cover that subtly allows the reader glimpses of the truth. She possesses a sexual agency that allows her to describe Bloom as her "latest conquest."¹⁶ In this way, she not only muddies the problematic waters of phallic sexuality with the use of the oppressor's language but also "[calls] into being a performance of virginity that seeks simultaneously to mask and to enact her desire."¹⁷ This episode thus troubles the binary of oppressor/oppressed by first placing Gerty within a sexist framework that informs her identity, but then allowing her in turn to manipulate it for her own purposes.

Both Bloom and Gerty imagine each other according to a system of difference that plays into patriarchal notions of gender. They each desire a construction of the other that demands a denial of certain realities – especially, among other things, Gerty's limp. After his masturbatory orgasm, Bloom is "glad [he] didn't know [Gerty's limp] when she was on show" and reduces her disability to a pornographic niche in line with a "curiosity like a nun or a negress or a girl with glasses."¹⁸ Gerty fashions Bloom out to be precisely the "manly man with a strong quiet face [...] perhaps his hair slightly flecked with grey"¹⁹ that she has always desired, imbuing him with an imaginary story: "She could see at once [...] that he was a foreigner

[...] the story of a haunting sorrow was written on his face [...] she wanted him because she felt instinctively that he was like no-one else."²⁰ This narrative of a lonely, sorrowful man corresponds to her own release of "pentup feelings"²¹ that she performs in front a mirror, making sure even her "gnawing sorrow"²² is cinematically "lovely."²³ The notion of Bloom as a "widower who had lost his wife"²⁴ also complements her own loss of Reggy Wylie's affections. Thus, the pleasure of looking and imagining is not Bloom's alone, because Gerty validates herself by projecting her own story onto him. She reaches a certain level of satisfaction in believing that she has accomplished something by "[trying] to understand him because men were so different."²⁵ The fact of her looking back upsets the binary of spectator and spectacle because Bloom becomes as much a spectacle to her as she is to him. It is not possible to simply understand her as the object of the gaze while Bloom occupies the position of subject; the reflexivity of the gaze prevents both characters from being entirely objectified or possessing full subjectivity.

The problem of representation is informed by the kind of myth-making of gendered discourse that produces convoluted information, such as Gerty's understandings of "manly men"²⁶ and "womanly women"²⁷ and Bloom's musings that "virgins go mad in the end I suppose. [...] Devils they are when that's coming on them. [...] Turns milk, makes fiddlestrings snap."²⁸ Bloom comprehends women, sex and menstruation in the same tidbit-collecting, superstitious, illogically narrativized way that Gerty does. On the beach, Gerty wishes to paint the scene not because she believes the act will accurately relay her feelings but because she knows precisely the opposite is true: "She could see far away the lights of the lighthouses so picturesque she would have loved to do with a box of paints because it was easier than to make a man."²⁹ In other words, it is "easier" to represent somebody – even oneself – through the filters of aesthetic narrative than to absorb the reality of an absurdly complex, conflicted human being. It is easier to seek expression through a predetermined, repressive framework of coded femininity than to examine the code itself. Interestingly, Bloom's attempt at self-definition builds on this to some extent. He writes the words "I AM A" in the sand, hoping to leave a message for Gerty: "Will she come here tomorrow? Wait for her somewhere for ever. Must come back. Murderers do. Will I?"³⁰ In an attempt to communicate with her, he touches on an acknowledgement of having victimized her by wondering if his behaviour is like a murderer's – but

he is ultimately incapable of grounding his identity in language, which is itself sand-like in its instability. There is "no room"³¹ for what he might want to say with the "I" of the masculine ego. Thus, both Bloom's and Gerty's uses of language are coded within a gendered ideology and both are incapable of expressing their subjectivities.

The eye that paints the episode into being is not Bloom's or Gerty's, however – it is the reader's, because reading is filtered through the experiences and understandings one brings to a text. The third person viewpoint of Gerty's narration not only allows her to maneuver the reader but also places the reader's eye somewhere above her. When she becomes the distant, other "she," the reader by consequence becomes an "I" that plays a part in bringing to life this Gerty struggling with gender norms. Though she performs for herself split into spectator and spectacle, she aligns the reader with the masculine, phallic ego that also looks on, interprets, and analyzes her: the audience becomes implicated in the sexual exchange, in Gerty's position in society and in Bloom's compelling perversity. The situation fascinates and yet repels the reader because it is as easy to identify with Gerty's willing, narcissistic performance as it is with Bloom's sexual transgression. Thus, the gaze is layered in ways that problematize the duality of viewer and viewed, oppressor and oppressed; these layers convolute the power relations presumed by the reader in order to demonstrate that there are no absolutes in Joyce's world.

1 Susette Henke, "Joyce's Naughty Nausicaa: Gerty MacDowell Re-fashioned," *Papers on Joyce* (2004-5): 87, *Papers on Joyce*, accessed October 16, 2013, <http://www.papersonjoyce.es/poj/docus/poj10/8.pdf>.

2 James Joyce, *Ulysses: Annotated Students' Edition* (London: Penguin, 2011), 87.

3 *Ibid.*, 453.

4 *Ibid.*, 452.

5 *Ibid.*

6 *Ibid.*, 453.

7 *Ibid.*, 452.

8 *Ibid.*, 459.

9 *Ibid.*, 485.

10 *Ibid.*, 460.

11 Ibid., 467.

12 Ibid., 450.

13 Ibid., 467.

14 Ibid., 462.

15 Ibid.

16 Ibid., 471.

17 Jen Shelton, "Bad Girls: Gerty, Cissy, and the Erotics of Unruly Speech," *James Joyce Quarterly* 34.1/2 (1996-97): 91, JSTOR, accessed October 16, 2013, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/25473789>.

