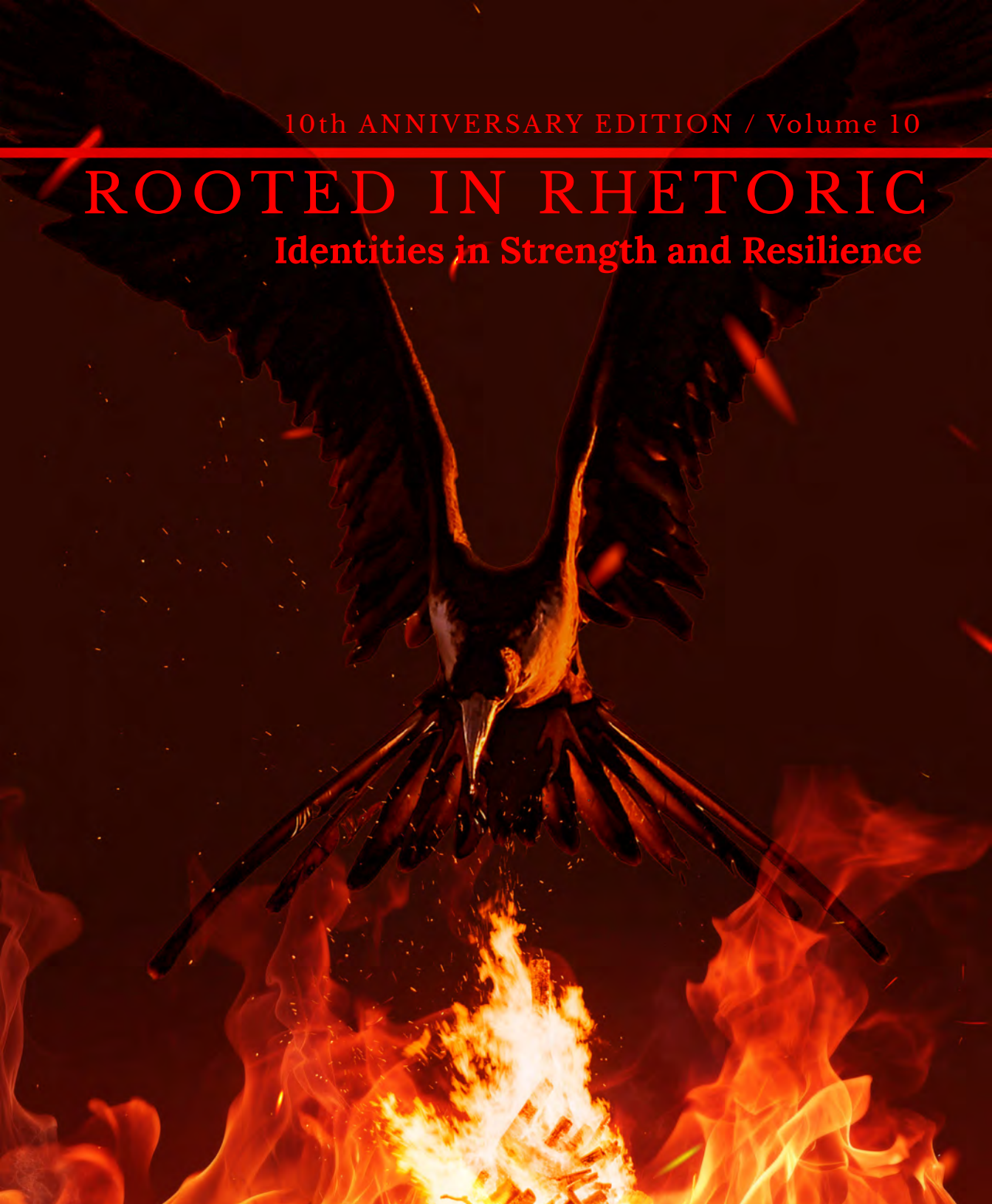


A dramatic illustration of a phoenix, a mythical bird that is reborn from its own ashes. The bird is shown in the center, with its wings fully spread, rising from a large, intense fire at the bottom. The background is a dark, smoky orange-red, with glowing embers and sparks floating around the bird. The overall mood is one of power, resilience, and renewal.

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Identities in Strength and Resilience

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INTRODUCTION

Identities in Strength and Resilience is the 10th volume of Rooted in Rhetoric, the student-led academic journal published by the University of Winnipeg's Rhetoric Writing and Communications department. This milestone journal is represented by the Phoenix, a creature of fire and renewal, whose story of resilience and resurrection speaks to the spirit of this year's collection.

The essays, research, critiques and analytical works gathered here are bound by a common theme of leaning into strength and identity by rising up and confronting real-world experiences in this current world climate. We invite you to consider the phoenix as a metaphor for the ways that people rise to learn about themselves through challenges. It is our intention that the works in this volume not only showcase the talents of our students but also inspire readers to recognize their own capacities of resilience and renewal.

To our contributors and authors, thank you for your creativity and commitment to sharing work that embodies resilience and strength in so many forms. To our editors, your careful attention and dedication to the craft of shaping this volume. To the Department of Rhetoric, Writing and Communications, we gratefully thank you for your ongoing support of student scholarship and your work in maintaining a space where critical thought and creativity can thrive. Lastly, thank you to our faculty supervisors, Dr. Helen Lepp Friesen and Dr. Ryan Clement, for their support, mentorship and encouragement through this process.

Precious Gauthier, B.A., B.Sc.

Cthulhu As Your Local Disability Rights Activist

Gabriel Fars (they/them) is an aspiring writer and a second-year student at the University of Winnipeg. While they enjoy writing, they also enjoy painting, crocheting, and anything artsy fartsy. They currently live in Winnipeg with their small (and very annoying) pet chihuahua, named Beefy.

The disabled body is your modern horror
You abhor being trapped in a place like this
Cthulhu walks with two crutches, tentacled, alien monster
Cthulhu lies dormant, on the first floor of an apartment
building
That is not accessible to anyone else
Cthulhu writes a crip queer theory blog and is a disability
rights activist
Cthulhu waits for you, dreaming
Knowing that one day, your body too will crumble
One day, your knees, back and hips will ache and you'll come
fourth
Into that first floor apartment
With a walker holding you up

Tuesday, December 10th: A To Do List

by Gabriel Fars

- Inject cross-sex hormones (always my favourite way to start the day)
- Have my morning abortion (a cup of coffee doesn't do it for me these days)
- Tell my mother I'm not her little girl anymore (I'm not a girl at all, although she insists I always will be)
- Spread misinformation online (no explanation needed)

I Miss Being Alive

Kanwal Afaq, is a 2nd-year Neuroscience student at the University of Winnipeg and a passionate writer. This is their first publication, and they are so grateful to share their voice. They write emotional poetry on @_kanwalpoetry_ expressing love, pain, and healing through words that come straight from the heart.

I stand in a crowd where laughter blooms, But my smile is buried in silent tombs.

The mirror whispers of dull, lifeless eyes, Eyes that have long forgotten to cry.

I press my chest no pulse, no beat,
Just withered, like a love left incomplete. My thoughts, like webs, entwined,
A prison of silence within my mind.

My trembling hands, so weak, so bare, Reaching for a ghost that isn't there.

I walk through joy, but I don't belong, An empty verse in a forgotten song.

POETRY

Someone stops me “Do you still remember him?” My tears
answered what words left dead.

Pain blooms in my chest, sharp and wide, A cruel reminder
that I’m still alive.

The mirror reflects a life undone,
A hollow shell where love once shone. I try to breathe, but the
air won’t stay, My soul, like him, has slipped away.

If you could see me, would you feel my despair? Or would you
turn, as if I’m not there?

I am nothing now, just a memory’s slave, Alive, but buried in
the love you gave.

In Every Moon, I Find You

by Kanwal Afaq

I whisper your name to the stars each night,
Hoping the wind will carry it right.
Wherever you are, near or far away,
My love still blooms, though you couldn't stay.

Your shadow lingers in every place,
In quiet corners, I see your face.
The air still holds the warmth of your touch,
A memory now soft is still much.

I dream in hues of what we were,
In every silence, I hear you stir.
No hand to hold, yet mine won't stray,
I'm yours in heart, though you walked away.

I write you letters the sky won't send,
A thousand words that never end.
They float, like petals, upon my soul,
Incomplete, for you made me whole.

POETRY

The world has moved, but I remain,
Tied to your love, bound by the pain.
They say to heal, I must let go,
But how do you bury a love that glows?

So, I'll carry you in every breath,
In life, in dreams, in even death.
Although you're gone, my heart still stays,
Loving you in quiet, endless ways.

What is the Relationship Between Islam and Sufism

by Kanwal Afaq

You know, growing up, I often heard people say, “Oh, he grew his beard, he must be a Sufi,” or “Look, he’s very kind, he must be a Sufi.” But honestly, I never really understood what Sufism was all about until I took the course on it. That is when I realized that Sufism is not just about outward appearance nor being kind. It is a deeper, spiritual way of living Islam, a way that touches the heart. And the truth is, I fell in love with this concept. Sufis take Islam so seriously, not just by following the rules but by feeling them, by living with love and devotion. Meanwhile, many of us Muslims barely obey any teachings of Islam, yet we are quick to judge Sufis. We point fingers, spread misconceptions, and speak badly about them without even understanding who they really are. That is what I call double standards. Reading the book *Dissolving into Being* by William Rory Dickson really opened my eyes (2024). I never knew Sufism was such a beautiful, rare flower, but instead of stopping to smell its fragrance, people act like it is a thorn that will prick them.

In the introduction, Dickson states, "Sufism is simply the process of taking Islamic teachings to heart, of following the way of the Prophet" (25). A lot of people think Sufis are bad people, involved in things like black magic.

Many Muslims have forgotten that if our souls are pious, they leave our bodies as gently as malmal cloth being lifted from a flower. But if our souls are impious, they are wrenched from our bodies like malmal cloth caught in the thorns of a flower, leaving holes in the fabric and scars on our very essence. But the truth is, Sufism is just about being closer to Islam on a deeper level, and genuinely. I believe that every Muslim should live like a Sufi, holding on to Islamic teachings as if they were oxygen, something we need to survive. Nowadays, Muslims are so diluted in this world that they have forgotten the true essence of Islam. It is a beautiful religion, but we have become distracted.

Working on this essay has helped me to identify that I want to live like a Sufi. Professor, I want to surround myself with that kind of madhhab-i ishq, the path of love (22). You know, the way Sufis live is not just by praying, fasting or giving charity but by letting love for Allah (God) flow through every breath, every step, every heartbeat. It is a way of living where faith is not just something you believe in. It is something you feel, something that sinks into your soul like honey melting into warm milk, sweetening everything it touches until it becomes whole.

If I ever get married, I do not just want a spouse, I want a companion on this journey, someone whose heart is as pure as crystal, untouched by arrogance, full of light. Since, at the end of the day, what is love if not a mirror reflecting the Divine?

A pure heart is the key to intimacy with Allah (God), and I believe that when two hearts beat for Him, they find a love that never fades.

In the book *Dissolving into Being*, Dickson writes, "Sufis affirmed that their path was nothing but the deepest heart of Quranic teachings, and that the best Muslims were those who not only knew the texts and traditions of Islam but actualized their meaning within their bodies, minds and souls" (29). That line struck me deeply. The sad reality is that many Muslims today are Muslims only by name. Their hearts, souls, and minds have become so blind and deaf that even when they do something haram, they do not feel any guilt or regret. And to me, that is the most dangerous thing, it is what I call "a locked heart with no key." A person might memorize the Quran, follow Islamic traditions, and pray every day, but if their heart does not truly feel the presence of Allah (God). They are like a flower with petals but no fragrance, beautiful to the eye yet lacking the essence that gives life to its bloom. Their faith becomes empty. That is why the awakening of the heart is such an important concept in Islam.

Islam is not just about rules, it is about connection, about feeling the weight of our actions in our souls. Sufis understand this better than anyone. Their hearts are not just connected to the Quran and Sunnah, but rather they are dissolved in it, just like salt disappears into water. Their faith is not separate from them, it flows in their veins, and their love for Allah (God) becomes deeper and so real. It makes me wonder, what would the world look like if more of us lived with that kind of sincerity?

Once someone said to me, "You're a fool, living in an illusion. There is no God." I just smiled and read him the verse of the Quran, which Dickson also mentions in chapter 3, "It is not the eyes that are blind, but blind are the hearts within their chests" (134). If there were no Creator, then someone tell me who painted the sky without pillars, who carved the mountains into the earth, and who placed life in lifeless clay? Do the stars align by accident, or does the sea halt at its shore by mere chance? "Were they created by nothing, or were they themselves the creators?" (Quran 52:35). Reflecting on this, I propose the thought that denial does not erase the truth, it only blinds the heart that refuses to see. This verse speaks directly to many Muslims struggling with their faith. So many say, "I don't see God," but that's the thing, Allah (God) is not a treasure we can just find by hunting. He is not hiding from us, nor is He waiting for us to discover Him. He is already here. Every breath we take, every beat of our heart, every law of nature that holds the universe together, these are all signs pointing directly to Him. Every single thing around us is a message, but the question is, are we really paying attention? I do not understand how people can deny His existence when everything around us and within us whispers His presence.

The problem is not that Allah (God) is far away, it is that we humans are blind. Islam is like a map, showing us the way to live in a manner that brings us closer to Allah (God). However, too many of us follow the directions without really experiencing the journey. We get stuck just trying to get to the endpoint, but we forget to enjoy our ride.

On the other hand, Sufis follow the same map, but they do it with full love, joy, and sincerity. As a result, they reach the destination of Allah Almighty not because they are focused on the goal alone, but because the act of seeking itself changes them. The journey opens their hearts, awakens their souls, and they begin to see and feel what has always been there. It is not just about reaching a destination, it is about the transformation that happens within us as we walk that path.

I hope you are not bored with me rambling, but Ibn Arabi's words in Chapter 2 really spoke to me: "Do you not see the Real manifest through the qualities of existent things—telling us about Himself—even with qualities of deficiency and qualities of blame?" (101). This saying reminds me of my mother. When I can not find my things, she says, "If you search diligently, you can even find Allah (God)." This quote really struck me because it is all about finding the truth, yet so many people are still in a deep sleep, hitting the snooze button on reality. It is like they are waiting for the truth to knock louder when it has been right in front of them all along! In Sufism, this is a way of speaking about Allah (God), or Al-Haqq (the Real). Sometimes, we forget who we truly are because we get so lost in this wonderland, our jobs, our problems, our desires. But deep inside, I believe that we are not separate from the Real. Our essence comes from Allah (God). Wallah Hil Azeem, this is a struggle for us, believing people, living in a world full of fitna (distractions) that pull us away from our faith. Yet, at the same time, we know we belong to the one and only Allah (God), and we will return to Him soon.

Islam gives us the structure of prayers, fasting, rules , etc. It teaches us what to do to get closer to Allah (God), but Sufism is the heart of that structure. It asks, why do we do it? It goes deeper, looking beyond just actions into the souls longing for the Real. When I think about salah (prayer) wallahi, it is a gift from God (Allah). Although sometimes, Muslims just recite the words without truly understanding or going deeper within them. I often think, like, seriously man, you are connected to something beyond yourself in that moment. This is a major problem, people can not feel that deep peace. That is why many pray but still do haram things, or do not feel like praying at all. Their souls are lost, and they have not tasted the pure essence of this gift.

This is the difference between Islam as a practice and Sufism as an experience. Sufism does not just want you to know Islam, it wants you to feel it, live it, and be it. Even in the things we consider "bad or good" there is a hidden wisdom, a reminder that everything has a purpose. When you realize this, you begin to understand that nothing is wasted. There is meaning in everything, even in pain or difficulty, because everything is a sign pointing us back to the Real. The deeper you go, the more you see that everything is a reflection of God's presence, and it is only by experiencing this that you can truly connect with the Divine. To the same person who once said, "I'm a fool for believing in God, I quoted "Although the senses perceive forms, and the mind can analyze their dimensions, it is the heart that perceives their meaning" (133). He said, "Yeah, I can see that. What am I supposed to do now?"

I explained to him, "It's true, your eyes can see, and your mind can understand, but without your heart, nothing will truly sink in. I can look at the sky and know it's vast, but do I feel its infinity? I can hear the waves crashing on the shore, but do I feel their rhythm inside me? That's the difference between seeing things and actually feeling them." I know many Muslims, including myself, who understand what is haram and what is halal. We recognize the rules and we understand the limits. However, knowing is not enough. If my heart does not feel the weight of sin, then slowly it turns cold. A cold heart is dangerous. It is like a body without a pulse. It may look alive, but inside it is lifeless. When people commit sins and feel nothing, they do not even realize they are breaking their souls apart. That emptiness leads to depression, addiction, and even suicide. When the heart loses its connection to Allah (God), the soul feels lost.

That is why Islam speaks so much about the qalb (the heart). It is not just an organ, it is the center of our faith. A clean heart is like Zamzam water, rich in minerals that reflect the light of Allah (God). But when it is filled with sin, distractions, and neglect, it becomes like a muddy pond. I can not see the sky and the birds in it anymore. That is why purifying the heart, cleansing it from arrogance, greed, and heedlessness, is so important to feel the peace of Allah (God) within us. This is where Sufism takes the journey even deeper. If Islam is the path, Sufism is the way I walk it. It is not just about avoiding sin, it is about feeling the presence of Allah (God) so deeply that sin loses its attraction. Sufis do not just follow the rules,

they immerse themselves in remembrance (dhikr), meditation, and self-purification so that the light of Allah (God) shines through them. I remind my sisters all the time that faith is not just about praying or fasting, it is more about what is in your heart.

Sufism is more than just a practice. It is not a checklist of dos and don'ts, but a way of living, of loving, of being. It is like a river that does not rush to the sea, but flows gently, appreciating each twist and turn. The journey itself is what transforms us, not the destination. When we walk this path with sincerity, we start to see the world differently. Every little moment becomes a reminder of Allah's presence, like sunlight filtering through the leaves, gently turning it alive. It is in these moments, in the stillness of our hearts, that we truly find Him. That is the kind of life I want. Where I am ' not just doing the actions, but feeling every step, embracing every breath, and living with a heart full of love for Allah. It is not about perfect rules or strict obedience, it is about a genuine connection that comes from the heart, from within. And that is how I want to live deeply, sincerely, and with purpose.

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Multimodal Analysis: “Arise, Optimus Prime”

Alexander Wasyliw (He/Him) is a 2nd Year student at The University of Winnipeg. He is currently majoring in Rhetoric, Writing and Communications with a minor in Theatre and Film. Both of these areas of study give him experience analyzing filmmaking techniques.

The object that I am analysing is the scene “Arise, Optimus Prime” from the movie *Transformers One*. This scene depicts the betrayal of Orion Pax at the hands of his friend D-16, spurring their respective transformations into Optimus Prime and Megatron (Cooley 01:23:23-01:29:05).

Within the film, Orion Pax and D-16 debate on how best to deal with the traitorous dictator Sentinel Prime (01:00:47). Whereas Pax wants to peacefully bring Sentinel to Justice, D-16 wants to explicitly brutalize and kill him (01:00:47). During the scene itself, Pax tries to save Sentinel but fails, getting shot instead (01:24:36). Because of his sacrifice, Pax is reborn, taking on the moniker Optimus Prime (01:28:03), whereas D-16 embraces his evil side by finally killing Sentinel and dubbing himself Megatron (01:27:52). The goal of this paper is to explore the ways in which the filmmakers use techniques like editing,

camera shots and sound to develop Optimus and Megatron's relationship and make that relationship resonate with the audience. *Transformers One* centers on this friendship and how it falls apart, so despite being about giant alien robots, the movie still needs to appeal to human emotions.



The scene uses elliptical editing. Which is editing outside of time or space. This multimodal technique shows events regardless of their chronological or physical order in the narrative (Howells 181). Because it disregards the chronology of the story, elliptical editing can show us events out of their ‘in universe’ order (Howells 181). This is usually done to create an “exciting pace” as it cuts out any non-essential action (Howells 181). This scene utilizes this technique by cutting between Optimus and Megatron. When Optimus is inside the planet, the film cuts to Megatron’s speech on the surface (01:26:54). The events are happening in the scene at the same time, but in different places in the world of the movie.

RHETORICAL ANALYSIS

Elliptical editing works in this scene to humanize the characters as well as show how the two characters differ. By placing Megatron and Optimus' defining moments back-to-back, a juxtaposition is created between them. Optimus and Megatron spend most of the movie as best friends, and this scene illustrates that friendship falling apart as they splinter off into pacifism and violence, respectively. Elliptical editing places these ideas side by side, allows these different ideas to coexist on the screen, and creates a contrast to show how different the two have become.

This multimodal technique combines the visual aspect of films with the temporal as the filmmakers make a conscious decision as to the order of visuals. Choosing to place Optimus' revival and Megatron's rampage together links their fates cinematically. They are connected in the language of the film because they are edited into one scene rather than made into two scenes.



RHETORICAL ANALYSIS

The cinematography in the scene is another multimodal technique. Optimus Prime is primarily framed through long camera shots while he is inside the planet. When Optimus is with the Primes, they are physically larger, and the camera is angled in a way that frames Optimus as much smaller (01:27:11). This cinematographic choice creates a sense of scale to the proceedings. The Primes are the closest thing Cybertron has to gods. Framing them as physically big telegraphs that they are important characters. Ironically, Optimus being smaller humanizes him by reducing his scale and bringing him to a size that is much closer to the audience. In this scene, he is no longer the biggest presence in the shots. The Primes loom over him, making him feel smaller and at a size more relatable to the audience. Optimus is no longer the big alien robot in the room, and thus feels more human.



In contrast, Megatron is shown in close-up shots. Even when he is brutalizing Sentinel Prime, his face is framed by wires and robot-guts as he scowls in anger (01:26:28). This works cinematographically to put the focus on the scene purely on his emotions. This scene is the turning point when Megatron embraces his villain persona, choosing to act in violence rather than remain peaceful. Megatron has given into his frustration and lashes out at the person who harmed him. The choice to focus on his emotions humanizes Megatron by showcasing his human-like emotions. Anger and rage are universal feelings that all humans experience, and when the camera centers itself on his reacting face the focus in the scene is squarely on his emotions. The fantastical, unrealistic violence isn't the main focus. Rather, it is Megatron's rage at the situation: a feeling more understandable to the audience. Despite being in an unrealistic scenario where Megatron kills a robotic dictator, the scene is still relatable by showing human characteristics like anger rather than the fantasy violence.

Finally, I noticed the use of shaky, handheld camerawork. During the shots where Optimus and Megatron argue about killing Sentinel, the camera shakes and moves slightly as the characters shift and argue (01:24:00). This humanizes the scene by emulating real-life recordings. *Transformers One* is an animated movie, so the camera exists virtually and thus can be perfectly stabilized. The camerawork in this scene breaks from this, with the animators consciously choosing for the scene to be shaky. This brings to mind real-life handheld recordings, which are often shaky and unstable.

This reflects the human qualities of the characters in the scene, or rather their imperfections. Shaky cameras reflect mistakes that only humans can make. The rise of digital effects has given rise to “impossible” camerawork that twists and turns (Bateman 329). The camera can now be controlled to move anywhere, even in ways that would normally cost too much money or be too difficult to achieve before (Bateman 329). Shaky cameras bring a layer of humanity by reflecting human-made imperfections. Without relying on technology to stabilize shots, shaky cameras are closer to an average person’s home recording than professionally shot footage. This works perfectly to represent the range of emotions that the characters are experiencing. The scene is messy, with two friends essentially arguing over ethics and justice, leading to one’s death. It is only fitting that the actual camerawork itself is just as shaky as the actual content of the scene.

When Megatron lets go of Optimus, a choir sings a song known as *Dies Ares*, a Latin poem describing the judgement day in which God selects mortals into heaven (01:24:13). This scene uses multimodality as films often combine different techniques to get across a specific meaning (Bateman 330). The shot combines the audio with the visuals to reflect the death of Optimus. He selflessly sacrifices himself and is resurrected by the Primes (01:27:1), matching the contents of the song. The use of *Dies Ares* matches what we see on screen, giving a dramatic flair to Optimus’ death.



The choice to use this song humanizes the scene by appealing to the viewers, rather than the world onscreen. In the world of the film, *Dies Ares* is non-diegetic, meaning that it is “not caused by any actions or events being depicted” (Bateman 331). The characters in the movie, being alien robots, don’t recognize Latin, but the audience does. This includes all the connotations that *Dies Ares* has. Films build up “institutionalized... circumstances of reception” (Bateman 331), meaning that they build upon each other to create commonly seen techniques. Choirs are often a shorthand to highlight something dramatic. If a viewer has heard a choir in a film before, they will understand that connotation and connect it to what they are seeing on screen. Even if the music is alien to the characters and setting, the audience still understands its meaning because it is a common trope. The choice to use *Dies Ares* humanizes the film because it reaches out to the audience and their shared experiences.

Transformers One contains no human characters and takes place entirely on an alien world. This setting risks the film not resonating with audiences who might struggle to empathise with such inhuman characters. Luckily, *Transformers One* uses these multimodal techniques to humanize the film. Without these choices, the drama between Optimus and Megatron is lost. This is not a movie about giant war robots, but rather a story about two friends losing each other over their differing ideologies. We have all had friends who come and go; it is a very common experience for people. Seeing these characters who have been positioned and portrayed as very humanlike appeals to the audience's empathy and emotions. The film could easily have been nothing but 90 minutes of robot violence, but by giving Optimus and Megatron real emotions and crafting the film so the audience can identify with them, these robots transcend their metallic bodies and become fully realized.

