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Cover Page

The image featured on the cover of this issue is adapted from a painting by Gillian Belcher, titled *Double Vision*. This painting is the first of Gillian's *Double Vision* series: each part of the series aims to see the four elements (i.e. fire, air, earth, water) and human features in abstract ways. The series was an exercise in personal expression and was born through experimenting with colour palettes and representations of human features. *Double Vision*, featured on our cover, uses a primary colour palette to combine ideas from the rest of the series. You can see more of Gillian's work on Instagram @gilbelart.

We acknowledge that we work and learn on the traditional territory of the Attawandaron (Neutral), Anishnaabeg, and Haudenosaunee peoples. The University of Waterloo is situated on the Haldimand Tract, land promised and given to Six Nations, which includes six miles on each side of the Grand River.



Expression

Hello, and welcome to the third issue of the *Journal of Integrative Research & Reflection*.

As described in our central goals, *JIRR* is designed to foster an academic community for undergraduates who do work that employs multiple ways of knowing. This means that we depend on undergraduate reviewers, authors, and readers with varied educational backgrounds and rich epistemic experiences to bring this journal to life. Integrating ways of knowing extends beyond linking academic disciplines; cross-disciplinary work connects traditional knowledge, lived experiences, knowledge found through identity, and academic disciplines. The creation of cross-disciplinary work is a dynamic and creative pursuit that is driven and shaped by our authors' individual voices.

This year, the *JIRR* editorial board was again taken by the involvement, dedication, and engagement of the cross-disciplinary undergraduate community. In the process of creating this issue, we worked with enthusiastic authors and reviewers, both new and old. The review of each submission involved a strong team of editors and reviewers who shared time, insight, and thoughtful feedback with authors. Every piece submitted to *JIRR* was influenced by more knowers than any of us realize. Each issue involves time and commitment from real individuals, and I want to recognize the people behind this journal.

Unlike other members of the *JIRR* community, the editorial board is lucky to read and hear the voices of authors and reviewers for every piece that is submitted. As a member of this board, I wish to highlight the strength of those voices as you read this issue. I encourage you to approach each piece differently — to reflect on the stronger proclamations of self, or to look for the quiet, structural voices that were used to construct the article. Finally, I want to express my hopes that we will continue to see the same strength of expression we have seen in these past three issues — I have every confidence we will.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Hannah Anderson', with a long, sweeping horizontal line extending to the right.

Hannah Anderson
Editor-in-Chief

JIRR gratefully acknowledges the support of the Department of Knowledge Integration in the production of JIRR. Special thanks to Rob Gorbet and to Katie Plaisance for their mentorship and guidance. JIRR also thanks Jordan Hale for helping us to navigate the publishing process.

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Combating the Illegal Antiquity Trade through Museums and Economic Reform

Lindsay Williams

ARCHAEOLOGICAL looting has been present for thousands of years and is a known problem in the archaeological community. While many archaeologists are engaged in the complexity of the problem, the public is not. As part of the process for creating and implementing sustainable and realistic solutions, the issues and complexities need to be communicated to the public. For instance, in Jordan many looters are unaware of the economic disparity they are experiencing on the international antiquity market, or simply feel they are not in a position to do anything about it. These looters are searching for a way to support themselves and their community, and are either unaware or do not care about the damage the illegal antiquity trade has on the archaeological record. One of the easiest ways to communicate the harmful impact of looting to the Jordanian public is utilizing museums. However, this is only the first step as looters must be able to find a viable alternative to the loss of looting as a source of income. In this paper, I will explain the harmful effects of looting, both for the archaeological record and for looters, and offer more in-depth strategies for combatting the illegal antiquity trade in Jordan.

To identify and examine the different solutions available to combatting the illegal antiquity trade in Jordan, it is necessary to examine multiple disciplines. Some important areas to consider are economics, both the international and Jordanian antiquity market, and policy. It is only through a holistic approach that an understanding of the complexity of looting can be fully understood. To develop my un-

derstanding, I conducted literature reviews and drew upon my personal experiences in Jordan. To direct my research, I discussed the illegal antiquity trade with Dr. Adams, the Archaeologist leading the Barqa Landscape Project, which I was fortunate to take part in during the summer of 2019. My personal interest and knowledge in museum theory drew me to analyzing museums as a possible way to assist in combatting the illegal antiquity trade. Much of my research into the museums in Jordan was done through visits and analysis I did during my time in Jordan. As established public institutions, museums are able to bridge disciplines and effectively communicate the complexities of the antiquity trade in an engaging way. This led me to consider how else Jordanians may be educated in the antiquity trade, prompting analysis and research into the Jordanian education system. All together my thesis bridges multiple disciplines, including economics, policy, museums, and education.