18 Joyce, *Ulysses*, 479.

19 Ibid., 457.

20 Ibid., 465.

21 Ibid., 456.

22 Ibid.

23 Ibid.

24 Ibid., 474.

25 Ibid., 475.

26 Ibid., 457.

27 Ibid.

28 Ibid., 479, 481.

29 Ibid., 473.

30 Ibid.

31 Ibid., 498

SORCIÈRES

Gabrielle Brais Harvey

Abitibi-Temiscamingue / Montréal, Québec
Université Concordia
Majeure en Studio Art

2012

Celle qui boite,
Celle qui est laide,
Celle qui baise,
Celle qui s'isole,
Celle qui sort du lot,
Celle qui crie,
Celle qui vit seule,
Celle qui rit,
Celle qui ne prie pas,
Celle qui soigne,
Celle qui conteste,
Celle qui fait sa propre vie,
Celle qui s'émancipe,
Celle qui est lynchée,

Sorcières.



YIARA'S STAFF

Editor-in-Chief: Tess Juan-Gaillet

Tess Juan-Gaillet was born in Paris, raised in New Jersey, and now resides in Montreal as she completes her final year of a BFA in Art History at Concordia University. Through an open and self-reflexive dialogue, Tess aims to expose the ubiquity of patriarchal and colonial frameworks that shape her daily life. For her, this dialogue usually takes the form of curatorial projects and art historical writing that explore the intersectionality of race, gender, and sexuality in hopes of creating real social change. Participating in Yara Magazine has been a joy thanks to all the beautiful, colorful minds that made it happen.

Assistant Editor: Ellen Belshaw

Ellen Belshaw, originally from New Brunswick but raised in Ottawa, Ontario, is currently in her third year studying Art History and Photography at Concordia University. Focusing more recently on written rather than visual work, she finds herself most interested in analyzing the spiritual facets of secular-made artworks throughout history. In her visual work she is mostly interested in the personal and social implications of portraiture. In addition to working as the Assistant Editor for Yara Magazine's second edition, Ellen is also the Exhibitions Coordinator for the Art Matters Festival.

Associate English Editor:

Stéphanie Hornstein

Stéphanie Hornstein is a native Montrealer who is currently completing her third year as an undergraduate student in Concordia University's department of Art History in addition to a minor in Creative Writing. In the realm of art, her interests are numerous and varied. She is fascinated by forays into new modes of visual expression as well as contemporary reactions to social issues such as sexism, racism, colonialism and warfare. Questions of the artist's role and that of art institutions in society also intrigue her. She is extremely pleased to participate in Yara Magazine's second edition as the Associate English editor.

Associate French Editor: Isabelle l'Heureux

Isabelle L'Heureux est montréalaise. Elle complète une majeure en histoire de l'art à l'Université de Montréal. En plus de son implication auprès de Yara Magazine, elle a récemment rejoint l'équipe de l'ARgoT, revue du département où elle étudie présentement. Elle souhaiterait écrire, organiser, exposer et archiver le monde de l'art dans son exhaustivité. Les questions de mise en valeur de l'art actuel et des relations de l'image et du texte inspirent ses réflexions et ses actions les plus récentes.

Head Writer: Valérie Frappier

Valérie Frappier hails from the town of Aurora, Ontario and is currently completing her final year at Concordia University in the Art History/ Studio Arts program with a minor in English Literature. In her visual art, Val explores notions related to gender dynamics, femininity, ageing and the mythical while primarily working with paint. She is interested in many types of art including community projects, street art as well as interactive installations, and is fascinated by art's ability to become social-engagement and a transmitter of knowledge. Val is proud to be Yara's Head Writer for its second issue.

Events Coordinator: Cassandra Marsillo

Cassandra Marsillo is a native Montrealer currently studying History at Concordia University, after having completed her BFA in Studio Arts and Italian in December 2013. She is a multi-disciplinary artist working in sculpture, installation, fibres and performance. Usually dealing with themes of nostalgia, memory and relationships, her pieces are often self-referential yet open to interpretation, personal exploration and audience interaction. Her academic interests include Italian Humanism, as well as the study of feminism and education in Renaissance culture and issues concerning contemporary education.

Social Media Coordinator: Mallika Guhan

Mallika Guhan is a Communication Studies student specializing in Sound Production in the city of Montreal. The nature of her degree has her exploring the questions and the relationships between art, media and the world around us. With a growing interest in feminism as a sex positive female, she strives to immerse herself in projects that promote both healthy and intellectual artistic expression, which is how she found herself working with Yara Magazine. While Mallika's desire is to transport a listener into another world through her sound art, Yara lets her sink her teeth into meaningful work that promotes bold visual art of all forms.

Photographer: Ana Caicedo

Ana Caicedo is from Vancouver B.C. and currently completing her first year in the Photography program at Concordia University. She is interested in how different forms of femininity can be visually actualized through photography. Ana is thrilled to have been a part of Yara's second edition. To view her work, check out her website at: cargocollective.com/Anacaicedo.

Graphic Designer: Bianca Su

Born in California and raised in Montreal (with much of her childhood spent in Taiwan), home to Bianca is a mix of cultures. She enjoys experiencing new scenarios as she delves deeper into the field of design. Following her professional graphic design degree at Dawson College, she decided to dive into a new, exciting direction: digital and interactive designs. This change was completed by joining the Computation Arts program at Concordia University. She is skilled in page layout, poster creations, website designs, packaging, promotional materials, and corporate identity. Bianca loves to work on projects big and small, feel free to get in touch: bianca.su8d@gmail.com.

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