RHETORICAL ANALYSIS

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“Cultured Language”: The Reflection of Power Structure in North Korean Language in Comparison to South Korean Language

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Since the establishment of North Korea by Kim Il-Sung in 1948 after division from South Korea at the 38th parallel, language has seemingly been one of the primary ways that the regime has consolidated its power and expressed its political views. Kim Il-Sung and his government quickly began to shape and standardize language even before creation of their national

ideology, *Juche*, which demonstrates exactly how much importance was placed on language as a “a powerful weapon for revolutionary strife and construction” (Song, 2015, p.483)[1]. *Juche* itself is a quasi-religious, uniquely North Korean ideology that places emphasis on self-sufficiency in relation to politics, military and economy (Lee, 2005, p.1; Breton, 2014, p.14; Oxford English Dictionary, 2024). Analysis of the carefully planned out differences which sets North Korean language apart from South Korean language reveals not only aspects of *Juche* state ideology, but also the impacts of political control on national identity. This includes the designation of North Korean language as “cultured” (munhwaeo, 문화어) language, purification of language by replacing foreign loanwords with government-sanctioned vocabulary, and creation of reserved titles/honorifics, text formatting, and rules around tone of voice when referring to members of the Kim family. Therefore, it can be argued that the control of the North Korean dictatorship regime, along with the complex political relationship between North and South Korea has been reflected in every aspect of the North Korean language, especially in comparison to South Korean language.

North Korean language as “cultured” language

Within his 1966 talk with linguists, Kim Il-Sung designated North Korean language[1] as “cultured language”, or munhwaeo (문화어) to differentiate it from South Korean as “standard language”, or pyojuneo (표준어) (Kim, 1966, p.295). Such a designation immediately demonstrates political motivation on behalf of Kim Il-Sung to not only separate the two languages but also to impart the importance of self-sufficiency present within *Juche* onto North Korean language specifically.

Aside from applying Juche to North Korean language, Spencer Jentsch (2010) argues that this designation was a strategic case of rebranding to establish both the language and country of North Korea as superior (p.3). The word choice itself of “cultured” aligns with this establishment of superiority, as it implies that the language holds cultural significance in contrast to the word “standard”. The ease by which North Korean language was labeled as well demonstrates the control that the government has in shaping the national identity of a country, with this label often reflecting how the leader presents both the language and country as well to the rest of the world. In her work identifying the “rhetorical turn” which accompanied the name switch, Roy (2024) highlights that “[the switch] illuminates...how the question of language became deeply tied to the question of the political legitimacy of the leadership and the state” (Roy, 2024, p.203). In this sense, it can be said that the language name is a way by which power is both reflected and consolidated.

“Purification” and preservation of North Korean language **Purging of foreign loanwords**

Along with designating North Korean language as “cultured”, another way that Kim Il-Sung initially attempted to “purify” North Korean language from South Korean was by purging and replacing various loanwords from Chinese (including hanja), English, and Japanese with Korean words (Song, 2015, pp.485-486). He argued that “[North Koreans] should not copy from the language of any other country-much less take the Seoul dialect, corrupted as it is by English and Japanese, as the standard.” (1964, p.23). Once again, within this statement and

intent to banish all foreign words, there is presence of the same ideal of self-sufficiency also found within Juche. However, use of the word “corrupted” is indicative of the political relationship between North and South Korea, along with political views towards the relationships that South Korea has with America and Japan. This view still exists within North Korean government in the modern day, as in 2023 they passed the “Pyongyang Cultural Language Protection Act” which bans all use of “puppet language” and warrants a death sentence for anyone caught speaking it (Jieun Kim, 2023). The fact that such strong attitudes towards foreign words still exists more than half a century after Kim Il-Sung’s initial talk with linguists is evidence that language has the potential to reflect impacts of political viewpoints over a large span of time.

Preservation of *hangul*

The remnants of Kim Il-Sung’s decisions around language can also be seen within the writing system. In contrast to the elimination of foreign loanwords and hanja, Kim Il-Sung showed reluctance to reform the hangul writing system as he stated: If Koreans in the north and south used different alphabets, it would be impossible for them to read the letters they wrote to each other...This would bring about the serious consequence of erasing some of the common national characteristics of the Korean people and, in the end, of splitting the nation...We communists can never accept any reform of our alphabet which would divide our nation. (p.14) This sentiment itself demonstrates the complex connection and turbulent relationship between the two countries. Whilst the differences between North and South Korean language are symbolic of the divide between the two countries,

it seems that the similarities often reflect shared history and hopeful attitudes towards the potential of reunification.

Linguistic elements reserved for the Kim family

Titles, honorifics, and tone of voice

In addition to being a primary identifier of the control and political motivations stemming from the North Korean regime, language is also reflective of societal expectations around reverence toward members of the Kim family. This is mainly through reserved use for the Kim family of titles such as “Supreme Leader” or “comrade” (동지) utilized with the honorifics (께서 instead of 이/가) and even tone of voice. Tone is specifically highlighted by Sonia Ryang (2021) in her work *Language and Truth in North Korea*, where she states that when paraphrasing Kim Il-Sung, one must “select an appropriate soribitgal (literally, “color of voice”), as depending on the content of Kim Il Sung’s quoted words, one needs to use a “low but bright” voice, a “thick voice,” or a “deep voice” (Li 1975: 362–364)”. (pp.78-79). While South Koreans do use honorifics such as “께서”, they are not specifically used for members of a certain family or political leaders (“께서,” 2025). The fact that rules around these linguistic elements are built around respecting the Kim family show that their political status is both embedded within and reinforced through North Korean language.

Text formatting

Formatting is another aspect of language which is not untouched by ideology and the cult of personality surrounding the Kim family.

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In all North Korean newspapers and on their websites, the names of Kim Il-Sung, Kim Jong-Il, and Kim Jong-Un are often bolded and/or made a larger font than the surrounding text (조선의 소리, 2025; 조선중앙통신, 2025; 청년전위, 2025; Pyongyang Times, 2025)



While subtle, such a detail subconsciously draws the reader's attention to the names and offsets them, implying a higher level of importance than the rest of the text. This differs from South Korean newspapers, where certain government officials may have special titles based on their roles, but no bolding and difference in size from the rest of the text and the names of other politicians (김, 2025). From analysis of this example, it is evident that even through the basic formatting of text that one can view how different the power structures are between North and South Korea.

Conclusion

To conclude, it is evident that various aspects within the initial standardization of North Korean language reflect not only the political power structure and ideology of Juche in North Korea, but also the complex relationship and division between the two countries of North and South Korea. These aspects are reflected in every part of the language and remain in some form today, including its designation as “cultured” language, purification of foreign loan words and reserved titles, honorifics, and even tone of voice relating to members of the Kim family. The reflection of power structure and politics is only amplified when comparing the similarities and differences between North Korean language and South Korean language, especially in reference to Kim Il-Sung's hesitancy to change the hangul writing system due to the potential of reunification. Ultimately, the nuances between North and South Korean language are just as complex and multifaceted as the history and relationship in and around the border of North and South Korea.

Future Research

Due to the controlled nature of North Korean media and language, I acknowledge that it is difficult to expand the scope of research beyond analyzing what has already been released by the North Korean government. However, I believe that future research should focus on updating resources produced by the North Korean government on language to determine how the language has developed and if this development reflects current political motivations. I had incredible difficulty searching for updated dictionaries and vocabulary handbooks, with almost all of the ones I could find being from the 1990s and prior.

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Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women in Canada

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They are passionate about learning, growth, and making a meaningful impact.

The National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls in Canada reports that “Indigenous women and girls are 12 times more likely to be murdered or missing than any other women in Canada.” This statistic highlights the severity of the crisis of Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls (MMIWG). The MMIWG crisis is rooted in systemic factors that have marginalized Indigenous women for decades. Systemic racism refers to unfair biases and discrimination that are exacerbated by law enforcement and the justice system, resulting in cases involving missing and murdered Indigenous women being handled with less urgency or not investigated thoroughly. The lack of justice in MMIWG cases remains a disheartening reality for many Indigenous families and communities.

Colonial policies, such as the residential school system, the child welfare system, and the Indian Act, have significantly contributed to the inequalities and intergenerational trauma experienced by Indigenous women and families. These colonial policies are government-enforced laws designed to assimilate, control, and displace Indigenous peoples in Canada.

Misrepresentation in the media further reveals negative portrayals of Indigenous women, often employing victim-blaming tactics that reinforce harmful stereotypes, reduce public awareness, and diminish the perceived urgency for action. The ongoing crisis of missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls in Canada is a profound consequence of entrenched systemic racism, marginalization driven by colonial policies, and persistent misrepresentation in the media.

Systemic racism plays a fundamental role in the MMIWG crisis. It perpetuates violence against Indigenous women by neglecting their rights to safety and dignity. One of the most prominent examples is the lack of urgency and attention given to legal cases involving MMIWG compared to non-Indigenous victims. Law enforcement often fails to respond urgently to cases of missing Indigenous women, likely due to preconceived stereotypes and biases. In many cases, police have assumed Indigenous women and girls had run away or were involved in high-risk lifestyles, rather than treating their disappearances as potential crimes from the outset. A recent example of systemic racism is the government's refusal to search a landfill site for the remains of missing Indigenous

women in Manitoba. In an article by Leon Laidlaw, scholars describe these cases as “a glaring example of the most heinous effects of anti-Indigenous racism within white settler societies, the gendered and sexualized dimensions of genocide that result in the violence, murders, and disposal of Indigenous women... and the systemic racism of policing that results in the neglect and utter lack for respect and dignity for victims and their families ... which is intensified in the Prairie city of Winnipeg” (Laidlaw 55).

Despite calls to action from families and community members, the refusal to search the landfill vividly reflects the failure to prioritize justice for MMIWG and their families. The ongoing neglect of MMIWG cases by law enforcement reveals how systemic racism continues to deny Indigenous women and their families the justice and protection they deserve.

Colonial policies have created profound inequalities that put Indigenous women and girls at risk. The Indian Act is one such example of how Indigenous women have been marginalized and forced into colonial assimilation. Under the Indian Act, Indigenous women would lose their treaty status and associated rights if they married a non-Indigenous man. This policy severed Indigenous women from their communities, as the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls contends: “[This law ensures] encounters between First Nations women and ‘Canadians’ resulted in dramatically reducing the number of people for whom the government claimed responsibility” (NIMMIWG 250). According to the National Inquiry, “for those who became

‘non-Status’ through [the Indian Act], the dangers of being expelled from their communities often compounded existing dangers” (250). These harmful policies increased the vulnerability of Indigenous women by cutting them off from community ties, limiting band support, and devaluing their identities.

The Indian Act’s residential school system was used as a tactic to assimilate Indigenous peoples by forcibly removing Indigenous children from their homes and families and placing them in schools where they suffered abuse and cultural genocide. The National Inquiry reports, “a key point in all of this history is that it isn’t just ‘history.’ Although they might look different now, these policies and the structures and ideas that feed them are still around today and are still forms of violence” (NIMMIWG 312). The lasting effects of residential schools include intergenerational trauma, family separation, and loss of cultural identity, which have made generations of Indigenous families more vulnerable to poverty and violence. The mistreatment of Indigenous children has played a significant role in reinforcing harmful attitudes that continue to affect Indigenous women and girls today.

Misrepresentation in the media plays a significant role in the MMIWG crisis by reinforcing damaging stereotypes. Indigenous women are often portrayed as leading high-risk lifestyles, such as involvement in crime and addictions. Sana Shah notes that “the depiction of Indigenous women and girls as defiant and deviant has been prevalent in mainstream media narratives of MMIWG” (Shah 19).

Indigenous women receive less media attention, and when their stories are covered, they are often framed in ways that emphasize personal struggles, playing into harmful stereotypes. The lack of fair and accurate representation perpetuates continued violence against Indigenous women and girls without accountability. According to the Final Report by the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, “on average, missing or murdered white women received three times more coverage than Indigenous women did” (NIMMIWG 388). The Inquiry also found that media coverage of non-Indigenous missing and murdered women was more extensive and detailed, highlighting their social status, personalities, significance to families, and ambitions compared to coverage of Indigenous women. The harm caused by inadequate media representation leads to systemic neglect, reinforces stereotypes, and is a significant barrier to receiving the urgency these cases deserve.

The number of missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls in Canada is far more than a simple statistic. It is a devastating reality resulting from persistent discrimination, colonial oppression, and damaging media narratives. Injustices related to MMIWG have left many Indigenous families searching for answers and communities fighting for change. Acknowledging the problem is only the first step; real progress requires intentional action. Such actions include clearer legal protections and stricter enforcement, responsible and fair media representation, and meaningful, accessible, culturally sensitive support for Indigenous women and girls. Without change, this crisis will continue to cause devastation and

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trauma for Indigenous families and communities. Canada and its citizens have a responsibility to confront the past and build a future where Indigenous women and girls are valued, protected, and receive the justice they deserve.

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Eclipsed Hearts: A love that never was

by Kanwal Afaq

"They say that stars are born from the remnants of great explosions, but no one ever told Kochab that love could ignite just as fiercely."

In the quiet depths of space, where galaxies spun their endless dances and nebulae glowed with the hues of forgotten dreams, Kochab was a lone figure. She drifted through life with a heavy weight on her chest, cloaked in a veil of quiet desolation. Her heart was a frozen wasteland, hardened by the betrayals of those she once trusted. Each day, she retreated further into her own world, seeking solace in the solitude that surrounded her. As a middle child, Kochab often felt overshadowed and overlooked. Her siblings were loud and boisterous, while she remained in the shadows, unnoticed and forgotten. She longed for connection and companionship, but found herself lost in her own thoughts instead. Each night, she would wander through the cold, dark streets of her hometown. The silence of the deserted streets mirrored the emptiness she felt inside.

It was during one of these lonely walks that she stumbled upon him. A man stood in the moonlit alleyway, his hazel eyes glistening like pools of liquid honey that pierced through her soul and held her gaze in a hypnotic trance.

As soon as Kochab's gaze met his, she felt a rush of blood to her cheeks and a flutter in her chest as she fell under his spell. It was as if he could see straight into her soul, drawing out all of her deepest secrets. She couldn't resist the desire to get closer to this mysterious stranger. His soft, velvety lips were a tender invitation for her to trace their contours. She longed to run her hands along his milky skin that seemed to glow in the moonlight. His dark, luscious hair completed the picture of perfection, making her want to drown herself in its scent and never resurface. But as quickly as the wave of desire washed over her, it was replaced by deep sadness and hesitation. Memories flooded back to her mind. Memories of past betrayals and heartbreaks that had left her wounded and guarded. She couldn't bring herself to reveal the depth of her feelings for fear of being hurt again. Like a fragile flower sheltered from harsh winds, Kochab held back from fully surrendering herself to this enchanting man. Little did she know, he would be the one to slowly melt away the ice that had encased her heart for so long.

After she stumbled onto Deneb from a crack in the pavement, she said, "Thank you for saving me from tripping," grateful for his quick reflexes. Deneb smiled warmly at her and replied, "No problem." From that moment on, they were inseparable. Kochab found herself confiding in Deneb, sharing her deepest fears and dreams with him. His gentle, reassuring words were like a warm embrace during moments of doubt. He would often tease her by calling her cute, causing her cheeks to flush with shyness.

Their late-night walks were filled with laughter, but also hushed confessions and secrets shared under the stars.

As they strolled through the quiet streets at night, their footsteps echoed like a melancholic symphony. With each passing night, their bond grew stronger, but so did Kochab's unspoken love for Deneb. She struggled with the weight of her feelings, unsure if they were reciprocated or if she was simply imagining them. Years passed, and their friendship deepened into something more profound. But still, Kochab kept her feelings hidden, afraid of losing their precious connection. Until one day, she could no longer bear the weight of her love and whispered to herself through tears, "My heart belongs to you, Deneb. My love is an ache that never fades." Every time she looked into his eyes, she saw her reflection and knew that he felt the same way. Their love remained unspoken but ever-present, a beautiful secret between two hearts.

Kochab, trembling with nerves and shyness, chose to pour her heart out in a letter on April 17, 2023, instead of facing Deneb directly. Each page was carefully written and then delicately burnt at the edges. Alongside the letter, she gifted him a bouquet of paper flowers, each petal a testament to her feelings, and a small cardiac necklace that glimmered like stars in the night sky. Days later, when they met again, Kochab stood in front of Deneb, their bodies tense. He returned everything. His words pierced through Kochab's soul like icy daggers,

It's not possible. It won't work." The pain was unbearable as she tore up every page of the letter in front of his eyes, the flames of her love now turned to ash. She wore the necklace he handed back, its weight heavy with unspoken dreams.

Through tear-stained cheeks, Kochab questioned him, "Why can't we be together?" He explained that his past relationships had left him scarred and that there were differences in their beliefs and a significant age gap. He was 31 and agnostic, while she was just 19 and held onto her faith dearly. His refusal cast her into a sea of despair, where tears flowed freely and prayers were whispered desperately into the night. It took an eternity to begin to mend the shattered pieces of her heart, but she was still broken inside. Yet Deneb remained her close friend throughout her darkness. He even admitted, "I had a feeling you liked me," which only added salt to her wounds.

Deneb was the only one who remembered her birthday and wished her well. When she asked if he had gotten her a present, he remained silent, then pulled her into a tight hug. "This is your present," he whispered in her ear. His embrace sent a shiver down her spine, her heart racing, overwhelmed by his gesture. Even now, his gaze lingers on hers as if she is the only girl who holds the secrets of the universe, despite others vying for his attention.

The cold air bit at their noses as they strolled through the park, their footsteps crunching on fallen leaves. Kochab and Deneb's breath formed small clouds in front of them as they walked, the moon casting a mystical aura over the world around them.

As they reached the end of their journey, Kochab's heart grew heavy with sadness, knowing this would be their last time together. She had spent countless nights like this with Deneb, walking and talking for hours. But now, it was all coming to an end. She couldn't help but wonder if there was anything she could have done differently to change their fate.

Sensing her emotions, Deneb turned to her with a gentle smile. It was a smile that she had fallen in love with, so warm and reassuring. But as he wrapped his arm around her, she couldn't help but wonder if it was all just an act to comfort her. As they said their goodbyes, Kochab turned to take one last look at Deneb. "Goodbye, Deneb," she whispered, her voice barely audible amidst the loud beating of her heart. He nodded, his expression unreadable as always, before walking away into the night. Kochab stood there for a while longer, watching him fade into the darkness of the night, her heart breaking with every step he took. It was as if a part of her was leaving with him, and she couldn't help but feel utterly broken inside.

Kochab's feelings for Deneb only seemed to grow stronger. She tried to convince herself that she was better off without him, that she deserved someone who could reciprocate her love, but deep down, she knew that her heart belonged to him and him alone. With each passing day, Kochab found herself clinging to a fragile hope, a glimmer of possibility that maybe, just maybe, Deneb would come to realize his true feelings for her. She held onto this hope like a lifeline.

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But as the years turned into decades, Kochab realized that sometimes, love was not about happy endings or fairy tale romances. Sometimes, love was simply about the journey, about the moments shared and the memories made along the way. So, as Kochab looked to the future, she did so with a sense of peace and acceptance, knowing that though her heart may have been broken, it would always hold a special place for Deneb, the man who had captured her heart and soul so many years ago. And though their paths may have diverged, Kochab knew that their love would never truly die, for true love was eternal, transcending time and space to unite two souls in a bond that could never be broken.

Made of Plastic, Born of Flesh

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Her hair is blonde like mine, but her eyes are blue like the sea, whereas mine are green like emeralds. My hair smells of a fragrance, fresh from a wash, whereas her hair is factory-made, fragrant less, and her skin is plastic to the touch. Yet, I choose to pretend that her eyes sparkle and her skin is soft and smooth. I choose to pretend that her blonde hair comes from me and that her blue eyes are a genetic anomaly. A doll gifted to a young person is like gifting them a child: will not drop her, I will not hurt her, I will put her to bed and dress her up. A child's imagination often imitates life, like motherhood, or the ever-consuming dream to grow up. Her name is Brianne, and like a mother's child she is my first favorite thing.

Brianne is not an ordinary doll; she is a Canadian Girl doll with a unique story that details who she is, what she enjoys, and where she comes from. According to her backstory, Brianne was born and raised on a farm in Onanole, Manitoba with dreams of someday becoming a farmer or ballerina. Her story is written, not to limit a child's imagination, but to enhance it. I envision myself on that farm alongside her, with her horses, cows, and an open field to run and play. I imagine a life different from mine – one where I ride horses as a hobby and take Brianne to her ballet classes. Her story opens a world of possibilities for my imagination to explore. Yet, it always circles back to one recurring theme that many little girls dream of – motherhood.

Through her backstory, I felt a genuine connection to Brianne. She was raised in the same province that I grew up in, and in a town that my family would pass through on our way to Riding Mountain National Park. My connection to Brianne extended to the town of Onanole; it felt as if I knew it. It felt as if I had lived there too. That is how imagination works as a child: you become deeply invested in a story and intertwine with its narrative, and Brianne's story was particularly compelling. As a city girl who's access to farmland was seemingly a world away I could still imagine another place and another life so vividly.

In almost every game I played as a child I imagined myself older. Sometimes I was a teenager, experiencing the kind of love I learned from Disney – the unconditional, flower-buying, sweet-nothings kind of love.

The love that sparked misconceptions about what finding love is really like. Other times, I pictured myself as an adult, as a mother. There is a tinge of shame when a feminist-thinking woman admits that, despite having big dreams as a child, one of her most cherished aspirations was to grow up and become a mother. As my story shows, society plants the idea of motherhood in girls' minds from a young age, often through the marketing of dolls that we are encouraged to care for and protect. In the past, I grew to resent this idea. However, I have since realized that learning to love something with a heartbeat, even in a child's imagination, fosters empathy. This is where Brianne played a significant role in my young life. The issue is not in a feminist confessing that she wanted something less ambitious than her current goals; rather, it is that boys are not given the same opportunity to dream of parenthood and learn empathy in the same way that girls do. Brianne taught me to care for someone other than myself. I can not help but wonder whether if boys had the same opportunity to learn it as well, perhaps the world would be a better place. Perhaps women and men can form deeper and healthier bonds if men had the opportunities to know more about caring.

I still have her. She is in a box in the back of my closet with all her clothes, in the box she came in. Her hair is messy, and she has ink on her chin, but other than that she remains unscathed. I have taken her out of the box recently, waiting to feel what I felt as a child, but it never came.

I had lost touch with the idea of her, the imagining of who she could be, the soft skin, and the scent of her hair fresh from a wash. She was just a doll, a creepy doll. After taking her out of my closet, putting her on the ground, and then going to bed, I imagined her crawling out of the box in the middle of the night. I had to put her in the hallway so that I could get some sleep. It became clear that over time – from when my doll used to sleep in my room to when she caused nightmarish thoughts – I had grown up and my imagination had darkened. The child-like innocence I had when I played with her was gone. I still remember it when I look at her. There is something special about keeping a childhood item safe for all those years, and even though I have lost touch with those feelings I had for Brianne, I am keeping a part of my childhood alive by keeping her. She is more than just a doll.

NARRATIVE



Brianne and her journal in the present day (2025)

Please Just Hear Me: Fighting for My Life Against Medical Discrimination

Content warning: *This narrative contains depiction of self harm.*

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Like a swarm of bees whose nest had been smashed, my mind was a flurry of dark thoughts, fear, loneliness, and despair. I ran, as if on autopilot with manic purpose. I found myself with cold steel pressed so tight against my head it hurt, and then I squeezed... Nothing, nothing happened as I realized I had made a horrible mistake. “What the fuck did I just do” I screamed through tears as I dropped my shotgun and collapsed to the floor crying harder than I ever had before. For the next few hours, I sat in that room replaying my entire life in my mind, and then finally snapping out of my hypnosis by noticing how beautifully blue the sky was. My life, my struggles with depression, and my health had reached one of

the worst possible conclusions. Yet I am still alive, still alive because my niece had been using the safety as a fidget while we packed up from our hunting trip a few days before. Call it chance, luck of the draw, or divine intervention, the safety landed on safe, and my life was spared. I did not know it at the time, but this event would be the catalyst for me finally fighting to save my life, fighting to get doctors to see past my obesity and take my health issues seriously.

If a person goes to the doctor, they expect to be helped. A person experiencing back pain goes to the hospital, gets an X-ray, examination, and with any luck, answers. That kind of service could not be further from the truth if you are one of the roughly 9 million Canadians who are obese (Elflein, 2024). In 2013, after falling off a piece of equipment at work, I went to the doctor. I was told that my weight was the issue, and to lose weight. I accept that my obesity plays a role in my health and overall well-being, but it cannot be the only cause, right? Well, if I were to listen to my first two family doctors, the answer to all my life's issues is to lose weight! Knee pain? "Lose weight!" Depression? "Lose weight," Single? "Lose weight," just like that, all of life's problems were solved with the least helpful advice I have ever received from anyone in my life. Imagine doctors telling paralyzed patients: "You are not trying hard enough to walk."

Losing weight was not going to fix the fact that my body does not produce testosterone. I was experiencing all the symptoms, never mind the fact that I have a documented and

obvious physiological issue from birth, which would cause this. Yet the day I asked my doctor about testing me for it, she responded with such hate and anger in her face and voice, I worried that I had possibly said something wrong. “I will not sit here and let you try to find something to blame your obesity on!” She shouted at me. So, I did what may have been the wrong thing to do in that situation. I used the fact that I am an extremely large man, and she is a very small woman, to my advantage. Imagine if you will, Thor from the god of War video game, a 6-foot-tall, 470-pound man with a massive red beard jumping to his feet towering over the doctor. “Just run the fucking test! It costs you nothing, and if it comes back normal, hell if it comes back low normal, I will drop it!” I demanded in a voice booming with anger that felt like it shook the world. She relented, giving me the paperwork.

Why did it have to come to that? The short answer is discrimination. Two-thirds of obese Canadians experience medical discrimination (Puhl RM, 2021). I also had to work hard to stop judging others based on their weight. I would assume other obese people were lazy, even though at over 500 pounds, I hiked to the top of a mountain in Jasper. We are trained by society and the media to think that thin is healthy, obesity makes us ugly and unwanted in all aspects of society. It teaches us that this is our fault, and no one is going to help us. This leads to outcomes where obese people may stop going to the doctor. Why would you take time off work to be judged and bullied by a person in a white coat who seems to hate you? You know what they are going to say anyway. So, you ignore

the problem, and slowly your health, your mobility, and your life gets worse. Until one day, some doctor will write “complications due to obesity” on your death certificate.

There are good doctors out there, those who will listen and run tests to find the causes. I ended up changing doctors after mine called me and said: “Your test came back; your testosterone is 5 nmol/L I have referred you to a specialist” in a tone that sounded both annoyed and defeated. For those who may not know, the low normal for men is 10-15 nmol/L. My depression? It is gone like a light switch being turned on; the darkness is instantly replaced with light. My knee pain? It turns out I have a severe vitamin D deficiency. With just two tiny pills a day, and after 3 months, I can walk up and down stairs again. Things seem to be changing for the better. When talking to friends who are also obese, they have reported that they are also finding doctors who do not discriminate against their size. Funding for obesity research has doubled since 2008, leading to a greater understanding of causes and treatments for obese people (Williams, 2024). Organizations like Obesity Canada have done amazing work providing resources and training to medical staff, helping advocate for the health and well-being of obese people.

When I reflect on the struggles I faced in trying to fight my way through the medical system, I cannot help but feel some sadness for those who have not yet found their voice. However, that sadness is mixed with the hope I feel for the changes I see in the system and society in general. Seeing

more doctors helping obese people instead of judging them, I wonder how long until obesity is universally treated as the chronic health condition it is and not the failings of an individual. As for my future, it looks bright. I have been assigned a team of doctors, specialists, and other medical professionals as I work to sort out my health issues in preparation for bariatric surgery. While enjoying the last of the warmth of summer, I lay in the grass staring up at a clear blue sky. I found myself overwhelmed by the beauty of life and ended up crying for the first time since my suicide attempt. Not because I was sad, but because I realized that for the first time in my life, I truly have hope for the future.

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An Archetype for Madness: How Joker (2019) Uses Signs to Depict a Societal View of Mental Illness

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While Batman is always the main character of the eponymous franchise, he would be nothing without his iconic rival, The Joker. I would like to focus on for the purpose of this paper is the 2019 film *Joker*. My intent of this paper is to use semiotics as a method of rhetorical critique to answer the question: How does *Joker* (2019) use semiotic concepts to reinforce an underlying theme of the societal view of mental illness? I will do this by analyzing the key iconic, indexical, and symbolic signs in *Joker* that depict madness, followed by reporting on how the utilization of these signs contributes to my analysis, and then describing the contribution my semiotic analysis makes to the knowledge of *Joker* as an artifact.

Firstly, I will provide some context about *Joker* (2019). The film follows Arthur Fleck, a party clown aspiring to be a stand-up comedian. Arthur lives in the lower class of Gotham City with his dying mother. He faces constant torment and ridicule from his coworkers, boss, mother, and even random passersbyers. Arthur Fleck's life goes downhill when Arthur gets fired from his party clown job after a gun falls out of his pocket while working a gig at a children's hospital. On his way home after being fired, still in full-face clown makeup, Arthur is harassed and then assaulted by three well-known businessmen who coincidentally work for Batman's alter ego, Bruce Wayne. In retaliation, Arthur shoots and kills all three men and leaves the crime scene without a trace. Once the news of the killings is released, the public becomes divided into the elite who condemn the killings and the poor who become avid supporters and protestors in favour of killing the rich. As a result of Arthur's clown attire, they begin wearing clown masks and face paint to show their support of Arthur. After much chaos, the ending of the film finds Arthur Fleck as a patient in an insane asylum, fully embracing his identity as the *Joker* with no hope of turning back.

My critical approach to answering the research question is semiotics. David Chandler defines semiotics as "the study not only of what we refer to as 'signs' in everyday speech, but of anything which 'stands for' something else" (2). Some key figures in the field of semiotics were Charles Sanders Pierce and Ferdinand de Saussure. Pierce was an American logician who "studied how signs shape our individual understanding of physical reality" (Riera).

Saussure stated that semiotics “referred to the constitution of signs, and elements governing them. According to him, linguistics, psychology, and society are parts of semiology as a general science” (Dweich et al, 273). Therefore, because semiotics can be applied in many ways, it is important to distinguish that for the purpose of this paper, I will be applying a mainly Pierce and Saussurian semiotic approach.

To begin this analysis, it is important to find the signs represented in this film. Regarding semiotics, “signs take the form of words, images, sounds, odours, flavours, acts or objects, but such things have no intrinsic meaning and become signs only when we invest them with meaning. Anything can be a sign if someone interprets it as ‘signifying’ something – referring to or standing for something other than itself” (Chandler, 17). Another aspect of signs is differentiating between the signifier and the signified, which a sign is comprised of. The signifier is any material that signifies something, whereas the signified is the concept that a signifier refers to (*uvm.edu*). Lastly, to truly understand how signs function, we must distinguish between the three different types of signs. The three types of signs are “iconic” (those which are not arbitrary, the signifier resembles the signified), “indexical” (the signifier is caused by the signified), and “symbolic” (the relation between signifier and signified is purely conventional and culturally specific).

In *Joker*, I have identified one of each type of sign. The first sign identified as the “indexical” is Joker’s laugh. In this film, Arthur Fleck suffers from a rare mental disorder called

Pseudobulbar Affect (PBA), in which uncontrollable laughing occurs. Therefore, Joker's laugh is a literal or causational representation, or sign, of his mental illness. One might also say that the card in which Arthur has to carry with him that reads "Forgive my laughter: I have a Condition" (*Joker*, 0:08:49), is an indexical sign for his mental disorder. Hence, the signifier in this is Arthur's laugh (or his medical card) and the signified is his mental illness.

Now for the "iconic" sign: Arthur's drawn-on smile. One can recognize that an absurdly wide smile is most often associated with madness. Moreover, it is often the big smile that is the most notable trait in the portrayal of "crazy" and "evil" characters in film. Some examples for reference include: the iconic "Here's Johnny" image of Jack Nicholson in *The Shining* (1980) and the titular character Venom in *Venom* (2018).

Therefore, Arthur's deteriorating mental health and descent into further madness is iconically represented through his drawn-on smile: the signifier resembling the signified.

The last form of sign represented is the "symbolic," which is the title/character of "Joker." Let me elaborate because this may seem confusing. Many sources have stated that the Joker may not be the same person in all adaptations of the character. For example, a writer for *TheReclinerSeat.Wordpress.com* states:

The film is interestingly titled 'Joker' and not 'Arthur', because it is rarely about Arthur... He is nothing more than a realization of the metaphor that Joker is...A voice of anarchy, a presence of a disturbing mind that asks uncomfortable questions.

Ultimately, Todd Phillips' movie is not really about Arthur. It is about the birth of Joker. Not as an individual, but as an idea, a metaphor that is too strong to be limited to one Arthur Fleck. (2019)

Therefore, it is evident to argue the name, Joker refers to any character archetype within the Gotham universe who has been drawn to madness. This makes this a symbolic sign because one can make the connection between the Joker archetype and madness through a culturally specific understanding of who this character is in the Gotham universe. This is an arbitrary symbol of madness because if one is not familiar with the Joker in all Gotham universe adaptations, this connection between the Joker and madness would never be made.

Now, what do these findings mean for my semiotic analysis of *Joker*? By deciphering the three most important kinds of signs (iconic, indexical, symbolic), we get a better idea of what message the film is attempting to communicate. All three uses of these signs within the film convey an overall representation of Arthur Fleck's descending mental health which turns to madness. The indexical sign of Arthur's laugh gives the receiver a literal representation of Arthur's mental illness. We learn that he suffers from a rare neurological disorder in which he suffers random outbursts of laughter in uncomfortable situations. Next, the iconic Joker smile is a universally understood symbol of not only the Joker character, but of a "crazy" villain archetype in popular culture. Therefore, by seeing this iconic symbol in *Joker* (2019),

one can attach this meaning to the sign and see that the smile is signifying Arthur's madness. The symbolic sign of the name Joker, signifies a conventionally recognized archetype of Batman's arch nemesis within the Batman franchise.

This analysis of *Joker* contributes to an overall knowledge of the film because it allows the receiver to look at the film through a semiotic lens. When the film first came out, there was some discourse over whether it was deserving of the awards and praise it received. It also stirred controversy regarding its representation of mental illness. People felt it did not represent mental illness accurately and many were offended. Hence, I believe that this analysis can shift the understanding of the film. On the surface, there are aspects of the film that very well might come off as offensive to the mental health community; however, by applying the film's use of semiotic signs, one might be more open-minded as to why those choices were made by the filmmakers. After careful analysis, it can be understood that the film was not a mockery of mental illness but rather a representation of how society continues to mistreat the mentally ill community.

In conclusion, the 2019 film *Joker* uses the semiotic indexical, iconic, and symbolic signs to represent the mental struggles of the main character, Arthur Fleck. Fleck is depicted as a mentally unstable individual; this is represented through specific semiotic signs such as his laugh, his iconic smile, and the name "Joker."

RHETORICAL CRITIQUE

Therefore, by using these semiotic concepts, the film is able to reinforce the message that society has a misinformed idea of mental illness – automatically assumes that anyone suffering, is mad and undeserving of help.

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A Feminist Discourse Analysis of the #BringBackOurGirls Campaign: Digital Activism and the Fight Against Gender-Based Violence

Blaise Munga is a third-year psychology student at University of Winnipeg. Born in Bukavu, DRC, they moved to Canada in 2007. Blaise is passionate about understanding human behaviour and recently found an interest in the rhetoric used in kleptocratic regimes where it exacerbates systemic instability and threatens the rights of women and children.

In April 2014, Boko Haram, a militant Islamist group, kidnapped 276 schoolgirls from Chibok, Nigeria. The attack ignited global outrage and exposed gender-based violence, government inaction, and systemic patriarchy.

The Nigerian government's dismissal of the abduction, coupled with discriminatory laws, such as those requiring married women to seek spousal permission for passports, highlights the institutionalized patriarchal system within the country (Akpojiwi 19). The #BringBackOurGirls campaign emerged as a feminist digital movement that mobilized millions on media demanding accountability for their safe return. At its core, the campaign argued that the abduction was not an isolated tragedy, but a direct consequence of patriarchal systems that undermined their lives and education. The state's complicity in reinforcing gendered hierarchies is evidenced by President Buhari's 2016 remarks, "My wife belongs to my kitchen" and "I claim superior knowledge over her" (Akpojiwi 22).

Applying feminist discourse analysis (FDA), which investigates the role of language in maintaining or resisting gendered hierarchies, this paper argues that the campaign redefined narratives of gender-based violence by transforming the abducted girls from passive victims into symbols of political resistance. Activists, through hashtags, tweets, and digital protest materials, amplified marginalized voices that reframed girlhood as a site of feminist struggle, and critiqued patriarchal state inaction. While the movement demonstrated the power of digital activism to stimulate global solidarity, it also revealed critical limitations in translating online discourse into tangible political change, highlighting both the emancipatory potential and inherent constraints of feminist social media activism.

The abduction of the Chibok schoolgirls was a pivotal moment in Nigeria's struggle against gendered violence. Boko Haram militants targeted the Government Girls' Secondary School in Chibok, kidnapping 276 girls who were preparing for exams and resisting extremist ideologies that criminalize women's education. The government's delayed and dismissive response, including false claims that the abduction had been circumvented, fueled public outrage. Nigerian feminists, activists, and grieving families mobilized by staging protests in Abuja and coining the slogan "Bring Back Our Girls" to condemn state negligence. Innocent Chiluwa and Presley Ifukor document how campaigners condemned the government's lethargy with terms like "damn fools" and "idiots," framing its inaction as a systemic failure to protect the abducted girls (281).

What began as a local outcry soon evolved into a global digital movement. The hashtag #BringBackOurGirls spread rapidly across social media, drawing attention from figures like Michelle Obama and Malala Yousafzai (Chiluwa and Ifukor 269). Folasewa Olatunde documents that the hashtag originated from Nigerian activist Ibrahim Abdullahi's tweet, inspired by Obiageli Ezekwesili and that within days "several international groups, personalities and media began to refer to the movement as 'Bring Back Our Girls'" (202), increasing its rapid global co-optation. Although its virality amplified pressure on the Nigerian government, the campaign's feminist origins, framing the abduction as systemic patriarchal violence, often clashed with oversimplified global narratives.

Olatunde's analysis of Twitter data reveals that, despite the hashtag's global reach, only three of the top twenty most active nations in the discourse were African (286). Moreover, western voices, including the performative engagement of public figures like Michelle Obama who tweeted once before fading from the spotlight (290), sometimes overshadowed the campaign's grassroots origins and its feminist message. In analyzing the campaign, FDA shows how activists strategically employed rhetoric to counter patriarchal narratives. On Nigerian Twitter, phrases like "Our Girls" and "Education is Not a Crime" reframed the abduction as a political issue (Akpojiwi 30-31). Beatriz Revelles Benavente critiques the campaign's lack of intersectionality and its univocal representation, noting that the digital campaign's focus on the notion of "girl" falls into representationalist traps by simplifying the girls' identities and experiences (251). She introduces the concept of "intra-sectionality" to address this issue, emphasizing that the girls' experiences must be understood through a relational lens that transcends Western notions of girlhood. In this context, Revelles-Benavente argues that the campaign, while aiming for solidarity, often "colonizes" the voices of the girls, turning them into passive symbols rather than empowering them as active agents in their own struggle (250). Chijioke K Onah further contends that such performative solidarity by global figures, like Michelle Obama, reinforced Western-centric narratives, overshadowing the contributions of grassroots activists (301). Ultimately, though viral campaigns raise awareness and create "portable monuments" of cultural memory (311), they often fail to catalyze systemic change.

The campaign's most transformative achievement was its subversion of patriarchal victimhood narratives. FDA illuminates how phrases like "Our Girls" reframed the abduction as a shared political failure, rejecting tropes that isolate survivors of gender-based violence. This rhetorical shift fostered a sense of shared responsibility and politicized the abduction. Transforming what might have been viewed as private tragedies into an inclusive demand for accountability, the slogan "Education is Not a Crime" explicitly linked the girls' plight to systemic attacks on their autonomy, countering victim-blaming narratives and resonating globally. Moreover, as Chilwa and Ifukor emphasize, the #BringBackOurGirls campaign on social media went beyond simply demanding the release of the Nigerian schoolgirls kidnapped by Boko Haram. It also served as a powerful platform to advocate for the fundamental right of girls to receive formal education (267). They further highlight that the abduction of the Chibok schoolgirls was a clear demonstration of Boko Haram's resistance to Western cultural influence, particularly their opposition to the education of women and girls. This act revealed the deep intersection between gender-based oppression and religious extremism, emphasizing how the two forces combined to target the education and empowerment of girls (268).

However, the campaign's reliance on digital platforms risked reducing profound trauma to viral slogans because the rapid spread of hashtags often oversimplifies the complex realities behind these issues. While hashtags like #BringBackOurGirls generated significant visibility, they struggled to address the

systemic neglect of girls' education or secure their release, exposing the gap between symbolic solidarity and structural change. Chiluba and Ifukor warn that such efforts may become "mere slacktivism" (270). This contradiction is a central critique of digital activism, as global visibility and rapid virality often strip local struggles of their political complexity, reducing nuanced issues to simplistic slogans that fail to drive lasting change.

Additionally, the movement's global reach also exposed contradictions in transnational feminist solidarity. The hashtag unified diverse audiences, from Nigerian mothers to international celebrities, but it was co-opted by Western figures, recentering the narrative on performative allyship rather than on structural change. Revelles-Benavente illustrates how figures such as Michelle Obama or former British Prime Minister David Cameron adopted slogans and performed concern without engaging with the underlying systemic issues (254). This performative allyship recentered the narrative on western saviourism, suppressing the campaign's grassroots origins and sidelining Nigerian feminist demands. Moreover, FDA emphasizes that the brevity of digital activism in slogans like "Education is Not a Crime," oversimplified the demands and failed to address systemic issues such as poverty or extremism. The fleeting nature of social media attention, with public engagement waning once the hashtag stopped trending, hindered progress toward long-term objectives. The campaign's enduring legacy underlines the fundamental paradox of digital activism, as social media

can generate unprecedented global visibility, but this exposure rarely translates into concrete justice. More than a decade after the abduction and the #BringBackOurGirls movement went viral, over 80 Chibok girls are still in captivity according to Amnesty International. This unfortunately demonstrates the disconnect between viral awareness and substantive outcomes. Onah suggests that the media's insatiable need for content and its constant recycling of information is the *sine qua non* of local memory discourses transcending borders, thus contributing to the creation of a global memory culture (301-302). Yet, despite this global attention, no concrete resolutions have been reached. Moreover, FDA indicates how hashtags prioritize symbolic gestures over structural solutions. Though #BringBackOurGirls condemned attacks on education, it could not challenge the patriarchal systems enabling Boko Haram or Nigeria's underfunding of schools, illustrating what Onah describes as the disconnect between "the archival possibilities of new media technology" and actual political change (Yékú & Ojebode in Onah 303).

Global solidarity, as demonstrated by the campaign, frequently depoliticized the girls' struggle by portraying them as universal symbols of oppression, rather than addressing their specific geopolitical contexts. As FDA highlights, discourse alone is insufficient to dismantle patriarchy. Meaningful change requires the integration of online mobilization with offline efforts, including grassroots organizing and policy reform. This is a tension that is evident in Onah's analysis of literary testimonials like Andrea

Hoffmann and Patience Ibrahim's *A Gift from Darkness: How I Escaped with My Daughter from Boko Haram*, which shows how sustained and nuanced narratives provide a more comprehensive understanding of the girls' experiences in contrast to the fleeting and often superficial nature of hashtag activism. Unlike viral campaigns these literary texts preserve the complexities of their stories, which provides a more meaningful form of advocacy while challenging reductive media tropes (296).

To conclude, the #BringBackOurGirls campaign redefined the narrative surrounding gender-based violence by transforming the Chibok girls into symbols of feminist resistance. Through feminist discourse analysis (FDA), this essay demonstrates how the campaign challenged patriarchal norms, amplified marginalized voices, and critiqued state negligence. Though the campaign succeeded in generating global visibility and raising awareness, its reliance on digital platforms also exposed the limitations of hashtag activism, which often prioritizes visibility over structural change. The unresolved fate of many Chibok girls ten years later highlights the disconnect between online awareness and tangible outcomes. In some cases, the campaign's global reach depoliticized the struggle, shifting focus to performative allyship rather than addressing local, systemic issues. While high-profile figures like Michelle Obama brought global visibility to #BringBackOurGirls, such attention sometimes eclipsed the efforts of Nigerian activists underlining the tension between visibility and genuine local impact (Loken 1100).

RHETOICAL CRITIQUE

Digital feminism has the potential to empower marginalized voices; however, true change requires the integration of online activism with offline efforts like grassroots organizing and policy reform. Only then can progress shift from raising awareness to achieving meaningful, systemic change.

RHETOICAL CRITIQUE

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Stand-up Standing Up: How Comedy Critiques the Abuse of Presidential Power

Caroline is an English: Creative Writing student who is looking to become a high school teacher. While taking classes, Caroline works as a tutor within the university as well as outside of school.

Caroline is passionate about the importance of education and hopes to bring the skills that English and Rhetoric teaches to her students.

Since his re-election, the United States (US) President, Donald Trump, has signed numerous executive orders that align with the Project 2025 vision and strike fear in the hearts of many American citizens. These executive orders have then been discussed by social media users, podcast creators, and comedians, among many others. The comedian Josh Johnson, known for performing sets about current pop culture events and political issues, uploaded a set titled “(Some of) Trump’s Wildest Executive Orders Explained” to discuss some of President Trump’s actions, a mere eight days after his inauguration. Johnson highlights the president starting the process of leaving the World Health Organization (WHO),

pardoning those involved in the January 6 coup, and the use of fear mongering strategies. Johnson is able to successfully establish the dangers of President Trump's executive orders by referencing famous comedy routines and telling personal stories to invoke particular ideas or feelings within the audience, and leading it to "real talk" about the matters being addressed. As a result, through Johnson's pattern of alternating between comedy and gravity, he is able to provide a warning to his audience about the possible repercussions of Trump's presidential actions.

The first major executive order Johnson addresses is President Trump announcing the US is leaving the WHO. By performing a bit that references the famous "Who's on First" routine by Abbott and Costello, Johnson is able to express to the audience that Mr. Trump may not be fully aware of what he is agreeing to do. Johnson's routine is him playing the part of both the president and one of his advisors, as they talk about dropping out of the WHO. By mimicking the comedic results of having "WHO" be a name, and President Trump not understanding what exactly he is being told to do, Johnson establishes that Trump is likely being puppeted by those around him, and does not have the necessary knowledge the US president should have. Johnson moves on to talk seriously about the repercussions of leaving the WHO. Although Johnson does not go into the specifics, he does successfully point out that public health knowledge will suffer as a result of this decision. WHO and the US's long-term, mutually beneficial relationship is now at risk.

This will weaken “WHO’s ability to identify, report, and respond to public health emergencies,” as well as affect the US by limiting “domestic public health agencies and the US pharmaceutical industry” because the US currently relies on data that comes from “WHO laboratories and other partners” (Gostin 559). Considering that over a year into the Covid-19 pandemic, “many countries [struggled] to create a vaccine,” the US ending their relationship with WHO will make future worldwide health crises a steeper uphill battle (Usman et al. 30297). Johnson is able to establish these repercussions by performing another joke that demonstrates the danger of countries not sharing health research. Johnson references Covid-19, saying that a vaccine came out relatively quickly due to countries sharing research (Johnson 6:05-6:25). He then describes a scenario of people starting to exhibit absurd symptoms, such as “farting blue” and becoming “painfully double jointed,” but having no viable way to discover what is wrong (Johnson 6:25-7:45). Absurdity aside, the message behind the joke rings true. If countries are not sharing research and knowledge, then if something new emerges, it will be more difficult to identify issues, and finding solutions will require more time. By referencing a well-known miscommunication bit, switching between telling jokes and speaking genuinely, and giving an absurd example of what the future can look like, Johnson is able to tell his audience that the US leaving WHO will lead to inaccessible medical help for everyday American citizens. Johnson moves on to President Trump’s decision to pardon those involved in the January 6th coup.

In order to get his point across, Johnson tells a personal story about a guy he knew, Ledon, from a neighbourhood he used to live in. Johnson sets the tone by saying that Ledon was a “proper criminal” (Johnson 14:00). Johnson states that even though he does not support the police, when Ledon got arrested, Johnson could not help but to feel relief that he was in prison (Johnson 13:15). Johnson told this story as a means of comparing those who got arrested for attacking the Capitol to Ledon. Although his story did not involve Ledon leading a coup, this comparison allowed Johnson to establish – without explicitly saying – that those arrested for the coup are people who should be in prison. With this story, Johnson concludes by saying, “Now imagine that Ledon gets let out by the president of the United States” (Johnson 15:40-15:55). Johnson was able to portray to his audience the clear bias that President Trump has in regard to those who follow him and those who do not. Leading up to the attack on January 6th, President Trump “encouraged the assault,” and even “ignored pleas [asking him to] instruct his supporters to stand down,” despite one of the objectives being to assassinate Vice President Pence who President Trump “accused of betrayal” (Gerstle 91-12). The president used misplaced patriotic language and intimidation tactics to convince his followers that the election was stolen, which is a common practice in authoritarian rulers (Baturu 583). By telling a story to compare those President Trump pardoned to Ledon, Johnson was able to make his point clear about the favouritism the president displays to his most intense followers.

Johnson was able to point out the double standard President Trump holds by showing the ridiculousness of the idea of any other guilty criminal being unjustifiably pardoned. Through his storytelling as an avenue of comparison, Johnson shows the audience who Mr. Trump is in favour of – his supporters – and how he will pick and choose who the justice system applies to.

At the end of the set, Johnson addresses the Trump administration using fear-mongering tactics. For instance, President Trump has signed various executive orders that affect the rights of immigrants, and this is a result of “right-wing populist rhetoric” requiring a “perpetuate crisis,” and since “terrorism and immigration were conflated previously,” Mr. Trump has chosen to portray immigrants as part of an invented crisis (Hall 57-8). This rhetoric invokes fear in those who believe that immigration is causing a crisis, which President Trump relies on for support, but also invokes fear in those who will be affected by the president’s actions to mitigate this alleged crisis. Johnson agrees that President Trump’s decisions have been frightening, but then briefly yet earnestly says that he is still hopeful regardless (Johnson 30:30-30:45). Johnson concludes by further pointing out that the actions taken after the executive orders have not been thought out. Johnson talks about 80 immigrants being deported, which allegedly cost \$700,000 (Johnson 34:30). Through his tone, exaggeration of certain words, and repeating the amount of money it costs to deport a fraction of the immigrant population, Johnson implies that the plan is expensive and unsustainable.

Johnson further highlights the lack of planning on behalf of the Trump administration by revealing that when the plane the 80 people were on landed in Mexico, Mexico denied entry and sent them back to the U.S. (Johnson 34:00-34:15). With this concluding bit, Johnson provides the audience with some of the hope he previously mentioned having. By discussing this specific situation, Johnson agrees that the government's decisions are scary and reflect Project 2025, but these plans have not been well thought out. Since this was the conclusion to his set, Johnson did not tell a joke in the same manner as his previous ones, but instead used his tone and pacing for comedic effect. While doing so, he was able to simultaneously emphasize his overall point that although what the government is doing is terrifying, their plans are unorganized, so there is still room for hope.

Since the upload of this set by Johnson, President Trump's actions and decisions have escalated, but the messaging behind Johnson's routine still rings true. It is important to be aware of the potential consequences of government decisions, such as what Johnson displays with the consequences of dropping out of the WHO. Johnson also brings to light the importance of knowing when laws are being adjusted for particular people. Despite these government actions, Johnson is sure to make clear that US President Donald Trump and his administration are not executing their plans wisely. Therefore, despite the fear and potential consequences of these actions, there should be hope for a brighter future.

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“Defying Gravity”: Rising Above Stereotypical Representation of Disability in Wicked: Part One

Emily Farraige (they/them) is pursuing a creative writing major with a minor in disability studies. Passionate about exploring disability representation, Emily delves into the intersections of fairytales and romantic tropes, seeking to challenge stereotypes and amplify diverse voices. They believe in storytelling as a powerful tool for change and understanding.

In recent years, disability representation in media has gained increasing attention, prompting a reevaluation of how marginalized identities are portrayed. The film *Wicked: Part One* (directed by Jon M. Chu) offers a more nuanced and sympathetic depiction of disability compared to Gregory Maguire’s 1995 novel, *Wicked: The Life and Times of the*

Wicked Witch of the West: A Novel, and Stephen Schwartz and Winnie Holzman's 2005 musical adaptation, *Wicked: A New Musical*. While academic work specifically addressing disability in versions of *Wicked* is limited, scholarship on disability in Baum's *Oz* works and broader discussions of disability representation in media provide valuable context for my discussion. They highlight the historical underrepresentation and stereotypical portrayals of disabled characters, often confined to narratives of pity, tragedy, or villainy.

Wicked: Part One enhances the themes of identity and societal judgment by incorporating a broader spectrum of disabilities through Elphaba (played by Cynthia Erivo,) and Nessarose (played by Marissa Bode). The film depicts Nessarose's wheelchair use with sensitivity, illustrating her challenges and triumphs, enriching her character arc, and emphasizing her struggle for autonomy and acceptance. Through Elphaba, the film explores neurodiversity by showing her intense emotional experiences, illustrating her struggles with social norms, and showcasing her exceptional abilities in magic. It reveals the depth of emotional awareness in neurodiverse individuals, the challenges they face in navigating societal expectations, and the unique strengths that come from their different ways of thinking. I explore how *Wicked: Part One* "defies gravity" (Chu 02:16.45-02:30.48), by reimagining these characters and deepening the conversation surrounding disability representation in popular culture, rising above convention and fostering a more inclusive and sensitive narrative.

True and appropriate disability representation in media is crucial because it fosters inclusivity and challenges societal stereotypes, creating a more equitable environment. Accurately portraying diverse experiences and perspectives breaks down barriers, promotes understanding, and reduces stigma and discrimination. Representation empowers individuals with disabilities by validating their identities and experiences and enriches storytelling, offering audiences a broader view of humanity. In a world that often marginalizes those with disabilities, their visibility in media, politics, and various spheres of life is essential for advocating for rights, accessibility, and acceptance, ultimately contributing to a more just and compassionate society.

Nessarose: Beyond the Tragic Beauty Stereotype

In *Wicked: A New Musical*, Nessarose serves as a significant representation of disability, showcasing the challenges and complexities faced by individuals with disabilities. Born with a physical disability that leaves her unable to walk, Nessarose is problematically portrayed with little to no depth and nuance (Haller, sec 3). However, rather than reducing her to a mere symbol of pity or a plot device, the 2024 film adaptation's director and production team worked with actor Bode to create a more realistic portrayal of a disabled person's experiences. This allows audiences to see her struggles, desires, and motivations, making her more relatable.

Disability narratives often fall into stereotypical portrayals, such as the “supercrip” who overcomes all obstacles the tragic victim who elicits pity—or the villain whose

disability is linked to their malevolence, such as Quasimodo in the 1996 film *The Hunchback of Notre Dame* (Schalk, p 6, Whittington-Walsh, p 4, Barnes p 5, Garland Thomson p 9). These stereotypes limit the complexity of disabled characters and reinforce societal biases. Media portrayals often further perpetuate harmful stereotypes, such as the “eternal child” or the “burden” (Longmore [Page #]). These stereotypes contribute to the marginalization and dehumanization of disabled individuals. Disability narratives often fall into stereotypical portrayals, such as the “supercrip” who overcomes all obstacles (Schalk, p 6) the tragic victim who elicits pity—or the villain whose disability is linked to their malevolence, such as Quasimodo in the 1996 film *The Hunchback of Notre Dame* (Whittington-Walsh, p 4) Barnes (p 5) Garland Thomson p 9). These stereotypes limit the complexity of disabled characters and reinforce societal biases. Media portrayals often further perpetuate harmful stereotypes, such as the “eternal child” or the “burden” (Longmore [Page #]). These stereotypes contribute to the marginalization and dehumanization of disabled individuals.

In the film, Nessarose is often described as “beautifully tragic” (Chu 0:22.15-[end]). This is problematic when directed at a person in a wheelchair, or any disabled person, as it implies a romanticized view of their disability that reduces their lived experience to a narrative of suffering or loss. It suggests that the individual’s challenges and struggles are somehow aesthetically pleasing or noble, dismissing the real frustrations and injustices they face, perpetuating a stereotype that disability is inherently tragic or pitiable, rather than recognizing the person’s full identity, capabilities, and agency.

This framing can contribute to a societal narrative that glorifies suffering and overlooks the everyday realities of living with a disability, overshadowing accomplishments, joys, and complexities, reducing their experiences to a dichotomy of beauty and tragedy. Instead of fostering genuine understanding and empathy, this stereotype can alienate individuals by suggesting that their worth is tied to their perceived struggle rather than to their individuality and contributions to society. An example of this is found in a journal article by Hayes and Black about the film, *My Left Foot* released in 1989, citing that even though the film creates more disability representation, the romance aspect is still the pity stereotype (Hayes et al. 2). The respectful approach, in my opinion, would be to focus on celebrating the diversity of experiences and recognizing the multifaceted nature of life with a disability, without imposing a narrative that diminishes their reality.

In *Wicked: Part One*, though Nessarose resembles the beautifully tragic figure, her character development adds depth to her story. Unlike conventional portrayals of secondary characters, the film gives Nessarose a compelling arc, exploring her internal struggles and desires for autonomy. The film also created a new character named Miss Coddle (played by Keala Settle), which represents how society is coddling Nessarose even though she doesn't want to be. Nessarose confronts her challenges, particularly the societal limitations that are put on her. She rejects the notion of being defined solely by her relationship with Elphaba to asserting her own identity and ambitions, allowing her to take control of

her circumstances, ultimately influencing her choices and actions.

For example, a pivotal moment occurs during the scene where Nessarose dances with Boq (played by Ethan Slater) at the Ozdust Ballroom. The scene opens with Nessarose initially hesitant to participate, feeling self-conscious about dancing in her wheelchair. Boq sings to her, trying to express his feelings of why he asked her to the ball by saying, “Nessa, I’ve got something to confess. A reason why, well. Why I asked you here tonight. And I know it isn’t fair.” Nessarose stops him and says, “it’s because I’m in this chair. And you felt sorry for me...” (Chu 1:06. 42-1:07. 08). This ends up with him inviting her to dance and not him telling her about his true intentions.

However, the film made this scene more positive by having the dance be more consensual, unlike with the original musical. As they move together, the camera focuses on their connection, highlighting Nessarose’s joy and confidence. The dialogue emphasizes Boq’s acceptance of Nessarose for who she is, challenging societal expectations and showcasing her desire to break free from her constraints and embrace her own identity, even as it foreshadows the complexities of her eventual choices.

By the end of the film, Nessarose emerges as a more complex character whose journey reflects the broader themes of power, acceptance, and the quest for belonging, revealing that her tragic beauty is intertwined with her strength and resilience.

Nessarose's journey also highlights themes of empowerment and the quest for acceptance, as she grapples with her own identity and the societal perceptions of her disability. By presenting her as a fully realized character with her own conflicts and agency, *Wicked: Part One* challenges conventional narratives that often marginalize or overlook people with disabilities. Furthermore, Nessarose's interactions with other characters, including her relationships with Elphaba and Boq, provide a platform to explore issues of power dynamics, autonomy, and the impact of societal expectations. Overall, the portrayal of Nessarose in *Wicked: Part One* contributes to positive changes in disability representation by emphasizing the importance of inclusivity, complexity, and understanding, ultimately encouraging audiences to reconsider their perceptions of disability and the individuals who embody it.

Elphaba: Neurodivergence and Social Justice

An inclusive neurodiversity paradigm posits that neurological differences, such as autism, ADHD, and dyslexia, are natural variations of the human brain rather than deficits (Silberman p 7); Singer p 10). This perspective challenges the medical model of disability, which focuses on curing or fixing impairments, and instead emphasizes the strengths and unique perspectives that neurodivergent individuals bring to society.

Neurodiversity advocates argue for the acceptance and inclusion of neurodivergent individuals, promoting accommodations and supports that enable them to thrive (Chapman p 27).

In *Wicked: Part One*, Elphaba, the Wicked Witch of the West, exhibits several neurodivergent tendencies that set her apart from those around her. Her intense sensitivity to the injustices of the world, particularly the discrimination faced by marginalized groups, showcases her heightened empathy, a trait often associated with neurodivergent individuals. Elphaba's struggles with social interactions, her deep focus on her passions — such as magic and the plight of the oppressed — and her tendency to think outside the box also reflect characteristics of neurodiversity. Additionally, her experiences of feeling alienated and misunderstood by her peers highlight the challenges many neurodivergent people face in a society that too often values conformity. Elphaba's journey is not just one of self-discovery, but also a celebration of embracing one's differences in a world that can be unforgiving.

Elphaba's embodiment of neurodivergent tendencies both highlights her uniqueness and underscores the challenges she faces in a conformist society which consciously and unapologetically discriminates against those it considers different. One of the most striking examples of her neurodivergence is her intense focus and passion for social justice, particularly in advocating for the rights of the Animals, who are oppressed in Oz. This deep commitment to her beliefs illustrates a passionate intensity often seen in neurodivergent individuals, who can become deeply engrossed in their interests and causes. Elphaba's dedication to her mission, despite the societal backlash, emphasizes her strong sense of justice and morality.

Elphaba also struggles with social interactions, which further exemplifies her neurodivergent characteristics. Her blunt honesty and outspokenness often lead to misunderstandings with her peers at Shiz University, where she feels alienated and isolated. These social challenges reflect the difficulties many neurodivergent individuals face when navigating social norms and expectations, as Elphaba's straightforward nature often puts her at odds with the more conventional behaviours of those around her. Her experiences of being misunderstood and marginalized resonate with the feelings of alienation that many neurodivergent people encounter.

Moreover, Elphaba's emotional sensitivity is a defining trait that accentuates her neurodivergent tendencies. She reacts strongly to the injustices she witnesses, displaying a heightened emotional awareness that allows her to empathize deeply with others, particularly those who are oppressed. This ability to feel emotions intensely is often characteristic of neurodivergent individuals, who may experience the world on a deeper level. Elphaba's passionate responses to the injustices in her environment reveal her profound sense of empathy and moral obligation to fight for what is right.

A single scene illustrating Elphaba's neurodivergence is when she confronts Madame Morrible (played by Michelle Yeoh) about the Animals being silenced. The scene opens with Elphaba visibly agitated, pacing and struggling to articulate her powers. Madame Morrible notices that her concerns makes her power more active, so Morrible starts asking questions about how she feels.

Elphaba's frustration boils over, and she passionately defends the Animals, highlighting the injustice of their situation. Her speech is rapid and intense, reflecting her heightened emotional state. The camera focuses on Elphaba's expressive face, conveying her deep empathy and unwavering commitment to social justice. The dialogue emphasizes Elphaba's inability to conform to social expectations, as she prioritizes her moral convictions over politeness or diplomacy.

Additionally, Elphaba's nonconformity is a significant aspect of her character. She defies societal expectations regarding her appearance and behaviour, choosing to embrace her unique abilities and identity as a powerful witch. This refusal to conform to the norms of her society illustrates her divergence from the mainstream, showcasing her strength in embracing her individuality. Her unconventional approach to life, paired with her willingness to challenge authority figures, reflects a mindset that is often seen in neurodivergent individuals who think outside the box and question societal standards.

Lastly, Elphaba's creative problem-solving skills further highlight her neurodivergent nature. Her ability to utilize her magical powers in inventive and unexpected ways demonstrates her unique perspective on challenges. This kind of creative thinking is a hallmark of many neurodivergent individuals, who often approach problems from angles that others might not consider. Elphaba's resourcefulness in navigating obstacles, whether through her spellcasting or her strategic thinking, showcases her distinctive cognitive abilities.

Elphaba's character in *Wicked: Part One* serves as a rich representation of neurodivergent traits, including intense focus, social struggles, emotional sensitivity, nonconformity, and creative problem-solving. These elements not only contribute to her complexity as a character but also emphasize the broader themes of acceptance and the celebration of individuality in a world that often demands conformity. Through Elphaba's journey, the narrative invites audiences to reflect on the value of embracing differences and recognizing the strength that lies within those who dare to be themselves.

Nessarose and Elphaba: Nuance in Contrasts

Elphaba's character in *Wicked: Part One* contributes significantly to a more nuanced and positive representation of disability and neurodiversity in media, particularly when contrasted with her sister Nessarose. While Elphaba's journey highlights the strengths and complexities of neurodivergent individuals, Nessarose's portrayal initially leans into negative stereotypes often associated with disability. However, reinterpreting Nessarose's character can further enhance representation and challenge harmful narratives.

Nessarose, who uses a wheelchair due to her disability, often embodies vulnerability and anger, which can perpetuate the idea that disabled individuals are either tragic figures or inherently bitter. This portrayal risks reinforcing societal stigmas that suggest disabled people are less capable of leading fulfilling lives or experiencing joy.

However, by shifting the narrative to explore her motivations, desires, and complexities beyond her disability, Nessarose can be depicted as a fully realized character who, like Elphaba, strives for agency and acceptance in a world that marginalizes her.

For instance, emphasizing Nessarose's intelligence, resourcefulness, and determination can present her in a more empowering light. Rather than solely focusing on her physical limitations or resentment towards her sister, the narrative could delve into her ambitions, her struggles for autonomy, and her desire to make a meaningful impact in a society that often overlooks her. This shift would not only humanize Nessarose but also provide a broader spectrum of experiences for disabled characters, moving beyond the binary of victimhood or bitterness.

Nessarose's experiences with ableism and societal prejudice can serve as a catalyst for Elphaba's activism and commitment to social justice. By witnessing firsthand the challenges her sister faces, Elphaba gains a deeper understanding of systemic oppression and the importance of fighting for equality. Nessarose's vulnerability and emotional sensitivity can also temper Elphaba's intensity and impulsivity, encouraging her to approach social issues with greater empathy and nuance. In this way, Nessarose's character can serve as a grounding force for Elphaba, reminding her of the human cost of injustice and the importance of building alliances with others.

Moreover, by showcasing the bond between Elphaba and Nessarose, the film highlights themes of solidarity and support among those with different experiences of disability. Their relationship can serve as a powerful reminder that individuals with disabilities can uplift one another, fostering understanding and compassion rather than competition or resentment. This approach promotes a sense of community and empowerment, demonstrating that disabled characters can be both strong and vulnerable, ambitious and flawed.

Overall, by reimagining Nessarose's character and emphasizing the strengths of both sisters, *Wicked: Part One* can contribute to a more diverse and accurate representation of disabled individuals in media. This development not only challenges negative stereotypes but also showcases the multifaceted nature of disability, encouraging audiences to embrace the richness of all experiences. Through such representation, the story can inspire greater empathy and understanding, defying the gravity of stereotyping and marginalization that holds disabled folks down and back, fostering a cultural shift toward inclusivity and acceptance in the portrayal of disabled individuals in the media.

But the film also encourages its viewers to enter into a more symbolic, imaginative realm. Its audiences need to defy gravity by rising above and against the current oppression tellingly paralleled in the film's end — an evil white male patriarch defeats a powerful woman of colour, and what follows will almost certainly be a dire result.

Wicked: Part One's use of humour and imagination also asks its viewers to rise above the figurative gravity of our current lives, and to imagine a more just and inclusive future for disabled and non-disabled people everywhere. Through nuanced character development and a commitment to challenging stereotypes, *Wicked: Part One* offers a compelling vision of disability representation that promotes empathy, understanding, and social justice.

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Exploring Viktor Tsoi's Subtle Defiance of the Soviet Union in Peaceful Night/ Спокойная ночь Through Roman Jakobson's Communication Model.

Philip Broder's family is from Kazakhstan, a former Soviet republic. Like millions of others from post-Soviet states, they have inherited stories of hardship under the early Soviet regime in Eastern Europe and Asia. Opportunities to openly express those experiences were severely limited, as dissent was often suppressed. One of the few avenues for conveying these realities was through music.

This is why they chose to write about Viktor Tsoi, a legendary figure who became a voice for millions of Soviet citizens, offering a form of resistance and expression through his art. His artistic contributions to Eastern Europe and Asia remain relevant even in the 21st century due to the main message of his music being the demand for true political and economic change to be brought forth to all people.

Throughout the 20th century, bands like The Beatles, Rolling Stones, and Pink Floyd left a long-lasting mark on global culture, shaping history with the social messages in their music and becoming enduring icons. While Western rock figures dominate global music narratives, Soviet artists used their platform to address life's struggles during the late Soviet period. Kino, led by Viktor Tsoi, stands out as a key voice in this era of musical critique. The Soviet Union was notorious for repressing individuals who criticized its government and communist ideology. This paper explores how Viktor Tsoi subtly defied and criticized Soviet authority without facing consequences such as suppression, imprisonment, or exile, and is analyzed through the lens of Roman Jakobson's Communication Model. Viktor Tsoi was born in 1962 in Leningrad, USSR and was a son of a Soviet Korean engineer and a physical education teacher, as Federova states:

From his early years, his life did not follow the pattern of an established Soviet musician: he was expelled from art school, ... In the eyes of Soviet society, Tsoi embodied the typical young slacker, the flawed element in the proletarian machine (2017, August 15. *Remembering Viktor Tsoi: Why the rebellious rock poet is still a hero for our time*. Para. 5). Often regarded as Russia's equivalent of John Lennon due to his songs that challenged the status quo in his country, Viktor Tsoi emerged as a highly influential figure during a tumultuous era in Soviet history.

Prior to speaking on Tsoi's music, it is necessary to describe Roman Jakobson's Model of communication. Jakobson's model asserts that every communication form has an Addresser who sends a Message to the Addressee, and in order "...to be operative the message requires a CONTEXT referred to (the "referent"..., graspable by the addressee, and either verbal or capable of being verbalized; a CODE fully, or at least partially, common to the addresser and addressee (or in other words, to the encoder and de-coder of the message;) and, finally, a CONTACT, a physical channel and psychological connection between the addresser and the addressee, enabling both of them to enter and stay in communication." (Jakobson, R., Pomorska, K., & Rudy, S. 2015. *Language in literature* . p. 66). In Jakobson's communication model, Viktor Tsoi functions as the Addresser, while the Addressees are average Soviet citizens, particularly those of his generation or younger.

Understanding Tsoi's musical impact on Soviet society requires much needed context about the ongoing events in the Soviet Union at the peak of his fame. Viktor Tsoi gained popularity during the 1980s when the Soviet Union had recently mourned the loss of Leonid Brezhnev, who had brought relative stability and peace to all Soviet citizens. Stagnation began to take hold in the Soviet Union during the 1960s-70s, and by the 1980s, it was clear that the situation had not improved. After Brezhnev's death, he was replaced by Yuri Andropov, who had been considered as an old man, however, according to Kenez:

“...he was somewhat younger than the other members of the geriatric Politburo, and clearly more energetic and intelligent. (The average age of the members of the Politburo at the time of Brezhnev’s death was 71)... his tenure lasted only fifteen months, and during most of this period he was incapacitated by illness.... When Andropov died in February 1984, Chernenko was elected first secretary” (Kenez, P 2017. *A history of the Soviet Union from the beginning to its legacy*. p. 244).

After Konstantin Chernenko's death within a year of succeeding Yuri Andropov, the Soviet high command faced embarrassment over its leadership's reliance on aging figures with declining health. To address this issue and halt the Soviet Union's rapid decline, the Politburo sought to install a younger, more ambitious politician as leader. As the next appointed general secretary, Mikhail Gorbachev became famous for his efforts to restructure the Soviet Union in a bid to reinvigorate the system and curb its rapid decline. Gorbachev introduced ‘Perestroika’ and ‘Glasnost’ in the 1980s, and as stated by Kenez:

...was transformed into freedom of speech... When intellectuals were allowed to speak more openly, they came to compete with one another in matters of courage, each attempting to push the limits of the permissible a little further...

What seemed unthinkable at a given moment became commonplace a few months later. The taboos fell one after

another, creating a heady atmosphere, a sense of excitement that can be compared to nothing else in Russian history (Kenez, P 2017. p. 254).

While these changes are often regarded as positive in Soviet history, they ironically left the state more vulnerable. The newfound openness allowed citizens to openly discuss and criticize their inadequate quality of life, marked by the ban of alcohol, delayed wages, empty store shelves, the rise of black markets selling overpriced goods and a devaluing currency. Today, the Soviet Union of the 1980s is often remembered negatively due to rising inflation, unemployment, poverty, organized crime, alcoholism, and drug addiction among its population.

Understanding the essential historical context during which Viktor Tsoi rose to fame and critical acclaim across the Soviet Union will provide deeper insight into the message and intent of his music to the addressee. Viktor Tsoi made a significant number of songs that continue to resonate with millions of Eastern Europeans in the 21st century due to their relevance with current events in terms of the political climate and economy in post-Soviet states. He wrote songs like *Blood Type* (Группа Крови), which critiques the Soviet war in Afghanistan, and *I Want Change* (Хочу перемен), a powerful demand for change in a nation facing collapse. The song that I have chosen to write about is called '*Peaceful Night*' or '*Спокойная ночь*'.

While the previous songs clearly critique the Soviet Union, I chose *Peaceful Night* for its subtlety and the multiple interpretations it allows for the listener. The song opens with an eerie, echoed, lullaby-like melody of an electric guitar and synthesizers for the first 40 seconds, followed by Viktor Tsoi's voice. One vital aspect about Viktor Tsoi's singing style was the fact that he had a very deep voice and preferred to sing in a restrained conversational tone, which makes the audience feel more sincerity and emotion from the contents of the song altogether.

The first verse of the song begins with "Rooftops are trembling under the burden of the day, A heavenly shepherd herds the clouds, The city shoots pellets of light out into the night, But the night is stronger, her power is great" (Genius English translations. 2024. спокойная ночь (*peaceful night*) (*English translation*). Pg. 1). Throughout the song, the phrase "Peaceful Night" is repeated multiple times, carrying two different meanings. One of its meanings is the singer wishing one part of the listeners to have a good night, and is also a way to describe the night in general. Jakobson's communication model emphasizes the role of code in communication, and it is evident that Tsoi used "night" as a symbolic code in his song, drawing on its universally recognized emotional and symbolic significance. In many cases throughout history and pop culture, night has been portrayed as "death and horror, while in the Bible, night represents a lack of faith in God. During the night when it's dark and hard to see, it can get frightening.

Some people are terrified of the dark, which is one of the main meanings of night as a symbol. As stated by Chris, “It’s when wild animals come out to prey, and when we feel at our most vulnerable” (Chris. 2024. Night symbolism (*7 meanings in literature and the Bible*). Pg. 1). By using night and sleep as symbols, the song captures the fear and uncertainty that the night can evoke in humans. When people are frightened by things to come, they tend to hide or sleep in order to cope with their anxiety and fear which is precisely the reason why Viktor Tsoi says “To those who are off to bed, Good dreams, good night, To those who are off to bed, Good dreams, good night” (Genius English translations. 2024. Pg. 1). The rhetorical critique of the Soviet Union emerged in the song's third verse, where Tsoi declares that the long-awaited moment has finally arrived as the silenced finally found their voice, and those with nothing to lose began to take action, symbolically mounting their horses and setting forth on their journey with nothing that could possibly catch up with them and stop their progress (Genius English translations. 2024. Pg. 1). Tsoi’s deliberate vagueness ensures the song could evade censorship while still resonating with those seeking freedom, aligning with Jakobson’s idea of shared context and code.

When Tsoi sings about previously silent figures finding their voices, it is important to note that, by the time of the song's release, public criticism of the Soviet Union was no longer suppressed as it had been during the Stalin, Khrushchev, and Brezhnev eras. This shift stemmed from Mikhail Gorbachev's restructuring efforts, which aimed to revitalize the Soviet Union by promoting greater freedom of speech and transparency.

Throughout the Soviet Union's turbulent history, many political dissidents were exiled, imprisoned, and repressed. However, upon taking power, one of Gorbachev's first significant actions was to release the prominent dissident Andrei Sakharov from exile, who was:

...the father of that most dangerous weapon, the hydrogen bomb, which he gave to the Soviet regime in the naive hope that it would help preserve the world balance of power... In fact, it merely enabled the Soviet totalitarian regime to preserve its policy of expansionism and blackmail... Sakharov himself activated a still more powerful weapon, which ultimately destroyed the empire - he began openly expressing his beliefs, exercising the moral power of a free man... Sakharov, almost alone, created the moral climate that has undermined the Soviet regime (Shcharansky, A. 1990. *The Legacy of Andrei Sakharov. Journal of Democracy.* p. 35).

Gorbachev's decision may have been driven by efforts to improve his political standing abroad and to gain Sakharov's loyalty. Instead of earning the loyalty of newly freed dissidents, it is well known that the introduction of freedom of speech and transparency only weakened the authority of the Soviet government. With their newfound ability to criticize their government, Soviet citizens listening to this song were able to establish contact with Tsoi, as it reflected their shared experiences of life in the Soviet Union during that tumultuous yet freeing period in history.

Widespread disillusionment with the old regime prompted many to revolt and criticize the status quo, which is reflected in the next verse of the song, which states:

Neighbors come, they complain they hear hooves clicking
They can't fall asleep, it disturbs their dreams
Those who've got nothing to wait for go on their way
Those who are saved, those who are saved (Genius English translations. 2024. Pg. 1).

This verse effectively illustrates how those who previously were blissfully ignorant of their surroundings began to experience profound discomfort, as they sensed the wind of change which is symbolized by the clicking hooves that disrupted their sleep and peaceful dreams. The final verse of the song wishes the blissfully ignorant a good night and peaceful dreams, acknowledging they cannot be saved. The song then transitions into an emotional guitar solo, symbolizing the collective pain and despair experienced by Soviet citizens during a period of darkness and uncertainty.

Throughout history, individuals have protested their governments and rulers in diverse ways. While some have taken up arms to challenge oppressive regimes, others, like Viktor Tsoi, have turned to peaceful forms of resistance, including protests with banners, chants, posters and music, to rally people for change. Tsoi successfully communicated his message to millions, and his music and rhetoric still resonate over 30 years after his tragic death.

Using Roman Jakobson's communication model, it can be concluded that Viktor Tsoi's *Peaceful Night* transcends being merely a melodic punk rock song. Instead, it serves as a piece of rhetorical criticism directed at a country with which millions of Soviet citizens identified through their shared experiences. One notable aspect of the song's lyrics is their deliberate vagueness, which allows for diverse interpretations. I argue that the song can be seen as a call to action for populations in any country, as its themes of revolution and freedom of speech resonate globally.

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The Multimodality of One Direction's Story of My Life Music Video

Katelyn Benson-VanWalleghem is a third-year Rhetoric and Communications student at the University of Winnipeg. Her writing tends to focus on the effects of media and technology, influenced by her passion for photography. In addition, Katelyn soon hopes to start the joint creative communications program with Red River College in pursuit of a career as a travel journalist or photojournalist.

Do you ever wish you could relive your favourite childhood memories? Yes, of course, because you would get the chance to return to a time of familiarity, innocence, and never-ending love. The band One Direction got the chance to recreate their own personal memories through their *Story of My Life* music video. Moreover, I chose to analyse this music video because not only am I a lifelong One Direction fan, but this video has always produced a personal emotional response, due to its touching message. Accordingly, I understand the message of this music video to be that everything can change in an instant.

Therefore, this paper will analyse the multimodality of One Direction's *Story of My Life* music video by exploring how its elements of film illustrate that the band's members are idols, while being perceived as 'regular' people in their childhood memories and recreations. That said, this music video demonstrates multimodality through its camera movements, static shots, and editing.

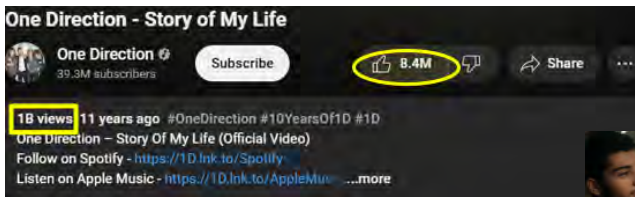


Figure 1: Screenshot of *Story of My Life* music video performance analytics (YouTube 2013).

Figure 2: Steadicam Tracking Shot from *Story of My Life* music video – (0:51~0:53) (YouTube 2013).



To begin, One Direction was an English-Irish boy band that formed in 2010 on The X-Factor which consisted of Liam Payne, Louis Tomlinson, Harry Styles, Zayn Malik, and Niall Horan, until they split up in 2016. In addition, the band released seventeen music videos on YouTube, including a video for one of their most popular songs, *Story of My Life*. This song was released in October 2013, followed by the release of its music video on November 3rd, 2013 that received praise from One Direction's young-adolescent fans. Furthermore, Figure 1 indicates the popularity of the *Story of My Life*

music video which gained one billion views and nearly eight and a half million likes on YouTube. Hence, this popularity allows for a personal correlation between the band and their fans through the video's visual rhetoric. In summary, the popularity of One Direction and their song, *Story of My Life*, led to the release of its highly acclaimed, emotional, and personal music video that fans still watch and love.

Following, the *Story of My Life* music video has many camera movements to emphasize the importance of action progression. Initially, the music video starts with a Steadicam tracking shot where “the camera is supported by a complex suspension system [producing] a remarkably steady shot without the need for tracks, dollies, or assistants” (Howells 182). This movement is shown explicitly in the music video (Figure 2) when the camera moves steadily to focus on Zayn reminiscing over a photo of him and his sister (Winston 0:51~0:53). Moreover, this type of shot draws attention to the memory to symbolise the importance of Zayn's past. In short, the Steadicam camera movement is effective in the *Story of My Life* music video by representing the significance of the boys' memories which allows fans to see their past to confirm that they are 'regular' people, ergo making the music video more personal and relatable.



Figure 3: Dolly Shot- Tracking Shot from *Story of My Life* music video (2:10~2:13 mins) (YouTube 2013).

Next, One Direction's *Story of My Life* music video displays the dolly shot to authenticate the band's connection with their fans. According to Howells, a dolly shot is a type of tracking shot that positions a camera on a dolly or trolley to move in and out of an action (Howells 182). For instance, Figure 3 depicts the music video's camera on a wheeled cart, moving smoothly to create the impression that the audience is walking with Louis, rather than watching a music video (Winston 2:10~2:13). Consequently, the dolly shot is used by One Direction to make their music video more realistic and personal to their fans.

RHETORICAL CRITIQUE

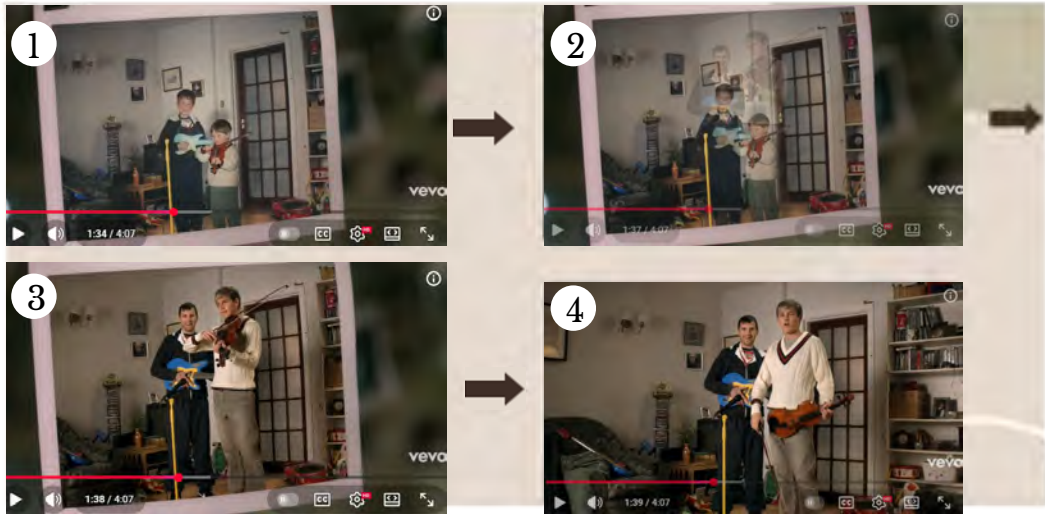


Figure 4: Zooming into (1:34~1:39) a photo of Niall & his brother (One Direction-*Story of My Life* 2013).

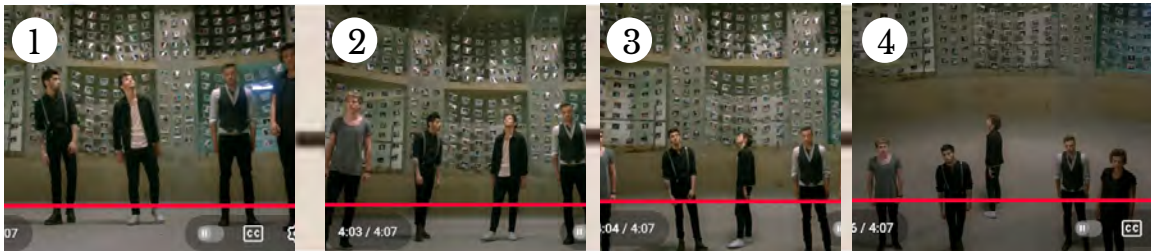


Figure 5: Zooming out of the scene of One Direction (4:02~4:06) (*Story of My Life* 2013).

Ultimately, the *Story of My Life* music video also applies the camera movements of zooming in and zooming out. To clarify, these movements are when a camera either gets closer to or further away from an action (Howells 181).

RHETORICAL CRITIQUE

Evidently, zooming in is fulfilled in Figure 4 as the camera zooms into a photo of Niall and his brother that turns into a recreation (Winston 1:34~1:39). Hence, this action highlights the recreations as the closer the camera is, the older the people in the photo become. Conversely, Figure 5 demonstrates the camera zooming out on the scene of the band's members surrounded by a room full of their memories (Winston 4:02~4:06). This further action conveys that the surrounding memories have presently shaped the boys' lives. Altogether, this music video zooms in and out of actions to interweave the band's identities as both 'regular' people who love music and spending time with their families, and idols by their memories of developing into celebrities.

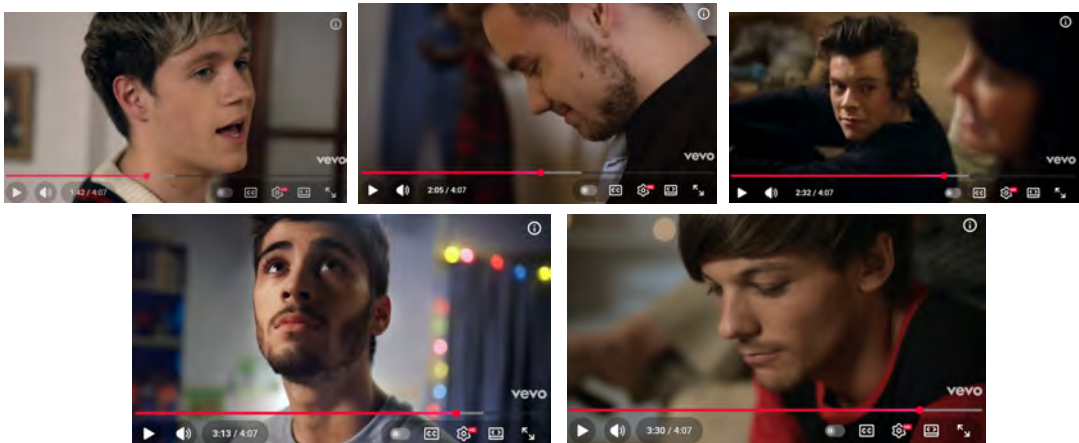


Figure 6: Screenshots of close-ups used in *Story of My Life* music video (left-right: Niall, Liam, Harry, Zayn, & Louis) (YouTube 2013).

RHETORICAL CRITIQUE

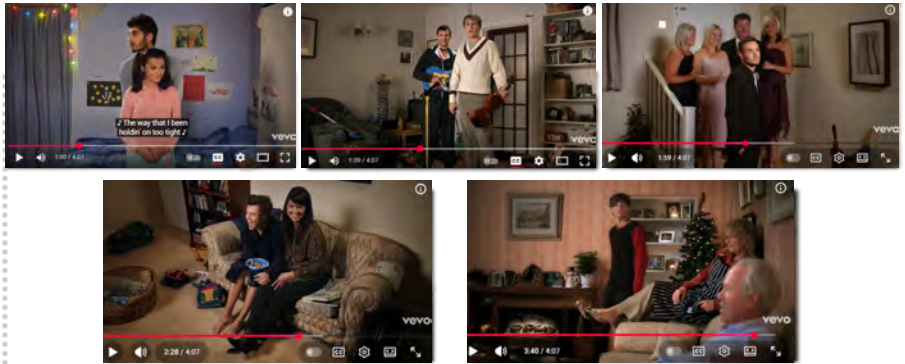


Figure 7: Screenshots of medium shots used in *Story of My Life* music video (left-right: Zayn, Niall, Liam, Harry, & Louis) (YouTube 2013).

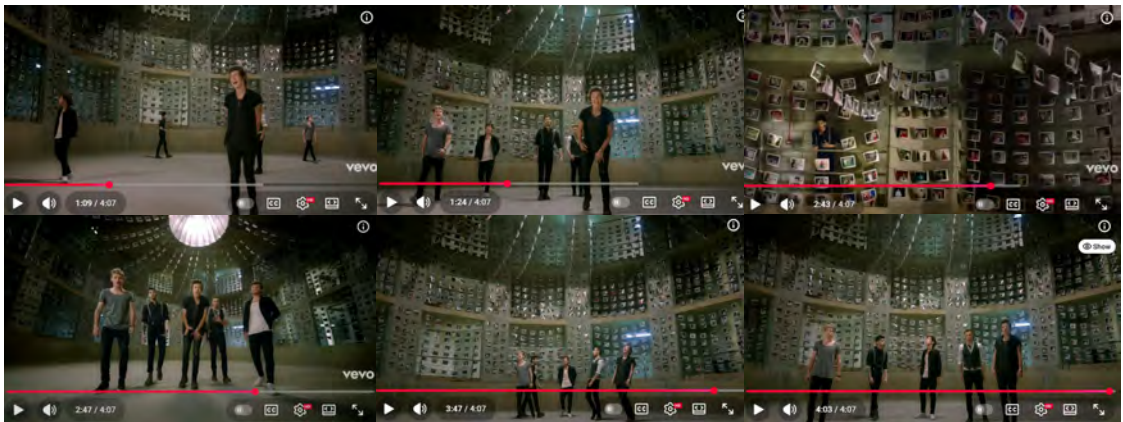


Figure 8: Screenshots of long shots used in *Story of My Life* music video (YouTube 2013).

Moving on, the multimodality of the *Story of My Life* music video is also demonstrated through the usage of static shots, including close-ups, medium shots, and long shots. Firstly

Howells describes a close-up shot as the concentration on facial expression or particular details (Howells 185). To elaborate, Figure 6 pictures the music video focusing on the boys' facial expressions to communicate the emotions they felt while recreating their personal memories. Secondly, One Direction uses these recreations to "show expression, emotion, and body language" (Howells 185), using many types of camera shots, such as the medium shot. This shot is used in the music video's recreations by exhibiting the body language of the boys to express the personal and emotional connections with their families (Figure 7). Thirdly, the *Story of My Life* music video uses the long shot to position the band with their past by surrounding the idols with the photos of them as 'regular' people (Figure 8). The long shot is explained by Howells as a shot used "typically to introduce a new location" (Howells 185). To wrap up, One Direction's *Story of My Life* music video successfully employs various static shots to prove that the band members grew up as 'regular' kids, through the evidence of character development.

Subsequently, the most important mode of multimodality in the *Story of My Life* music video is its editing techniques. Briefly, One Direction uses parallel editing, which is when an audience is "witness to simultaneous events at numerous locations, often switching back and forth between them as the tension mounts" (Howells 183). This edit in Figure 9 cuts back and forth between the present and the band's memories, presenting the band being in two locations at once (Winston 2:40~3:00). Additionally, this edit intensifies the narrative of the band's growth, since it expresses that everything can

change in an instant. All in all, the parallel editing in the *Story of My Life* music video implements meaning by moving fans through time and space to see the personal development of the boys into idols. Additionally, this edit intensifies the narrative of the band's growth, since it expresses that everything can change in an instant. All in all, the parallel editing in the *Story of My Life* music video implements meaning by moving fans through time and space to see the personal development of the boys into idols.

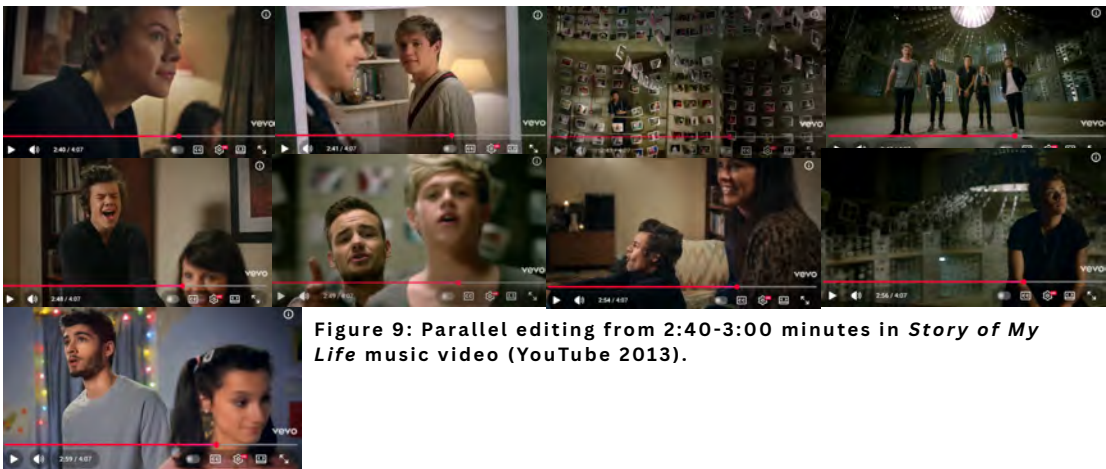


Figure 9: Parallel editing from 2:40-3:00 minutes in *Story of My Life* music video (YouTube 2013).

Finally, One Direction primarily uses elliptical editing throughout their recreated memories. As summarized by Howells, elliptical editing is when time is condensed between shots, followed by a simple edit within the same scene (181). For example, Figure 10 allows fans to see Louis grow up from a child into an adult in under ten seconds by editing out the years in between (Winston 3:19-3:26). Furthermore, One

Direction efficiently combines the transition of dissolve and elliptical editing in their recreations to emphasize that time can change instantly. Overall, the *Story of My Life* music video conspicuously uses elliptical editing in the recreations to condense the timespan of over a decade to show that, though times have changed, the boys are still those ‘regular’ children.

In conclusion, the multimodality of the music video *Story of My Life* by One Direction productively uses the elements of film to prove that the boys are both idols and ‘regular’ people. In addition, this music video is effective towards fans, through achieving the message that everything can change in an instant. This multimodality is attained through the music video’s chosen camera movements, static shots, and editing techniques. Specifically, its camera movements emphasize the importance of identity development, static shots capture emotions and personal connections, while editing techniques efficiently strengthen the narrative of the music video. Therefore, the *Story of My Life* music video successfully communicates the multimodality of film by presenting the idols of One Direction as ‘regular’ people through their recreated memories.



Figure 10: Example of elliptical editing in the *Story of My Life* music video by One Direction (pictured: Louis & his grandparents) (3:19~3:26) (YouTube 2013).

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The Art and Impact of Syrus Marcus Ware

Precious has completed Bachelor degrees in Biology and English with minors in Rhetoric and History and a Master's in Cultural Studies. She is interested in writing about inequalities and disparities in Black and Indigenous communities. She is looking forward to moving on to a PhD program in Fall 2025.

Syrus Marcus Ware is a celebrated Canadian Artist. He was born in Montreal, Quebec, but now resides in Toronto, Ontario. Ware is an award-winning artist with a plethora of experience in the art world, which includes drawing, painting, performing, academics, and curating; he is an educator in the Arts Department at McMaster University and a core team member of Black Lives Matter Toronto (BLMT). The current social climate in the world, especially in Western society, has been polarizing and regressive, with the discrimination experienced by marginalized and racialized communities. This problem has created a need for people to continue to build movements to fight for social change. Contemporary artist and educator Syrus Marcus Ware achieves this with his “Activist Portrait Series,” where he displays hand-drawn portraits of queer/trans/racialized activists Rodney Diverlus, QueenTite Opaleke, Dr. OmiSoore Dryden and Thandi Young.

This essay will discuss how Syrus Marcus Ware’s “Activist Portrait Series” is both activism and art, and how he merges the worlds of art and social justice through his identity. The creation of art has been a part of the Black culture long before being brought to America during the Transatlantic Slave Trade through the creation of “sculptures, relics, body tattoos, and ritual playscript’s among other things, in relation to religion and ritual in ancient Africa”. Today, the North American Black community carries on these traditions using art as a method of activism.

Ware “uses drawing, installation and performance to explore social justice frameworks and [B]lack activist culture,” and his intention is to “explore the spaces between and around identities.” Each image created by Ware in this discourse has been selected from his “Activist Portrait Series.” Image 1 is of Thandi Young, who is similar to Ware because she is also an artist and activist. Young is a queer woman who provides mental health and housing support to the community and is a Blockorama curator. Image 2, titled *Their Borders Crossed Us: For Eric*, is of a young boy, which mirrors the experiences of Eric Garner and Trayvon Martin, which creates a reminder of the societal brutality Black bodies experience. Image 3 is of QueenTite Opaleke, one of the founding directors of Prosthetics for Foreign Donation, a poet, and the recipient of the 2019 ACA Humanitarian Award. Lastly, Image 4 is of Rodney Diverlus, a co-founder of BMLT who works as a choreographer and dancer. Each hand-drawn portrait possesses various technical devices of art.

In the portraits of the activists in the series, Ware has sketched on white paper using only graphite and shading. This choice of medium, with the absence of colour, has both symbolic and technical attributes. The technical attributes include allegories, which are “a device whereby abstract ideas can be communicated using images of the concrete world. Elements, whether figures or objects, in a painting or sculpture, are endowed with symbolic meaning.” For example, a symbolic attribute is the black graphite contrasting on the white paper, which is a visual allegory for a Black person in a white normative society as its complex meaning.

Colour Theory is another device detected in each piece: the use or, in this case, the lack of colour. The portraits range from the top to the bottom of the lightness values. They are a zero in saturation and do not hold a position in a hue on the colour wheel identified from the Munsell’s model, which allows for “the precise specification and recognition of colors.” Ware’s lack of colour in the series gives the pieces their defining and unifying characteristics. Another important aspect of his series is the large size of the sketched portraits. The curator of Ware’s Wil Aballe Art Projects (WAAP) exhibit, Vanessa Dion Fletcher, highlights that the large scale adds permanence and connection to the larger-than-life-size pieces. While the series is connected through the structures and themes within art, each portrait also represents Ware's activism.

In an article collaboratively written by scholars Wendy Ng and Alyssa Greenberg, they focus on ways to create equity and diversity in art spaces.

Ware's position as a transgender man subjects him to the intersectional oppression of racism and transphobia, leading him to focus on the lack of diversity in the adequate representation of those identity categories in music and other prominent art spaces. His choice of resisting heteronormativity and white normativity in this series was calculated to create an anti-oppressive art environment to enact social change by decentering the dominant demographics in his work. Ware's art empowers these identities by what is plainly described as "seeing ourselves," where in which Black figurative art is used to allow Black people to "'see' themselves in the art they consume," which simultaneously dismantles racial hierarchies found within visual arts, as well as reassembles the attempted destruction of the humanity of Black people spanning the years of enslavement to Jim Crow laws and segregation. His activism intersects with his work and art into his personal life as well.

He believes that "activism art" is being co-opted by individuals who are not invested in the need for change in communities, there is a need for tangible awareness to be brought into their work, and the artist needs to be connected to the anti-oppressive movements with more than just their art but also by taking action as well. This is further examined when Ware shows praxis examples of his activism and art with what he describes as fungibility in opposition to the white supremacist disposability of Black marginalized bodies. Fungibility is defined as the means by which settler colonialism used Black bodies not only for labour but also as "fungible" property.

A term more commonly used to describe the ease with which one can change the crop they sow also works as an analogy for the way Black bodies are deemed as replaceable. Ware does this by identifying that Black people were not settlers on Turtle Island but provisions for the settler expansion and, without the need for their labour, have become disposable, resulting in violence such as the murder of people like Trayvon Martin. While this discourse seems to be travelling into the discussion of the structures of the United States, it is important to note that Canada was not identified as a country until 1867, and the Emancipation Proclamation was signed in 1863. Thus, identifying Canada as an active participant in the enslavement of Black people as well, the country maintained its own form of segregation and Jim Crow laws. Ware counters the fungibility by bringing awareness to the lives lost to murder and the conditions of struggle Black lives are born into and must continue to advocate against. Each of the images in his series is a representation of the marginalized groups he lives within, which includes Black, transgender and LGBTQIP2SAA. In this way, he embodies what Assata Shakur explains as being free to pursue his passion as opposed to only the identity of the struggle against oppression.

Syrus Marcus Ware's "Activist Portrait Series" represents the intersection of art and activism with his hand-drawn portraits of advocates and a representation of the victims. The unique space in which he identifies allows him to connect and bring awareness to the inequities experienced by these subjugated communities.

RESEARCH ESSAY

Ware not only celebrates queer/trans/racialized activists to confront the systemic injustices and inequalities within Western society; he utilizes artistic devices and his academic experience to his merge activism and art to create space that explores the unequal society.

Image Appendix



Image 1
Syrus Marcus Ware
Portrait of Thandi Young
2015-2018
Graphite on paper
59.5" x 108" approx.
Exhibition view of Wil
Aballe Art Projects
Vancouver

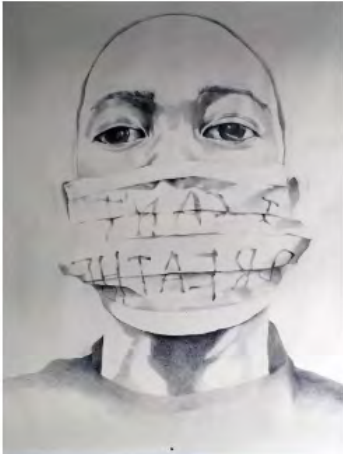


Image 2
Syrus Marcus Ware
Their Borders Crossed
Us: For Eric
2015
Graphite on paper
84" x 120" approx.
Exhibition view of Wil
Aballe Art Projects
Vancouver



Image 3
Syrus Marcus Ware
Portrait of QueenTite
Opaleke
2015-2018
Graphite on paper
59.5" x 108" approx.
Exhibition view of Wil
Aballe Art Projects
Vancouver



Image 4
Syrus Marcus Ware
Portrait of Rodney
Diverlus
2015-2018
Graphite on paper
59.5" x 108" approx.
Exhibition view of Wil
Aballe Art Projects
Vancouver

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A Sociological Exploration of Success in Formula One

Katelynne Fleming is an undergrad student of Sociology at the University of Winnipeg. Outside of school, she is also a certified Medical Office Administrator.

This publication explores a subject she loves talking about—the world of Formula One racing.

Please enjoy!

Introduction

Formula One, or F1, is an elite, international class of motorsport. It garners audiences of up to 1.5 billion viewers globally over one season (FormulaOne.com, 2022). There are currently ten teams competing, each employing only two drivers. Teams are sponsored and engineered by luxury brands such as Ferrari, Mercedes-Benz, and Aston Martin. An aspiring driver must train tirelessly and dedicate their entire life to reaching the exclusive profession of a full-time F1 driver. This paper examines the impacts of class, gender, and race on success in F1. It will evaluate what efforts have been made to mitigate societal obstacles in the sport. The goal of this research is to dismantle the social inequalities caused by race, gender, and class in Formula One,

and explore what can be done to ensure fairness in one's ability to participate in motorsport.

The Effects of Class, Gender, and Race

Professional athletes, and subsequently their families, commit a significant amount of time and money in order to succeed, and Formula One is no exception. In fact, it has been described by journalists, and even drivers themselves, as a “Billionaire Boys Club” (Voytko, 2021). Drivers, including Lance Stroll, have faced accusations that their place in F1 is undeserved, and only attained through their father’s considerable fortunes (Voytko, 2021). Success is connected to financial standing in F1 due to the expensive nature of the sport, costing teams upwards of 175 million to operate for one season (Baretto, 2019). While F1 drivers do not pay to compete, the road to F1 is a steep economic obstacle. Budding talents compete in subsidiary FIA championships, such as Formula 2 (F2). Competing in a season of F2, however, can cost a driver and their support system upwards of 1 million dollars (Voytko, 2021). Furthermore, this million-dollar investment comes only after dedicating years of their lives to training in motorsport. Drivers often start competitive go-karting around the ages of 5-10 years old and are expected to cover most fees during their junior careers (Chen, Galocha & Hill, 2023). If a driver and their family are not able to afford such payments, their chances of success in F1 are effectively negated from the start.

The impact of gender inequities in professional athletics is dramatically emphasized in the world of Formula One. Over 700 drivers have competed in F1 since the beginning days of the sport in the 1950s, and only two of them were women (Hill, 2024). Systemic obstructions in the male-dominated field of F1, and motorsport as a whole, act as a barrier to success for female drivers. Such obstacles span from a lack of role models and sufficient funding to stereotypes and sexist environments (Hill, 2024). However, experiences of sexism are not solely limited to potential drivers. At the beginning of the 2024 season, team principal Christian Horner of the Oracle Redbull Racing F1 team was the subject of major controversy regarding sexual misconduct (Specter, 2024). A female employee within the organization had experienced inappropriate and controlling behavior on Horner's behalf. After messages and photos between the two were made public, and an internal review took place, Horner was dismissed of his charges, and the female employee who accused him was suspended (Specter, 2024).

However, efforts have been made in recent years to extend equal opportunity of driving in F1 to women. The FIA now sanctions the F1 Academy championship, with an all-female pool of drivers. The series was introduced with the hopes of deconstructing barriers in F1 and to inspire women to seek out careers in motorsport (Francis, 2024).

There is a belief in the current world of Formula One, that in order to succeed, a driver must be located in Europe (Chen, Galocha & Hill, 2023). The competition and training

opportunities in European motorsport are considered more sophisticated than that of other countries. Therefore, European drivers tend to be advantaged within F1, and non-European drivers can face disadvantages and inequalities. This can be seen in the distribution of nationality amongst Formula One champions. Of the 73 world titles awarded since 1950 most have been won by drivers from the United Kingdom, currently sitting at 20. This is followed by German drivers with 12 total world championships (Briel, 2022). The last time a non-European won the world title was the Canadian driver, Jacques Villeneuve, in 1997 (Briel, 2022). While the connection between an athlete's race or nationality is evident in Formula One, this is not the only sport to experience such a relationship. Dominic Malcolm, a professor of Sociology of Sport, discusses how drawing conclusions about the capabilities of an entire race of people can be harmful (Malcolm, 2019). However, it is important to address the biases experienced by minority racial and cultural groups within professional athletics.

Organizational Efforts to Neutralize Inequality

In 2020, the Formula International Association (FIA) launched the “We Race as One” campaign. Its goal was to address the systemic issues of racism and social inequalities within Formula One (Brolly, 2023). This was during the Covid-19 pandemic, which coincided with the height of the Black Lives Matter movement, and many social protests globally.

Similar campaigns from governing bodies such as the Union of European Football Associations' "Say No to Racism" campaign were launched around the same time (Brolly, 2023). However, the public reception of the F1 campaign was not overly positive. Contrary to the equity-focused attitudes outlined in "We Race as One," the FIA continues to host Grand Prix in countries with national values opposing such equity (Brolly, 2023). While races in locations such as Qatar and Saudi Arabia garner considerable investment for F1's organizers, they also contribute to a phenomenon known as "sportswashing". This is a process by which national governments with stained reputations use prestigious sporting events to present favorably in the global public eye (Mngqosini, 2023). In addition to fostering cultural inequalities, in the case of Christian Horner's sexual misconduct case they did nothing. A statement was released claiming that they would be unable to confirm or comment upon the matter (Specter, 2024).

Unsurprisingly, Formula One drivers have more to say when it comes to inequality within the organization than their governing counterparts. Sir Lewis Hamilton, a driver for Mercedes-AMG and seven-time world champion, has stated that the FIA must do more to remove systemic barriers to success (Benson, 2020). Hamilton's father worked multiple jobs to support his son's karting career (Voytko, 2022). This, in addition to his position as the only black driver on the current F1 grid, has resulted in Hamilton becoming a spokesperson for equity in the sport. In an interview with the Today Show,

another driver, Lando Norris, discussed the recent rise in female viewership of F1. He observed it was a positive change, not only in the variety of audience members, but in encouraging women to pursue careers in motorsport (Hoxha & White, 2023). F1 drivers are often more vocal about such topics because they have experienced inequality firsthand, many of which face the obstacles rooted in class, gender, and cultural differences throughout their careers.

Conclusion

Through the combined social forces of race, gender, and class, the Formula One organization has cultivated an environment where success is not purely talent driven. While many within the sport have spoken out against the systemic inequalities they have faced, those with the power to make change seem unwilling to do so. However, the funding of organizations such as F1 Academy is a key step in the right direction. Without such access to opportunities in motorsport, the era of dominance in Formula One by wealthy men from Europe will continue. For a sport with a global audience in the billions, the Formula International Association should be making more effort to dismantle cultural biases, gender inequities, and economic barriers to success.

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From Penny Paper to Global Sensation: A Deep Dive into The New York Times

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The New York Times is a long-standing and well-respected American newspaper. It covers a variety of topics including domestic, national, and international news, as well as opinion editorials and reviews. It is the second largest newspaper by print circulation in the United States, following The Wall Street Journal (Wikimedia Foundation, 2025). The Times is written and published daily in English, Spanish, and Chinese. Its most popular columns include American news, world news, business, arts, lifestyle, opinion, cooking, the “Wirecutter” (which covers product reviews and recommendations), and its popular sports section “The Athletic” (The New York Times, n.d.-e). These columns have helped the newspaper reach 150 million readers monthly (The New York Times, n.d.-b).

As of 2023, the business had 296,330 print subscribers, and nearly 9 million online subscribers (Wikimedia Foundation, 2025). Their subscribers belong to 230 countries and territories worldwide (The New York Times Company, n.d.) -- solidifying *The New York Times* as a newspaper of record and one of the world's greatest newspapers.

Like its name, the paper is based in New York City, with its headquarters at The New York Times building in midtown Manhattan. The news organization has additional American offices in Los Angeles, San Francisco, DC, and Chicago (The New York Times, n.d.- c); as well as 31 international offices in cities such as Toronto, London, Paris, Tokyo, and Singapore (The New York Times Company, n.d.).

It was founded 174 years ago, in 1851, making it one of America's longest running newspapers (The New York Times Company, n.d.). When it first began, *The Times* was a penny paper (sold at approximately 5 cents cheaper than other newspapers), even though it appealed mainly to a more cultured and intellectual audience than a broad one. Due to the paper having a limited, higher-class audience (in addition to its cheap cost), it began to lose money quickly. When *The New York Times* was bought by Adolph Simon Ochs in 1896 (Encyclopedia Britannica, 2025), it was losing \$1,000 a week (which is valued at \$37,572.02 weekly today). After he purchased the newspaper, Ochs became its publisher.

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He is largely credited with turning the paper into what it is today, as previous news reports were filled with biases and attention grabbers rather than straight news. As publisher, Ochs decided that news would be given impartially. He also removed the fiction column and replaced it with several new columns such as a Saturday Book Review and a Sunday pictorial magazine. Under his leadership, circulation doubled within the first year and the paper profited by Ochs' third year as publisher. He remained the publisher of *The Times* for nearly 40 years, until he died in 1935 (The New York Public Library Archives & Manuscripts, n.d.). In 1971 (under his grandson Arthur Ochs Sulzberger's leadership as publisher), *The New York Times* became the centre of controversy, per Encyclopedia Britannica (2025) when:

It published a series of reports based on the "Pentagon Papers," a secret government study of U.S. involvement in the Vietnam War that had been covertly given to *The Times* by government officials. The U.S. Supreme Court found that the publication was protected by the freedom-of-the-press clause in the First Amendment of the U.S. Constitution. The publication of the "Pentagon Papers" brought *The Times* a Pulitzer Prize in 1972, and by the early 21st century the paper had won more than 120 Pulitzers...considerably more than any other news organization (Para. 4).

Now, *The New York Times* has won 132 Pulitzer Prizes for outstanding journalistic achievement—the most won by any media outlet in history (Wikimedia Foundation, 2024). Additionally, the paper remains in the Ochs-Sulzberger family. All voting shares for *The Times* are controlled by the

Ochs-Sulzberger Family Trust (InfluenceWatch, 2020). Furthermore, current chairman and publisher A.G. Sulzberger is the sixth member of the Ochs-Sulzberger family to serve as publisher since the newspaper was purchased by his great-great-grandfather in 1896 (The New York Times Company, n.d.).

The news organization is currently home to 5800 total company employees, 1700 of which are staff writers (The New York Times Company, n.d.). Some of the many people employed are journalists, app developers, software engineers, data strategists/analysts, videographers, marketers, and art directors (The New York Times Company, n.d.). They also offer internships and newsroom fellowships (The New York Times Company, n.d.-a).

In addition to its journalism, *The New York Times* is also widely known for its daily games, including the world-famous crossword puzzle, and the iconic Wordle and Connections games. Their other games include Spelling Bee, Strands, Letter Boxed, Tiles, Sudoku, and their mini crossword (The New York Times, n.d.-d). Furthermore, *The Times* has also grown to include 15+ successful in-house podcasts, which are included in their subscription service. They have also created their own app called “The New York Times Audio” so that their podcasts can be streamed on Apple, Android, and Samsung devices.

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In its future, The New York Times would continue to thrive by adding a new game and podcast annually since their games and podcasts have been so successful. Additionally, the paper should consider adding more international offices if they want to continue to increase their vast global readership. Finally, due to *The New York Times* being kept in the Ochs-Sulzberger family since 1896, it will most likely remain that way for years to come; especially with their family trust having full control of voting among The Times shareholders.

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The Murals of Northern Ireland: Borderland Identity and Political Conflict

by Katelynne Fleming

Introduction

Through art, humans are able to depict interpretations of the world they live in. The murals of Northern Ireland demonstrate the artistic expression of national identity, each telling a unique story, and often commemorating historic political conflicts. Such murals include depictions of armed gunmen, memorials for dead soldiers and community members, and even some that could be described as paramilitary propaganda (Ross, 2002). They memorialize an era of violent conflict, and leave a lasting image of a politically and ideologically divided borderland. The artwork serves as a material representation of these conflicting ideologies, that shape how individuals understand, and interact with, their surroundings (Althusser, 2014). This analysis will look at four murals located in Northern Ireland, and attempt to answer these questions:

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1. How do the murals of Northern Ireland depict historical and contemporary political conflict?
2. How do they depict, and serve to perpetuate, ideological bordering and the Loyalist-Nationalist identity binary?
3. How do they represent the concept of borderscapes in a global context?

The literature referenced throughout this analysis focuses on themes of public artwork as displays of ideological narratives, and as commemorations of conflict. They explore the binary between Loyalist and Nationalist cultures and identities, and how this is illustrated through the presence of political murals in cities such as Belfast, and Derry. The physical and ideological border in Ireland is understood through examining specific pieces of artwork, and by connecting the symbols, images, and depictions in such pieces to the longstanding division of the nation.

This research is intended to help further understand the borderland of Ireland, and to use the murals to explore their history of conflict. Additionally, it seeks to connect the themes of such artwork to broader borderland issues and subjects. To achieve this, the history of conflict between Loyalist-Protestant and Nationalist-Catholic communities will serve as a foundation.

Historical Background

The conflict between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland is rooted in the longstanding division, and antagonism, between Catholicism and Protestantism.

In 1690, at the Battle of Boyne, King William led an army against the Irish and the deposed Catholic King James, and claimed victory for the British Crown (Vannais, 2001). The British occupied Ireland for centuries, and Protestant powers oppressed Catholicism all across the country (Rolston, 2004). This continued until the year 1921, when the Republic of Ireland was officially declared as independent from the United Kingdom, and partitioned from the North (Rolston, 2004). Following the division, Nationalist organizations of the Republic struggled in an attempt to join forces with Northern Ireland; however, Loyalist organizations there had no interest in reuniting with the Republic, and sought to remain as part of the United Kingdom (Goalwin, 2013).

Following this ongoing dispute between the communities, the Troubles began in the year 1969, with The Battle of Bogside marking the first outburst in an era of violent conflict (ITN Archive, 2023). This conflict began as a 3-day riot that sparked confrontations throughout the nation, and eventually led to the deployment of British Troops in Ireland (O'Donoghue, 2023). The resulting national conflict between Loyalist-Protestant and Nationalist-Catholic communities led to the construction of what are known as the Peace Walls – a physical border that separates Northern Ireland from the Republic of Ireland (Stall, 2015). This border further estranged the disputing communities, and the eventual signing of the Good Friday agreement did little to address the lasting impacts caused by decades of violent conflict.

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However, throughout the Troubles and in the years following, artists from both Loyalist and Nationalist backgrounds would turn to mural painting to “legitimize their ideological claims and help catalyze popular support for their political causes” (Goalwin, 2013, p. 190). The murals therefore express both Loyalist and Nationalist ideologies, and respective cultural heritages. However, the violent history of the Troubles, and the hostility between these communities, is preserved through ever-present visual stimulus.

Author's Note: I have given each mural a working title for clarity and organization based on the appropriate research, however these are not official titles – from what I have found, the works are generally unnamed by their designated artists.

Analysis of Murals



I. King Billy's on the Wall

This mural depicts King William, or the familiar King Billy, and is a commemoration of his victory over Irish nationalists in 1690 (O'Donoghue, 2023). He is portrayed as The Prince of Orange, and those pictured alongside the mural are partaking in an annual bonfire in his honour (O'Donoghue, 2023). This serves as an example of what some of the first murals in Ireland would have looked like, initially starting to appear in the early 20th century (Pragnère, 2014). During this era, the murals exclusively depicted Loyalist ideologies and beliefs, predominantly featuring portrayals of King Billy and symbols of allegiance to Britain (Pragnère, 2014). King Billy's dominant image *On The Wall* signifies not only that the territory is decidedly British and Protestant, but also gives viewers an impression of control over the public space in which it occupies (Pragnère, 2014). It openly celebrates the Republicans defeat at the Battle of Boyne, and the British suppression of Catholicism in Ireland. Furthermore, this celebration is upheld by individuals (with bonfires and parades) who believe very strongly in King Billy's cultural legacy.

The artwork is a strong representation of Loyalist identity, and of the history of conflict, animosity, and binarization between Irelands Loyalist-Protestant and Nationalist-Catholic communities. Loyalists continue to support British rule of Northern Ireland, and refuse to join the cause with "Home-Rule" believing Nationalists. However, in comparison to the murals that will be analyzed further, this is the least violent depiction of conflict that we will see.

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Loyalist murals are often described as glorifying nationalist bloodshed, and supporting terroristic paramilitary organizations (Rolston, 2012).



II. Shankill
Road

Photo from *Medium*

Located on the now-famous Shankill Road in Belfast, this mural depicts three paramilitary members – the central figure being armed, with the barrel of his gun pointed directly at the viewer (Poole, 2013). Shankill Road was the location of a bombing during the Troubles in 1993, when a fish shop was targeted by the Provision Irish Republican Army (PIRA), as they suspected a loyalist gathering was taking place (Poole, 2013).

This attack resulted in the death of ten individuals, and left over fifty injured (Stall, 2015), thus sparking severe political tensions in the area. The Shankill Road mural is seen as a representation of Loyalist protection, with the central figure, an Ulster Freedom Fighter, being considered a guardian of Loyalist territory (Poole, 2013).

The Ulster Freedom Fighters, also known as the Ulster Defense Association, were formed in 1972 as a Loyalist response to the Troubles (Poole, 2013). The two names were used to avoid the UDA being declared an illegal or terrorist organization (Poole, 2013). The central figure, as well as the crest and figure on the left-side of the mural, represent these organizations. Lastly, the crest and figure on the right-side of the mural represent the Ulster Defense Union, who could be considered the grandfather of paramilitary groups such as the UDA or UFF. The formation of the UDU dates back to the late 19th century (1893). They were a Loyalist organization who fought against the Republican Irish Home Rule Movement, which sought for independence from the United Kingdom and “home-rule,” or self-governance, of Ireland (Poole, 2013).

This mural reinforces both Loyalist ideologies, and expresses unity of Loyalists in the Shankill area. Yet it also exemplifies the strength of paramilitary groups during, and in the decades following, the Troubles. It is a visually disturbing mural, and its presence serves to normalize the violence associated with paramilitary organizations. For comparison, imagine the notion of large murals in Winnipeg depicting the history of gang activity and crime in the city.

III. Ulster Freedom Fighters



The third mural being analyzed is a representation of ‘Eddie’: the mascot for the popular band, Iron Maiden. It depicts a skeletal member of the Ulster Freedom Fighters, and an ominous silhouette of the grim reaper appearing in the background (Forgan, 2013). The UFF were one of numerous paramilitary organizations to flourish throughout Ireland during the Troubles. They supported Loyalist causes, and were known for inciting brutal attacks against Republican-Catholics (Poole, 2013). The artwork also includes a threatening message, with the final line reading “so when yo u’re in your bed at night, and hear soft footsteps fall, be careful it’s not the UFF and Reaper come to call” (Forgan, 2013).

This mural represents the violence of the Troubles, and the fear associated with political conflict and paramilitary violence.

In fact, the majority of loyalist murals painted during the Troubles depict armed gunmen (Rolston, 2012), with several having been historically commissioned by paramilitary organizations (Rolston, 2004). In contrast to memorial artworks and King Billy murals, violent imagery of gun-wielding paramilitary gang members can be understood as propaganda that perpetuates loyalist ideologies (Rolston, 2004). This imagery is especially dangerous, as it has the ability to subvert reason, and appeal to human emotions such as fear or trauma (Ross, 2002).

Following the Good Friday Agreement, the over-saturation of such violent artwork led to negotiations with loyalist paramilitary groups and the council for the Re-Imaging Communities program. The Ulster Freedom Fighters mural, as well almost twenty others containing imagery defined as violent, were re-painted (Foran, 2013). The UFF mural was replaced by yet another King Billy portrait. The re-imaging program claimed the Iron Maiden figure and reaper as offensive and overly-divisive, and saw King Billy as a non-violent representative of Loyalist heritage (Foran, 2013). This demonstrates intent on behalf of both Loyalist and Nationalist community members, and of mural artists, to reduce the presence of fear-inducing murals and imagery. Although, it can also be seen as an erasure of the lasting impacts of violent political conflict in Northern Ireland.



Photo from euronews.com, Copyright *The AP*

IV. The Battle of Bogside

This mural is a commemoration of the Battle of Bogside, a 3-day riot that took place in 1969. The young man wearing a gas mask is depicted as holding an active petrol bomb, and using it in defense from the Royal Ulster Constabulary (CAIN Archive). The riot is known as the violent outburst that marked the beginning of the Troubles. Nationalists from the Bogside area in Derry clashed with Loyalists and the RUC, which eventually led to the deployment of the British military (ITN Archive, 2023). This sparked a series of riots and attacks throughout the nation. Over the three decades in which the Troubles took place, nearly four-thousand people lost their lives (O'Donoghue, 2023).

The artwork is located in Derry, a city in Northern Ireland with a larger Catholic population, and represents the Republican side of the conflict.

Similar to the previously explored murals, it is a reflection of community values, and of historic and contemporary religious and political divisions (O'Donoghue, 2023). While the mural serves as a grim reminder of the devastating impacts of such conflict, its presence also serves to perpetuate Nationalist ideologies through the negative depiction of the RUC.

The image is particularly intimidating given its large scale in comparison to the people pictured walking nearby. The idea of walking to work or school while being towered over by a boy in a gas mask is daunting, and tells a story about the members of the community in which the mural is located. They are a people who live in fear, and with constant reminders of the conflict that continues to divide them. The presence of the Battle of Bogside mural fixes the eyes and minds of the community upon the political conflict of the Troubles (Stall, 2015). At its worst, the artwork is a lasting visual reminder of violence, trauma, and death.

Ideological Bordering and the Loyalist-Nationalist Binary

The main themes that appear in the murals of Northern Ireland can be defined in three categories: identity, memorial, and cultural (Pragnère, 2014). Identity is explored through historic, symbolic, and mythological artworks; memorials include depictions of political martyrs, violent events and massacres; and culture is portrayed through references to language, religion, and heritage (Pragnère, 2014). These themes are illustrated by artists from both sides of the conflict, and can be understood as artistic depictions of ideological bordering.

Since the division of Ireland, and especially since the Troubles and construction of the Peace Walls, Loyalist and Nationalist identities have become increasingly binarized, and the relationship between communities has not been properly mended. The murals of Northern Ireland are described as ideological depictions of Loyalist or Nationalist identities, traditions, and cultures (Lisle, 2006). These depictions serve to societally entrench what is known as the two-communities thesis, wherein Irish politics have been erroneously reduced to the Loyalist-Nationalist binary (Lisle, 2006). For example, we can look at the King Billy mural commemorating the Battle of Boyne. A mural depicting victory for the British monarchy serves not only as an expression of Loyalist national identity and pride, but also as a discrediting of the Nationalist stance against the British occupation of Ireland.

The border of Northern Ireland is not only a physical separation of people, but an ideological division which reaffirms the separation of Loyalist and Nationalist identities (Vannais, 2001), perpetuated through the presence of political artwork. The re-imaging program demonstrates attempted efforts towards the reconciliation of Loyalist and Nationalist communities. They work with local groups to remove visual representations of religious and political sectarianism, and to create a welcoming environment for community members (Rolston, 2012). However, the re-painted murals still display ideological symbols, images, and messages from both Loyalist and Nationalist perspectives. The ideological border that exists between these conflicting communities is maintained through artistic monuments,

and through celebrations of these monuments, such as the bonfires in commemoration of King Billy taking place over three hundred years after his historic victory.

Murals as Reflections of Local and Global Borderscapes

When confined to the local borderland of Ireland, the political murals and artworks analyzed in this study reflect the conflicting identities and ideologies of Loyalists and Nationalists. They depict the ideological frameworks from which each community confirms their culture and sense of self (Lisle, 2006). Local spaces are therefore used to exhibit , and perform , narratives of national identity (Kappler, & McKane, 2019). The presence of such artwork not only asserts claims over identity, territory, tradition, history, and political values – they are further explained as suppressing lingering fears and hostilities under a coat of paint. As author and artist Bill Rolston states: “Better another mural than more bullets” (Rolston, 2012).

The feeling of fear associated with political conflict and division in Northern Ireland is comparable to that across global contemporary borderlands, including the Canada-US border. While the ‘trade war’ has yet to see any instances of violence, and has remained largely economic thus far , ; Canadians and Americans alike fear the consequences of border conflict, while also feeling further divided from their bordering neighbors. The murals and artworks analyzed in this study represent the ideology of separation, and the feelings associated with conflict at the border.

National identities of border-separated communities globally remain divided, and art is used as a way to express individual identity.

Therefore, the murals act not only as representations of local sectarian conflict, but of border culture on a global scale (Lisle, 2006). Local and international politics and economics influence the creation of such art (Adams, 2006), and through its creation and lasting presence, national identities are expressed, upheld, and affirmed. The murals of Northern Ireland represent the division of such identities in a global context. Around the world, people living in heavily bordered nations and communities would be able to identify with the political murals in Northern Ireland, and see their own struggles, identities, and values represented in the artwork. Such political art forged in times of instability and unrest allows struggling communities to construct and define their identities and ideologies (Goalwin, 2013). If similar murals existed in Canada, for instance, we could potentially see “ *We will never become the 51st state* ” plastered on buildings next to images of hockey players and Canadian military officials (however this is simply a dramatic theoretical).

Conclusions

With the presence of political murals in Northern Ireland, the ideological border between Loyalist and Nationalist communities is uniquely sustained in society. The murals function as a memorialization of the Troubles, and as a preservation of conflicting borderland identities.

Paramilitary propaganda, and violent images such as depictions of masked gunmen and the Grim Reaper, decorate their streets and neighborhoods. Children grow up surrounded by these artworks, with the beliefs represented in them strongly present in their communities. The conflict is immortalized, and the violent era of the Troubles is remembered through artistic expressions of conflict, with themes of opposing identities and cultures. The loyalist-nationalist binary is therefore embedded into society, and socialized unto children and adults who live amongst the (often violent) political imagery. The artists responsible for murals such as those in Derry, Belfast, and all throughout Northern Ireland, creatively express their experiences with political conflict and violence, their national identities, and their cultural heritage. The cities transform into “open-air museums” (Kappler, & McKane, 2019), where artistic displays of historic and contemporary conflicts are carefully curated.

Furthermore, the murals act as representations of global border culture (Lisle, 2006), and can help us understand the division and conflict between international borderlands. Though many of the artworks could be described as overly violent, with pieces such as the Ulster Freedom Fighters mural having even been painted over in favor of less-offensive artwork; they exist to demonstrate pride for, and solidarity with, one’s community and nation. The conflict, violence, and division experienced by Loyalist and Nationalist communities in Northern Ireland – and the murals that represent these experiences – reflect globally shared perceptions of national identity, and the ideologically pervasive nature of borders.

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Restorative Justice as a Tool to Address Colonial Systems that Marginalize Indigenous Women

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INTRODUCTION

It is an undeniable fact that Indigenous women in Canada face discrimination and mistreatment that affect every aspect of their lives, with dozens of widely available sources that promote the validity and reality of this assertion. The inequalities that Indigenous women face are a direct result of Canada's colonially formed and maintained systems that both produce and continually perpetuate institutions of oppression and violence. As a result of these systems, Indigenous women experience inequitable social determinants of health, are unable to access proper housing and education, are denied

their inherent rights to safety and security, and are confronted with higher rates of incarceration and domestic and sexual violence (“Reclaiming Power and Place” 551). Canada’s retributive justice system has, for far too long, failed to address and resolve the systemic racism intertwined in Canada’s past and present, making the hopes for an equitable future for Indigenous women seem less obtainable. This paper explores the benefits of restorative justice in Canada and whether it is an effective lens to address the injustices Indigenous women experience. Using a restorative justice lens to confront the many systemic issues ingrained within settler society can be beneficial not only in acknowledging the continued oppression and marginalization of Indigenous women, but also in giving Indigenous women and girls the space to share their stories and address their needs to provide the opportunity for a process of healing.

COLONIAL CONTEXT

Colonial oppression has disproportionately affected Indigenous women in Canada since first contact. Before European invasion, Indigenous women were important figureheads in cultural and societal contexts as Indigenous communities were based around matriarchal structures. Indigenous women “played a crucial role in determining leadership, were involved in conflict resolution and making major decisions like declaring war, had supreme authority in the household, had the right to own land and other assets, and had the freedom to divorce and remarry” (Halseth 7).

However, with the imposition of settler systems and Western traditions, a patriarchal structure was introduced, asserting the superiority of men over women. With this shift, the disenfranchisement of the rights of Indigenous women began.

Alongside the establishment of the 1867 Indian Act, the federal government assumed jurisdiction over Indigenous sovereignty and created a discriminatory and gendered definition for the legal title of Indian. This title made sure that Indigenous women would “lose their status and rights if they married non-status men, excluded them from decision-making processes and undermined their authority by a denial of household and property rights” (Halseth 7). The loss of status for Indigenous women also “often resulted in their being in unsafe positions: alienated, dislocated, and isolated from their family, community, and cultures” (McGuire and Murdoch 533). The erasure of Indigenous culture perpetuated by the Indian Act established a patriarchal system that diminished the role of women within Indigenous communities and contributed to the disempowerment of Indigenous women’s power and agency. Furthermore, not only were Indigenous women discriminated against through colonial policies, but also through the promotion of stereotypes that depicted them as “dirty, lazy, immoral and ultimately disposable” (Luoma 33). Since the formation of the Indian Act, Indigenous women have been routinely confronted with colonial oppression and systemic racism. The rising rates of violence that Indigenous women experience must promote the exploration of a new system of justice: restorative justice.

RESTORATIVE JUSTICE FRAMEWORK

The Canadian government has long upheld a justice system tangled with bureaucratic policies that fail to address the immediate needs of Indigenous women or make any effort to resolve the crisis of Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls (MMIWG). According to the Canadian Government, “between 2009 and 2021, the rate of homicide against First Nations, Métis and Inuit women and girls was six times higher than the rate among their non-Indigenous counterparts” (Statistics Canada). Similarly, reports from 2020 found that “Indigenous women represent over 41% of federally incarcerated women” (Ryan et al. 971). The higher rates of homicide and incarceration among Indigenous women in Canada and the systemic racism maintained within them exemplify the critical need to investigate an alternative form of justice.

The current retributive justice system does not address the colonial structures that impact Indigenous women and is based on punishing offenders rather than on their rehabilitation. In contrast, restorative justice is founded on Indigenous cultural practices that directly address “the offending behaviour and its effect on the victim and community, while offering a healing path forward” (Buchanan 319). Restorative justice is often practiced through healing circles designed to amplify the voices of participants and create a safe and open space to share personal experiences and engage in meaningful dialogue. Despite the lack of research on the effectiveness of restorative justice as a tool to address colonial harm, many programs that offer healing circles have reported positive results.

For example, the Yellow Medicine County Restorative Justice program published that their healing circles resulted in a 0% recidivism rate for participants within one year of completion. The program also saw that 100% of restitution owed was paid to victims and that 97% of participants felt fulfilled after concluding the circle process (Buchanan 326). Another successful healing circle is the Hollow Water First Nations Community Holistic Healing Circle based in Canada. The program is notably one of the best healing circles in the world and has helped implement restorative justice approaches across the globe. In a 2001 study, Hollow Water's Community Holistic Circle Healing model reflected that "of the 107 offenders who had participated in the program since its inception, only two have recidivated" (Cripps and McGlade 248). The impacts of healing circles have had astounding outcomes that far surpass the current retributive justice system which does not work to reduce rates of crime and incarceration and fails to close the systemic gaps that maintain the oppression of Indigenous women.

Healing circles have long been practiced in Indigenous justice systems, bringing people together through meaningful connections. Healing circles are directly related to restorative justice and are centred around amplifying voices and experiences rather than blaming and punishment. The approach and open dialogue of healing circles exemplify restorative justice's benefits in promoting shared experiences and conversations that shift and acknowledge different perspectives. When applied to the colonial violence that

Indigenous women experience, healing circles provide a space for Indigenous women to be heard and acknowledged, address their needs, and begin to heal their trauma.

CONCLUSION

Indigenous women continue to face systemic inequities as a result of the colonial systems imposed on them. The trauma and damage that these systems inflict are evident in the higher rates of incarceration, sexual violence, homicide, and the general lack of basic rights that Indigenous women are confronted with. Through the implementation of healing circles and the recentring of Indigenous cultural practices, the voices of Indigenous women are amplified, and the process of healing can begin. A restorative justice approach allows Indigenous women the opportunity not only to share their personal experiences but also to begin a dialogue that provides strategies to create tangible change within oppressive Canadian structures. Restorative justice is a highly effective tool to address the colonial violence that Indigenous women continually experience.

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The Pedagogy of Creativity at the University of Winnipeg

Clavis Pickford (any) is a Rhetoric & Communications major and UW Writing Center tutor. Fascinated by the connections within oneself and between others, their academic work spans the realms of advertising, mental illness and trauma, gaming culture, and most recently the study of creativity.

Creativity is fundamental to success in academics and the development of novel research. However, creativity is seldom discussed in undergraduate contexts despite having significant impacts on student life both during and after their education (Dumas et al., 2024). Conducted by an undergraduate student at the University of Winnipeg (UW) with interdisciplinary experience, this research aims to investigate the perception of creativity throughout undergraduate studies within the institution. Peer tutoring with students of myriad disciplines suggests many struggle with developing original perspectives and the process of ideation, both crucial skills in academia. In line with a belief that creativity is essential not only in academia, but in communication and personal understanding overall, this research questions if there is sufficient instruction in creativity in UW undergraduate studies and what influences

instructor, student, and disciplinary perceptions of creativity have on such instruction. Upon confirming such instruction to be insufficient, it then seeks to answer if facilitation of creative development is possible, and how it might be put into pedagogical practice in undergraduate education.

The pursuit of higher education requires the development of novel ideas, and many careers following graduation likewise require creative skills (Wu and Wu, 2020). Pertaining to UW specifically, creativity is a core part of several aspects of the university's mission statement. Accessibility and excellence are touted as central objectives of the school (UW, n.d.). The development of accessible infrastructure and instruction requires stepping away from the norm, an inherently creativity driven act. The mission to develop an "appreciation of the full range of human, aesthetic, and environmental values" likewise demands a significant degree of creativity from students (UW, n.d., para. 1) . Through discussion with members of the UW's community, this research concludes that significant discrepancies exist between the institution's perceptions and ambitions, and those of its students. The purpose-built understanding of creativity developed as a result of this research offers a means to reconcile this discrepancy.

Literature Review

Definition of Creativity

Definitions of creativity vary greatly between experts. The Creativity Research Journal, a prominent venue for the topic, struggles with inconsistencies in defining creativity

throughout works published (Runco and Jaeger, 2012). Addressing the high frequency of articles redefining the term, Runco and Jaeger (2012) aimed to standardize key facets of these definitions, such as “originality and effectiveness” (p. 92). Alternatively, though often similar, definitions are offered, such as creativity existing within the realms of uncommonness and adaptation to reality (Barron, 1955). More detailed is the definition offered by Stein, “works which are useful for some group combined with insight arisen [sic] from the reintegration of already existing materials or models which, when completed contains elements that are new” (Stein, 1953, p. 311). While valid, these definitions offer little in the way of praxis, save for perhaps the common thread of novelty in the form of synonyms, *originality*, *uncommonness*, and *newness*.

A more contemporary definition from Dumas et al., (2024) sees creativity as the generation of novel and meaningful ideas as judged by oneself or within some social process” (p. 143). Support for the domain-specific idea of creativity is also demonstrated here, reflecting an important facet of defining creativity: the question of domain-specificity or domain-general. As domain-general, creativity is an inherent trait of an individual, which is applicable to various fields. Conversely, domain-specific creativity is developed within one area with limited transferability to others, and is gaining prominence in contemporary research (Baer, 2015). These struggles in definition highlight the need for a pedagogy-specific definition garnered from the experiences of those to whom it applies.

Pedagogical Research

Existing research into the pedagogy of creativity is limited. Developmental, psychological, and neurological focuses are favoured, which often include limited participant perspectives (Herbert, 2010; Yoon et al., 2020). Herbert's work, for example, explores the development of creativity through the esoteric theories of Lacanian psychology (Herbert, 2020). In the discussion of methodology specifically, Herbert does, however, offer the importance of student-teacher relations, risk-taking in classroom settings, and the use of literature and visual arts in facilitating the development of creativity. Herbert also demonstrates a domain-specific conception by encouraging the development of creativity in the sciences as much as the arts.

Pedagogy-centric works primarily focus on children. Welch et al.'s work examines how existing research could be used to develop creativity-focused curricula in primary health and physical education (Welch et al., 2020). Similar research into the development of creativity through reverse engineering in robotics was conducted with Kindergarten to Grade 12 students by exploring potential connections between empathy and group creativity in elementary school students (Liu et al., 2023; Yoon et al., 2020). However, these topics only apply tangentially to the experience of students in undergraduate settings.

An international study by Harris and de Bruin developed an instructor's narrative of creativity development in secondary

schools (Harris and de Bruin, 2018). Instructors consistently noted the necessity of instruction in creativity, highlighting learning environments with opportunities for risk taking, minimal judgment, and playfulness as critical components. Difficulties incurred by the varied definitions of creativity were also noted by instructors.

A significant amount of past work relies on the Torrance Tests of Creative Thinking (TTCT), a controversial pair of tests which assess a subject's creativity (Baer, 2015). Questions such as asking the participant if they subscribe to a professional journal, are misaligned with current understandings of creativity and culture, especially among undergraduate students. As well, they rely on self-reported data, presenting risks of unreliability through misunderstandings and misrepresentation. A final concern is the TTCT's reliance on the domain-general conception of creativity, at odds with contemporary understandings. This lack of reliability undermines many studies, including one of the rare few centred on undergraduate students, Wu and Wu's research into the use of the corporate group-think SCAMPER method in engineering and computer science programs (Wu and Wu, 2020). This study also highlights the general issues in self-reporting and suffers from offering instructors minimal education on creativity instruction.

Model for Domain Learning

Influential to the work at hand was the aforementioned Dumas et al.'s adaptation of Patricia Alexander's Model for Domain Learning (MDL); a framework for how knowledge and skills are developed in a given domain, through the stages of acclimation, competency, and expertise (Dumas et al., 2024). The article suggests that as one develops expertise within a particular domain, they also develop creativity in tandem. It offers generalized strategies and activities for encouraging the development of creativity, which have the potential for adaptation to undergraduate classrooms. However, while Dumas et al. present a framework for instruction in creative thinking, their proposed methodology has yet to gain traction in wider pedagogical practice, suggesting a disconnect in the perceived necessity of creative instruction at the institutional level.

Conclusion

Review of extant work reveals the need for a purpose-built definition of creativity for pedagogy. Novelty, occurring frequently in other definitions, is clearly a core component (Baer, 2015; Dumas et al., 2024; Herbert, 2010; Runco and Jaeger, 2012). Other findings to be considered in said definition are the importance of risk taking, interpersonal relationships, and supportive environments (Bruin and Harris and de Bruin, 2018; Dumas et al., 2024; Herbert, 2010). Such a definition must be built from a narrative understanding of the group to which it will be applied, in this case, undergraduate students and instructors at UW.

Methodology

Interviews

Research was conducted using narrative inquiry, utilizing interviews to construct a narrative understanding of the undergraduate experience with instruction in creativity at UW. Interviews were approximately one hour in length and conducted over video call or on the UW campus at the discretion of participants. They followed a semi-structured format to aid in obtaining candid responses. Participants were informed of the topic of the study, though given minimal context otherwise. Six key questions were developed to guide the interviews and provide static points of comparison between participants:

1. How do you define creativity?
2. How does your discipline define creativity?
3. Do undergraduate students know how to be creative?
4. Can creativity be taught?
5. How valued is creativity in your discipline?
6. Do you think it is important to teach creativity?

Supplemental questions were also posed at the discretion of the researcher, such as “do you consider yourself a creative person?” and “what barriers exist to teaching creativity?” These were used to enable conversation as well as to expand on previous answers to key questions.

Participants

The participant group for this research was composed of five individuals active at the university:

four current undergraduate students and one instructor. While efforts were made to diversify the participant group, the majority of participants work primarily in the humanities, with one student enrolled in the sciences. Participants were assigned pseudonyms to maintain their anonymity:

- Ashe, a fourth-year journalism student
- Dani, a third-year neuroscience student
- Erin, a fourth-year rhetoric and communications (RC) student minoring in women and gender studies (WGS)
- Tami, a third-year RC major with a previous degree in Psychology
- Emmy, an instructor for the RC department

Response Analysis

Analysis of participant responses occurred in two phases. The first identified common themes and opinions were based on responses to all questions asked throughout individual interviews. Notable discrepancies between responses were also noted to aid in building an accurate collective narrative. The second phase was the construction of a collective narrative based on said themes and opinions, guided by the key interview questions as points of connection and comparison. This collective narrative was used to determine if instruction in creativity at the undergraduate level is lacking, and to answer the subsequent question regarding student and instructor influences. Participant responses were also synthesized with information garnered from literature in the

construction of a pedagogy-centric definition of creativity reflective of the group under study.

Analysis

Responses

Q1: How do you define creativity?

The purpose of Q1 was to obtain a baseline definition from participants before subsequent discussion could influence their perspective, and to encourage consideration of creativity in a concrete way. Both the initial answer given and the definitive aspects which arose throughout the discussion were considered. Overall, responses varied, but expression of some form was considered integral to creativity by all participants. Three students initially offered self-expression specifically. Emmy, the sole instructor, instead referenced the expression of knowledge. Dani alternatively offered “out of the box thinking,” referencing novelty and originality as central components, later referencing expression and the importance of autonomy as well. Erin also identified novelty as a key component. References to relational engagement, learning, and knowledge were also commonly discussed.

Q2: How does your discipline define creativity?

Q2 aimed to identify trends throughout disciplines and discrepancies between participants’ personal definition of creativity and that of their field. It also served to encourage thoughts on creativity from different perspectives. Responses varied significantly, even among participants from similar

disciplines. Erin identified flexibility as a core trait in WGS, referencing a lecture they received on Spoon Theory as a creative approach to disability education. Tami described RC's definition of creativity as the ability to express one's personal thoughts, feelings, and opinions in a professional way. They added that their previous degree in psychology defined it simply as "how different parts of the brain flicker". A similar neuroscientific perspective of "behaviours and actions," was offered by Dani, while also acknowledging that perceptions would vary depending on specific scientific streams. They also noted a perception that the sciences were less creative than the arts, disagreeing based on the amount of creativity needed for scientific innovation. Ashe shared that in professional contexts, journalism was creative and self-expressive, but suggested that undergraduate education in journalism to be creatively stifling due to rigid academic standards and classrooms. "How we put words together to portray meaning" was the definition offered by Emmy in the instruction of writing, also adding that creativity was not limited to any singular academic discipline.

Q3: Do undergraduate students know how to be creative?

The objective of Q3 was to garner broad perspectives on the UW undergraduate community's creative ability. Responses were mixed, but demonstrated a common belief that systemic issues within academia were detrimental to undergraduate students developing or expressing creativity. Tami responded affirmatively, but emphasized that undergraduate creativity was more often derived from building relationships with like-minded people to develop broader perspectives and other forms of connection rather than instruction. Similarly, Dani

offered that some undergraduate students knew how to be creative, but that their creativity was derived from their personal background rather than academic. This was echoed by Erin and Ashe, with Erin describing having creativity “beaten out” through earlier education, and Ashe describing creativity being stifled in later years of university by fewer opportunities for self-expression and stricter grading. Emmy offered the idea that “when you give them the opportunity, they really do know how to be creative.” They added that there were few visible ways for students to express their creativity, and that the commodification of education, prioritizing employment of pedagogical experience, contributed to these limitations.

Q4: Can creativity be taught?

Q3 served as a colloquial means to understand if participants viewed creativity as domain-general or domain-specific. All but one participant answered in the affirmative, though with less confidence than in previous responses. However, all agreed that creative development could be facilitated through certain means. Tami put forward the example of craft videos on social media platforms, which provide simple instructions that viewers can then customize to express themselves. Academically, Emmy suggested that creativity could be nurtured in environments that encourage and surround students with creative expression. A few other responses contained suggestions for practical means of teaching creativity. However, most did identify systemic barriers to creative expression and development within academia, such as necessary adherence to rubrics and dense syllabi.

Q5: How valued is creativity in your discipline?

This question aimed to understand the value of creativity on a disciplinary level after establishing each participants' personal understandings through discussion. Responses varied between participants and disciplines. Within neuroscience, Dani described differences in the perceived value of creativity between instructors, and mentioned a disdain for the concept in STEM subjects. This was attributed to a perceived lack of provability and empiricism despite the necessity of creativity in the production of novel work. Dani also highlighted the importance of creativity in raising the accessibility of STEM education. Ashe suggested the value of creativity in journalism is heavily influenced by the format and topic, but that the idea is seldom addressed or allowed for in academic settings. The ability to self-express in WGS was seen as limited by Erin due to the dense course material and a sense of responsibility to others in the advocacy-forward program. In RC, however, Erin felt significantly more room to "play," and self-express. Tami's response expands on this, suggesting that creativity is conceptually present in RC education as a demand for novel self-expression, but not taught in practice. Emmy's response aligns with this, paired with the belief that the field is shifting to be more candidly encouraging of creativity. They supported this through reference to the introduction of multimodal course delivery and projects incorporating more mediums of expression.

Q6: Do you think it is important to teach creativity?

The final key question was used to assess the perceived significance of education in creativity.

Concluding the discussion, it reflects participant's well-considered definitions and perspectives on creativity. All participants answered strongly in the affirmative, describing having a means of personal expression and development as the central reason. Erin stated that, "it helps people make sense of their life story." Tami mirrored this sentiment, describing creativity as a necessity to personal growth, communication, and interpersonal relationships. Dani also discussed connection in the form of a societal emphasis towards individualism, but without society providing tools to develop the self, such as creativity. More academically focused, Ashe stated that instruction which facilitates creativity would likely encourage enrolment in higher education, and that careers based on an individual's creative expression can lead to a satisfying life. Finally, Emmy highlighted the importance of teaching students versatility, driven by creativity, towards increasing opportunities for students after graduation.

Themes

First-Order Themes

First-order themes were identified as definitive of creativity within the research context, aligning with both participant responses and extant research.

Self-expression was a prominent recurring theme. All participants included expression in their initial definition, referencing a process of externalizing their own knowledge or experiences in some form. When asked how they expressed themselves, participants offered a wide variety of artistic, academic, and professional mediums.

Considering this, self-expression for the purposes of this research is defined as the ability to express oneself through some medium. Connection appeared frequently in responses and literature. Existing definitions rely on ideas such as adaptation to reality or utility to a group, suggesting creativity relies on the relational incorporation of external factors (Barron, 1955; Runco and Jaeger, 2012; Stein, 1953). Responses conquer; developing the ability to express oneself requires external context for education and inspiration. Instructor Emmy described connection as crucial to developing ideas, echoed by Tami's references to building relationships. Synthesizing these findings, we can understand connection in this context as the ability to acquire and connect personal, interpersonal, and relational experiences for a given purpose.

Drawing significantly from literature and referenced in various ways by participants, novelty was identified as an essential component of creativity. Erin and Dani used the phrase out of the box in their definitions of creativity, with other participants referencing originality or innovation. The importance of risk-taking was emphasized by Ashe and Emmy, and also cited as crucial in the development of creativity in research (Harris and de Bruin, 2018; Herbert, 2010). Whether something is novel or not can be based on the individual or derived from a collective perception (Dumas et al., 2024). From this, novelty is defined here as something unique, or developed through a unique process, by one's own understanding or that of a larger community.

Second-Order Themes

Themes were categorized as second-order based on their impact on the development of creativity within academic contexts, or as conceptual components of first-order themes.

Barriers to creativity arose frequently in interviews.

Measurements of performance were cited by Dani and Emmy as one such barrier. Dani described “feeling like a factory worker” as a result of the stringent criteria. Emmy addressed that standardized grading and assignments often left little room for creativity in teaching. Struggles with measurement also appeared in research as difficulties with empiricism in studying creativity, exemplified by the heavily critiqued Torrance Tests of Creative Thinking (Baer, 2015). The lack of accessibility was also posed as an impediment to undergraduate creativity. Tami described difficulties in focus and self-expression resulting from the sameness of classrooms, often feeling “trapped in a bubble.” Dani described dense curricula in sciences as being inaccessible to those with disabilities, restricting both creativity and general education. They also described a lack of autonomy in coursework as limiting to self-expression. These barriers represent systemic issues contributing to the lack of instruction in undergraduate creativity.

Third-Order Themes

Third-order themes include concepts that are components of second-order themes, or peripherally related topics. Examples include specific mediums of expression, such as visual arts, short fiction, and online content.

Connection was noted to draw from social media, extra-curricular activities, and personal relationships such as family, friends, and communities. Finally, the concept of playfulness arose as a means of developing creativity in childhood, but lacked weight to influence the undergraduate perspective within this research.

Interpretation

The Narrative of Undergraduate Creativity

The undergraduate experience of creativity at UW is often far removed from academic work. All student participants described themselves as creative, however, only one referenced their academic history in describing the development and expression of their creativity. More common was Erin's story of creativity being "beaten out of [them]" throughout earlier education, with no recourse in higher education.

Creativity was developed instead through personal pursuits in expression, often in the form of arts such as creative writing, poetry, and music. In addition, play was cited by Erin and Emmy as influential towards later creativity through the creation of games with friends or stories told with dolls. Ashe and Tami developed creativity in part through fashion and aesthetic choices as an outlet to self-actualize and self-express, as well as through immersion in nature. While all student participants developed their creativity throughout their academic career, none cited any pedagogical aspect of undergraduate education as prominently influential.

Instead, the creative experience within their classes was generally nonexistent, stagnant, or a result of their own personal creative drive. Those studying humanities described little creative instruction or freedom in the early years of their program, instead required to adhere to rigid course structures, teaching foundational information. This experience improved only slightly as they continued their programs, with later years offering marginally more opportunities for creative growth in specific assignments or courses. Conversely, Dani felt their early years in academia offered more room for creative exploration through widening possibilities as they learned the foundational material of biology and psychology, but noted that the rigidity of standardized testing and dense curricula still heavily limited creative opportunities, which worsened in later years. Moments where creativity was encouraged and developed were rare, and consistently the result of individual instructors rather than a disciplinary or institutional ethos.

For instructors, Emmy recognized that their students have the capability and often desire to be creative, believed it to be important to teach as much as possible, and feels that things are changing for the better. They have, for example, assigned projects which leave space for novel approaches, such as multimodal works including audio and visual elements. However, they acknowledged systemic issues at play; the limiting influence of necessary grading rubrics, and a shift to career-focused undergraduate education.

Although the importance of facilitating creative development was ubiquitous among participants, creativity pedagogy at UW is perceived as insufficient. Instead, the onus for developing creativity is placed nigh-exclusively on students. Despite creativity being fundamental to the development of the “appreciation of the full range of human, aesthetic, and environmental values,” students are required to develop creativity for themselves (UW, n.d., para. 1).

Pedagogical Definition of Creativity

An insufficient and unsatisfactory approach to the development of creativity was identified at UW, which necessitated determining the possibility of facilitating the development of creativity. This, in turn, required, like so many works regarding creativity, the establishment of a clear definition (Runco and Jaeger, 2012). This definition was developed through the synthesis of student and instructor perspectives and extant research to produce a purpose-built definition of creativity for use in pedagogical practice.

Drawing from contemporary approaches in research, this definition uses a domain-specific conceptualization of creativity, suggesting that creativity can be developed in specific fields independent of others, and that an individual can be creatively effective in some domains and not others (Dumas et al., 2024; Runco and Jaeger, 2012). Participant responses primarily focused on both ideas, an internal expression, and some form of external expression, which guided the conclusion that creativity exists between these two areas.

Self-expression within this research has been defined as the ability to express oneself through a medium, while ideas themselves are formed through knowledge and understanding of a domain (Dumas et al., 2024). That creativity itself is neither the idea nor the product suggests liminality; creativity exists within the moments of transference between idea and expression. Connection was also consistently identified, defined here as the ability to acquire and synthesize personal, interpersonal, and relational experiences for a given purpose. Finally, novelty was identified by participants and has consistently featured in extant definitions (Baer, 2015; Barron, 1955; Stein, 1953). Taking all this into account led to the following pedagogy-specific definition of creativity:

Creativity is the intermediate process between an individual's knowledge and understanding of a domain and the act of expressing themselves within and/or through it via some medium. It is liminal and internal, existing within the individual solely during the cognitive component of an act of expression. It is driven by three key skill components, each influenced by both internal and external factors:

1. Self-expression: The ability to express oneself through a medium. This is influenced by factors such as domain-specific technical competency with the medium in question and freedom of expression.
2. Connection: The ability to acquire and synthesize personal, interpersonal, and relational experiences for a given purpose. Connection is influenced by a wide range of environmental, interpersonal, and introspective experiences
3. Novelty: The ability to diverge from existing norms and combine understandings in new ways. Novelty is influenced by one's experiences in connection with their ability to express themselves, emerging as an interstitial product through the unique synthesis of information during the process of self-expression.

Following this definition, this research concludes that facilitating the development of creativity is possible within an undergraduate context. As one's understanding of a domain grows, they develop a wider ability to connect past experiences with newly acquired ones in a relational way (Dumas et al., 2024). This, in turn, enables them to express a wider range of ideas; practice with which improves competency within a domain of self-expression.

This demonstrates a cycle of improvement between self-expression and connection through a continuous process of building relational and technical skills. Novelty develops naturally through the combined practice of the other components.

Production of novelty is also encouraged through greater contextual understanding of a domain. This is further bolstered within environments which encourage risk-taking (Dumas et al., 2024; Harris and de Bruin, 2018). Through a continuous cycle of the acquisition of experiences, the development of self-expressive competencies, and the creation of increasingly novel products, one develops a collection of skills which together compose the creative process. Thus, creativity can be developed through the development of its component skills of self-expression, connection, and novelty.

Recommendations

The definition of creativity developed by this research provides a practical starting point for improving the development of creativity within undergraduate settings. Pedagogical application of this definition could take many forms, and the implementation of such would be in line with both student and institutional objectives at UW. Individually-catered education taking student's interests into account is shown to encourage creative development but fails to be scalable for undergraduate contexts (Dumas et al., 2024; Harris and de Bruin, 2018). A compromise would be to draw from Emmy's pedagogical style and increase the frequency of assignments which allow a variety of mediums. Permitting students to demonstrate knowledge through audio or video, for example, would allow those whose technical competencies favour those areas to succeed and further their academic development while developing their skill of self-expression. Increasing student autonomy in general could encourage,

greater self-expression and connection, for example, by expanding possible topic choices for coursework.

Infrastructural changes could also benefit students, in line with Tami's struggles with the sameness of classrooms. Making classrooms more comfortable and memorable to students could encourage engagement as well as produce richer experiences from which to develop relational thinking. Finally, creating classroom and social environments which allow for risk taking is shown to consistently benefit creative development by permitting novelty (Dumas et al. 2024; Harris and de Bruin, 2018). While the scope of this research was small, investigation of a larger population could reveal further barriers and allow for improvement to the pedagogical definition of creativity. This could then improve its application and further encourage the development of creativity in undergraduate contexts.

Conclusion

The significance of facilitating the development of creativity in undergraduate students was recognized by all participants in this research, and echoed by the wider educational community (Harris and de Bruin, 2018). However, instruction in such is insufficient at the University of Winnipeg. Systemic issues such as curriculum density, and rigid assignments leave students feeling unable to take risks or develop themselves creatively. A lack of accessibility for those living with disabilities creates barriers to not only creative development, but general academic development as well. This demonstrates a wide discrepancy between UW's practice and the university's

stated goals of accessibility and building a wide appreciation of human values.

This discrepancy could be resolved through improved facilitation of creative development. Through the development of students' skills of self-expression, connection, and novelty, UW and other institutions could nurture creativity, improve the overall educational experience they offer, one which aligns with their missions and values.

Creativity is vital to academics, to communication, to personal growth, and to social progress. Ultimately, the development of student creativity is tantamount to the development of an institute itself.

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How Drug Addiction Negatively Affects Family Relationships

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INTRODUCTION

Childhood, a blissful time where no child should ever be scared to live in their own home. A time when a child should focus on the happy moments and run into open arms with warm embraces once they arrive home from school. Those delightful moments should not be shadowed over by the fear of their personal belongings being tossed around in chaos, or even pawned for drug money, or worse; a parent passed out on the couch, or bent over the dining room table, face in a white substance they never truly understood what it may be, too young to understand the gravity of the situation.

Children who live with a parent struggling with substance-use disorder (SUD) are prone to many mental health challenges as they grow up, along with the challenge of having to care for themselves and potentially others, when they themselves are the ones truly meant to be cared for.

GENERAL IDEAS ABOUT ADDICTION

When we talk about addictions, there are many types to consider, such as; alcohol addictions, gambling addictions, tobacco addictions, binge-eating/food addictions, illicit drug use addictions, the list trails on. Before diving head-first into what addictions are, we must recognize two definitions: substance-use disorder and addiction.

Substance-use disorder is defined as the “recurrent use of alcohol or other drugs that causes clinically and functionally significant impairment, such as health problems, disability, and failure to meet major responsibilities at work, school, or home. Depending on the level of severity, this disorder is classified as mild, moderate, or severe.” (Volkow, N. D., et al 2016, p. 364). Addiction is defined as “a term used to indicate the most severe, chronic stage of substance-use disorder, in which there is a substantial loss of self-control, as indicated by compulsive drug taking despite the desire to stop taking the drug,” (Volkow, N. D., et al 2016, p. 364).

There are three main stages of addiction: binge and intoxication, withdrawal and negative effects, and

preoccupation and anticipation (Volkow, N. D., et al 2016, p. 364). The first stage, binge and intoxication, is when people are beginning to use the drug, therefore beginning to experience a euphoric high. The transition between stage one and the next stage is due in part by a distressed feeling covered by the withdrawal from the drug and a crave for the euphoric high. The second stage is the withdrawal and negative effects stage, where the human body craves things that their brain tells them they need. Take for example, food. When you are feeling hungry, you commonly get hunger pains, causing the body distress and resulting in eating which in turn will get rid of the negative feeling. There is a cycle in addiction, just like feeling hungry, where “you get high, you feel great, you crash, you feel horrible,” (Miller, 2016). Finally, the third stage; preoccupation and anticipation. Your body and brain now crave the euphoric high, meaning your brain and body now crave the drug. You can no longer resist strong urges; you indulge right into the drug. These three stages are not the sole definition of everyone’s addictions, but when we think about substance-abuse, we see how it alters a person’s brain in every which way, especially with mental health.

When we think about substance abuse, we commonly think about how those with the addictions handle the mental health issues that come from it, as “less sympathetic views may result at least in part from societal ambivalence about whether to regard substance abuse problems as medical conditions to be treated (similar to other chronic health conditions, such as diabetes or heart disease) or personal failings to be overcome,” (Barry, C. L., et al 2014, p. 1271).

OXYCODONE

In order to really grasp onto what a substance-use disorder is, we need to cover an example of a harmful drug. Take for example, Oxycodone. According to Kibaly, C., et al (2021 p. 2), “Oxycodone belongs to the family of one of the most powerful analgesic compounds available for treating moderate to severe pain.” Oxycodone is an opioid, chemically like morphine. It was created in 1916 Germany, and was prescribed to treat chronic pain, usually stemming from a traumatic injury to the body.

The company, Purdue Pharma, declared bankruptcy in 2007, and to this day still is battling lawsuits put forward by subgroups, and even governments, that are fighting the damages caused by the opioid. A vast majority of people who were prescribed the drug became addicted, leading to pharmacists and doctors no longer prescribing it, “however, despite strong efforts to prevent substance abuse through various designs, abusers have found ways to circumvent the deterrents, such as microwaving the pills to melt them, or freezing them, followed by shaving with a razor,” (Kibaly, C et al 2021, p. 2). As we learned before, addicts will find alternate ways to get their fix of the substance, even through means of life or death.

So, why were doctors so keen to prescribe the drug before the lawsuits? Growing up I heard the tales of how oxycodone was advertised as a “magical drug.” The opioid took away pain in such a short amount of time;

no one has ever seen a pill like this before, it was a miracle. It was said to improve the quality of life of those in chronic pain. Which it did – until the drug began causing more problems than solutions. The more people took oxycodone, the more their bodies became immune to its effects and benefits. This led to doctors prescribing higher doses or more frequent doses, leading to full addiction to the opioid.

THE STATISTICS

SUD's are never stuck on one drug/substance. Some drugs are gateways to other, more stronger ones, "...most of the heroin-using subjects transitioned from oxycodone to heroin because of the difficulties in procuring extended-release oxycodone, both in respect to its availability and cost," (Kibaly, C., et al 2021, p. 2).

In Canada, there have been a total of 50,928 opioid toxicity deaths reported in Canada from January of 2016 to September of 2024. From January to September of 2024, there were a total of 5,626 deaths due to opioid toxicity; approximately, that totals up to about 21 deaths per day. (Public Health Agency of Canada, 2025). You hear it every day in the news, more and more people are dying due to opioid related overdoses, and it seems like the numbers are not improving at all. But what do statistics even mean when you are unsure of what happens behind closed doors? Are we just looking at numbers, and simply forgetting that these are real people?

WITHIN THE HOUSEHOLD

You never hear much of first-hand experience from children living in these situations with a parent with an SUD. While sometimes you may, there can also be key factors left out by the storyteller. A disclaimer, first; every family is different. Every household that deals with a parent suffering with a SUD can go through different events. Through extensive research, and personal recorded experience, the following are only some common experiences shared throughout households.

A parent with an SUD brings forth complications with everyday activities, and a sense of normalcy is blurred within a fine line. “Families in which there is a parental SUD are characterized by an environment of secrecy, loss, conflict, violence or abuse, emotional chaos, role reversal, and fear,” (Lander, L., et al 2013, p. 2). A child will believe this is how a normal family is and not know how to develop meaningful relationships later on in life, especially with other family members. Having an unresponsive or inconsistently responsive parental figure creates insecure attachments. The household becomes stale, with no true emotions, and fear fills the air resulting in and has everyone walking on eggshells around the parent with the SUD. A lack of words halt any expression of emotion because, simply, what if you say the wrong thing?

Communication – something every healthy relationship needs – is thrown out of the window completely, as “parents with a

SUD may have difficulty with assertiveness and direct communication,” (Lander, L., et al 2013, p. 7). Poor communication can lead to domestic violence, sexual violence, etc. Certain subjects are off-limits, such as things that the parent does not want to discuss or are not in the right mind to discuss. Something a child might be told is “what happens here, stays here, the outside does not need to know about it,” meaning you keep your home life private and to yourself, and your outside life is pure and unknowing to what you are going through. In essence, just bottle up your emotions in public and keep them bottled at home too, because God forbid you show any emotion to a parent who is high on a substance. They may either laugh in your face or tell you to ‘get over it’. Parents struggling with an SUD will not want to be pinned as the bad guy, so they deflect that onto their children.

EMOTIONS AND FEELINGS

“Children may believe that they caused their parent’s SUD, or perhaps they are expected to keep the drug use a secret from others in the family or in the community. Perhaps they recognize their parent is mood altered or in withdrawal but are told that, ‘your dad is just sick; he needs the medicine,’” (Lander, L., et al 2013, p. 7). As a parent, you will do anything to protect your child. Now say your partner is struggling with an SUD, how will you protect your child from the emotional trauma? You’ll lie. Ignorance is bliss, so if you are told someone is sick, you’ll sympathize with them. This creates a distorted reality of what is happening around you. A sober parent will protect their child.

Whether that means running away from the danger or changing the stories, the purpose is to make it not seem like the ‘high’ parent’s fault. As the children get older, they will fully understand that “dad is not sick”. This realization will cause emotions to boil, resentment to occur, and a perception of someone to alter completely.

“Dependent children of addicted parents are grappling with many problems,” (Ebrahimi, S., Bahmani, B., & Ramezani, L. 2017, p. 94). Some of the most common mental health issues are depression and anxiety. The stresses caused by handling their life at home and out of home, and the stress of if they’ll come back to a sober parent, or one who can’t even remember their birthday. Many children who go through these childhood traumas end up going to therapy years after in order to resolve these hidden emotions and feelings shoved deep down in their childhood. Other problems children may go through are low academic performance and low peer relationships. School may become something in the background to these children, as they are more focused on surviving their time at home than the homework their English teacher provided them. Children may self-isolate in their rooms and their own worlds because it is a safe space to be in. They may push away their friends, push away family members, and stop reaching out to people for help, or for basic human interactions.

They may also try to create positive emotions on top of the lack of human interactions with sober like-minded people. “Social cognitive theory is part of the self-efficacy by Bandura, thought about how exciting the action listed.

This theory is based on two independent mechanisms, [and] creates behavioral change,” (Ebrahimi, S., Bahmani, B., & Ramezani, L. 2017, p. 95). The difference between positive and negative relationships are blurred, as the children will most likely have never seen a true positive relationship, whether that be platonic or romantic. Any love and affection they receive seems fake and “too good to be true”. Commonly, any love they get from the parent with the SUD is just to either get something they want – as an example, money or food – or over the top affection which the child is not used to. From lack of emotional connection to lack of physical affection, children depend on themselves more than anything, and it seems as though parents with an SUD rely on the children more as well.

CODEPENDENCY

Codependency “refers to psychological behavioral problems that enable drug users and their family members to engage in mutually destructive habits and maladaptive coping strategies to maintain a sense of balance or homeostasis,” (Bortolon, C. B., et al 2016, p. 102).

Within the household of a parent with an SUD, there is a major reversal of dependence needs, as the parent’s needs are placed before the child’s, no matter the age. From that creates an inability for the child to create healthy boundaries later in life within relationships, romantic or platonic. There is a thin line that becomes blurred between thoughts, feelings, and emotions within relationships.

RESEARCH ESSAY

In short, children of parents with SUDs struggle with putting their own needs first. They prioritize others simply because that is how they were raised, others needs before their own.

A term thrown around is parentified children, which basically means that the caretaker of the children is unable to meet the needs of the child, whether developmental or basic. The child then begins to parent themselves, and can even begin parenting younger siblings who are neglected by the parents. The child can even potentially parent the parent, caring for them and scolding them when they do something bad... a reversal of dependence needs.

CONCLUSION

A parent with a substance-use disorder is a parent who is struggling, and their child struggles alongside them, but in a different way. As children, we need the love, affection, and protection that parents provide for us. Though, these children are in desperate need of those things, and, in the end, need to be protected from their parents. From mental health issues to childhood trauma, to even personal substance-use disorders themselves, children of a parent (or parents) with a SUD face constant challenges in their upbringing.

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Examining Flashback and Irony in Toni Morrison's *A Mercy*

by Precious Gauthier

Toni Morrison immediately frames *A Mercy* in 1690, which signals to the reader that this is the early stage of the transatlantic slave trade. To reference Christina Sharpe's *The Wake*, *A Mercy* is metaphorically framed at the beginning of a ship's journey, right before "the track [is] left on the water's surface by a ship" (Morrison 4; Sharpe 3). She starts us in a time that symbolizes the beginning of the harm, where subjugation and disparities are becoming the normative experience of Black people. In *A Mercy*, Morrison uses the literary devices of flashback and irony to tell the story of Florens.

At the beginning of the text which at first unclear is a memory, or flashback of Florens, where Morrison shows the reader snippets of what is to come. Two examples of flashback occurs when Morrison begins with a corn-husk doll positioned on the shelf, which then moves to the corner of the room. Later, Florens's mother, who she calls "Minha mãe," offers her to be sold to Jacob Vaark (Morrison 4–8). Both instances in the text occur on the first pages but are unclear until one reads the second chapter of the text.

We come to understand that Vaark, who is Florens's current enslaver, is travelling to D'Ortega, Florens's previous enslaver, to have him settle his debts, to which he does not have the money, and Florens is sold to balance D'Ortega's debt. And again, near the end of the text, when Floren is staying with the blacksmith and accidentally breaks Malaik's arm, who is the adopted child of the blacksmith. She takes the doll from Malaik and places it on the shelf, out of his reach, which he eventually finds a way to access, and it ends up in the corner of the room. These are examples of flashbacks where "any scene or episode in a play, novel, story or poem which is inserted to show events that happened at an earlier time" (Cuddon 280).

In the first scenario, the reader finds out that Floren's mother recognized that their enslaver, D'Ortega had intentions to begin sexually harming Florens, which is her reasoning for offering Florens to Vaark instead of herself. This is how Minha mãe found a way to protect Florens and provide her a better life (Morrison 190-196). Her mother's love led her to endure a life without her, rather than to subject Florens to be destroyed by the violence that she had been subjected to.

In the second scenario, Florens believes that her mother loves and cares for her brother more than her, because of her mother's actions of offering to send her away. What constructs this idea is how Florens refers to her brother multiple times as "her baby boy," meaning her mother's son, which disconnects her from him as a brother (Morrison 6). Florens then recreates that dynamic within her relationship with the blacksmith and Malaik. Florens first ponders the blacksmith's feelings towards her, thinking,

“I worry as the boy steps closer to you. How you offer and he owns your forefinger. As if he is your future. Not me” (Morrison 160-161). This then became true when Florens was left with Malaik, and the blacksmith returned and saw Malaik hurt and unconscious on the floor, and Florens is told to leave (Morrison 164-167).

Each scenario is an example of irony, which is a complex event that occurs and results in nothing or “a situation where an audience appreciates the incongruity of a character’s words or deeds in the light of his or her fate, whereas the character does not” (Cuddon 371-372). There are two elements to the irony of *Minha mãe’s* actions. First, that Floren was still subjected to the violence of the wake, searching for love after her experiences of feeling unloved by her mother. And secondly, that she will never know that her mother’s choices were made because of how deep her love was for Florens. In the scenario with the blacksmith, the irony is that Florens journeys to the man she loves, only to have him cast her away as well.

Each scenario is also an example of the inception and being in what Christina Sharpe defines as “the wake.” The position of the wake is “the ways our individual lives are always swept up in the wake produced and determined, though not absolutely, by the afterlives of slavery (Sharpe 8). This story is situated in the early days of enslavement, before Black people were fully able to grasp the magnitude of trauma and harm it would entail. In this, Floren’s mother attempts to give her a better life than what she has endured with enslavement. The wake of that experience is initially seen in her daughter not feeling loved by her.

CRITICAL RESPONSE

And secondly, when Florens experienced envy of a child when she went looking for love in a man who did not intend to give it to her. Toni Morrison's *A Mercy* is a brilliant example of how what Sharpe explains, as “the wake produces Black death and trauma” (Sharpe 11).

CRITICAL RESPONSE

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Plots of Hope

Rachel Carlson is a versatile communications professional with a BA in English and expected BA Honours in Rhetoric and Communications.

Rachel has extensive experience in technical writing, media coordination, and strategic planning. In addition, Rachel is also recognized for excellence in videography and radio, with a strong background in community health and patient safety.

What is food security?

Food security is achieved when "people have physical, social, and economic access to sufficient, safe, and nutritious food that meets their dietary needs and food preferences."¹

¹<https://www.who.int/news-room/events/detail/2022/10/18/default-calendar/food-security-nutrition-essential-ingredients-to-build-back-better>

How prevalent is food insecurity in Canada?

6.9 million Canadians, 2.7 million households, and 254,000 Manitobans experience some level of food insecurity.²



²<https://proof.utoronto.ca/>

How can a local community garden help?



- Promotes physical and mental health.
- Builds social and community cohesion.
- Improves food security.
- Empowers local decision-making and needs-based programming.³

³<https://doi.org/10.1080/13549839.2021.1904855>



Why should the East Elmwood Community Centre (EECC) host a community garden?

- Alignment with EECC mission and City of Winnipeg policies and strategies.
- Located where people can't access food because of location or economic constraints.⁴
- Serves the needs of low-income, Indigenous and racialized populations who are most vulnerable to food insecurity.
- Offers three key resources: land, water, and volunteers.

⁴<https://www.mbcop.ca/>, <https://winnspace.winnipeg.ca/handle/10680/1205>

What is Plots of Hope Community Garden?

The Plots of Hope Community Garden initiative aims to grow healthy food while building community relationships. Our garden nourishes our bodies, families, community, and environment through a commitment to collective ownership and sustainable and inclusive gardening practices.

Plots of Hope will be led by and for the community.



How will community be involved?

Community members will:

- Set garden goals, rules, and approaches to conflict resolution through a steering committee.
 - Provide input into the purpose, design, and programming (workshops) of the garden.
 - Participate in individual and group garden tasks on a volunteer basis.
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What will it cost and who will pay?

Expense	Estimated Cost
Lumber (Eight raised beds at 8'x 4'x 3')	\$2500.00
Soil (Eight raised beds at 8'x 4'x 3')	\$750.00
Seeds	\$175.00
Seedlings (vegetables, perennial flowers)	\$1100.00
Fruit Trees and Shrubs	\$500.00
Tools	\$500.00
Total	\$5525.00

Potential Funding Sources
Municipal and federal government grants
Private/corporate grants
In-kind donations

Steps on Being The Baby of the Family

Rachel Sturgess is a fourth year Communications major at The University of Winnipeg. With a passion for reading and writing, they are excited to share their stories with the Rooted in Rhetoric Journal. As they near the end of their undergraduate degree, they hope to work in public relations after graduating.

Below you will find instructions on how to be the baby of your family. Not many will be able to succeed, however, some will be able to use the skills taught here in order to act in their new role. You may now begin.

Section A: Early Stages

1. When you are born last out of more than one other sibling, you do not question your duty in the family. Your duty is to never be taken seriously but always be serious to prove your place.
2. From birth to age 5, you will carry the weight of everyone's expectations about you, how you must be as successful as your older siblings but not more successful than them so that you do not steal their thunder.

CREATIVE WORKS

3. You must prepare for your education journey to be lesser than your siblings. Any grades, awards or achievements will always be compared to their's. They will point out how their grades were higher or their work more complicated when they did the assignment you struggle with.
4. You may never grow old. Meaning, your role will hence forth be *the baby*. Your name will be baby, your persona is baby, and the standard to which you will be held to is baby. You

Section B: Social Ques

1. You will be allowed to sit next to the adults, but you may not introduce yourself into conversation; for your thoughts are considered inexperienced when compared to the adults. Any jokes you may have, stories you want to tell are better off not said. It is best to keep quiet.
 - a. If you do feel as though you have something to contribute, use this wisely. You only have so many opportunities to speak before you are dismissed from the table. You may interrupt conversation when the adults finish speaking, and their facial expressions say there is nothing more to talk about. Your topic must be a question of relevance. Any joke or story will not be insightful in any manner.

CREATIVE WORKS

2. Being questioned will prepare you for a lifetime of quick thinking. Anything you say until the age of 19 will be questioned. Is what you are saying accurate and truthful? The friends you speak of, are they rememberable that you do not need to explain how you met each time they come up in conversation? Anything you see on social media will not be taken seriously so do not even go there. Try Facebook, the adults seem to believe everything found on Facebook

Section C: Work/Life Balance

1. Being home alone will act as a blanket. A warm blanket that covers any insecurity you had from the day. When you get home from school or work, and yes you must do both, coming home to an empty house will make you sigh in relief. You can cry from stress or pressure during this time. Any emotions must be shown now as you do not need to hide from judgement.
 - a. Side note: Any evidence of a show of emotion such as crying, eating, or not completing homework must be gone by the time the family comes home. Chores must be completed, and homework must be in progress at the arrival of the family. Any other state you are found in will be a disappointment.
2. You love leftovers. Chicken and potatoes from the night before are your favourite meal. While you rarely ever eat them hot from the stove, the nostalgia of chicken and potatoes from a Tupperware container will comfort you to no end.

CREATIVE WORKS

3. Being in university full time while balancing a part-time job is an act you will master by your second year of schooling. You may not exceed 15 hours of work per week. This allows you have a life outside of school but still make your own money; be seen as independent, focused and successful. Try to pick a retail store that is higher-class or a restaurant that is expensive.

Section D: Conclusion

1. Your life and mental health will be a struggle for the foreseeable future. Prepare for this as best as you can.
2. Become reliant on yourself and yourself only. You may seek help from family, but only when things have not spiralled out of control. Advice may be given if the situation is serious enough that it warrants advice but not too serious where the family becomes disappointed.
3. You may follow this guide to its full extent and still feel out of place. This guide serves as an instruction manual to walk you through any events in which you feel like the baby.
4. Do not stray away from this manual as best as you can.
 - a. You will want to act out against these performative norms, but it is in your best interest to follow this guide to its full extent.
5. Any improvisation will result in questionable looks or head shakes from the family. You want to avoid this at all costs.
6. Do not try to dive away from this path. That will get you nowhere.
7. Embrace your role. Not many people have this position, and they are certainly big shoes to fill.

Tips: Some helpful tips for the inexperienced

1. You may use the baby card in order to get out household chores. Use this card wisely or your sibling(s) will catch on.
2. Lower their expectations so when you do fail, it does not cause catastrophic ramifications onto you. But do not lower expectations too much to where you truly become a disappointment. You still want your achievements to be recognized.

Question 2: What was gained and lost by moving to the experimental format?

From reworking my original assignment to the experimental format, I was able to focus more on one aspect of my original paper. In my original version, I focused a lot of both positives and negatives. I feel as though the importance of the writing was lost due to amount of ideas I had. Using this format allowed me to have a clearer focus on why I wrote the story on this particular topic.

I think from using this format, while I enjoyed the instruction manual setting, I am not sure if it has the same heartfelt emotions as my original version held. I still liked the creative writing story narrative seen in my original version and feel as though it spoke more about who I am as a person.