Due to the complexities of the illegal antiquity trade and its impact on the lives of many Jordanians, I believe it is important to address my personal connection and bias. My education and interest in Archaeology has left me with an obvious bias towards conserving the archaeological record. I was incredibly aware from the beginning, due to my experiences in Jordan, that the illegal antiquity trade is not a simple issue, but instead one with various levels of complexity. So, it was important for me to arrive at a conclusion that provided a solution to the issue of the illegal antiquity trade. Additionally, I was determined to ensure that the needs of looters, and others

who rely on the antiquity trade to make a living, were still addressed. It is important to address that first-hand perspectives from those who deal directly in the antiquity trade are absent from my piece. In order to create a more holistic view, I would have liked to speak to a looter or others directly involved in the trade. These considerations along with my personal experiences and views, guided the creation and direction of my discussion throughout my piece.

The illegal archaeological trade is not a new concept. Historically, western archaeologists have been accused of taking precious artifacts from countries during colonization or on explorative trips. In some cases, archaeologists have apologized and restored these objects to their countries of origin (Jennings, 2006). In other cases, western archaeologists are praised for their careful study and handling of these artifacts, as they have provided greater insight into the culture heritage in which they were found (Jennings, 2006). What has changed over the years is the respect for local heritage that has deepened as many of these countries, including Jordan, have developed a strong sense of local identity (Jennings, 2006). In all of these cases, archaeological study, past and present, stands apart from the current illegal trade due to its careful recording and study of the discovered objects in the context in which the objects were found.

Archaeologists are trained to carefully document the position of each artifact as it is found. When analyzing a site, it is crucial for an archaeologist to carefully consider the placement of an object and its relationship to other objects. This allows them to infer the potential purpose of each object. The context of an artifact may also be critical in determining how old an object is. These insights allow archaeologists to decipher the different components of an object to develop an understanding of the various parts of a culture they are studying. Context is a critical element of archaeology and is what makes ancient archaeological artifacts valuable, both for collectors and archaeologists. Ultimately, archaeological sites and artifacts are a non-renewable resource that archaeologists strive to protect and promote. Since looters typically lack archaeological training that allows them to understand the context of the artifacts, looting is incredibly harmful to the archaeological record.

Due to how harmful looting is to the archaeologi-

cal record, looters are often judged harshly. Recently, however, academics who study looting have begun to refer to looters by other names deemed less judgmental. For example, Neil Brodie and Daniel Contreras (2012) in *The Economics of the Looted Archaeological Site of Bâb edh-Dhrâ: A View from Google Earth*, use the term “subsistence digger”, as they recognize the larger social and political consequences of the illegal antiquity trade. A “subsistence digger” is defined as someone who uses the money earned from the sale of antiquities to support their traditional subsistence lifestyle (Brodie & Contreras, 2012). The goal of changing the terminology used when referring to illegal antiquity traders is to avoid stigmatizing people or communities, who are trying to make a living in areas that may be economically deprived (Brodie & Contreras, 2012). Subsistence diggers are aware that their area is rich in ancient artifacts which are heavily sought after internationally, and as a result, they see a way to make a living for themselves. Many of these diggers are unaware that they are selling items at a price substantially lower than the value of the artifacts on the international market (Brodie & Contreras, 2012).

Much of the heritage legislation put in place to attempt to suppress the illegal excavation and trade of antiquities traditionally fails to recognize archaeology as an entity with any economic value (Brodie & Contreras, 2012). The illegal antiquity trade continues to thrive, proving that this strategy is failing, as others are able to take advantage of the economic potential of artifacts (Brodie & Contreras, 2012). The denial of the economic potential of archaeological heritage means there is little data on the economic aspect of archaeology: however, research conducted by Jerome Rose and Dolores Burke (2004) found that diggers in North Jordan received \$7 for each Roman oil lamp they found¹. These lamps were then sold by dealers in London for \$45 each (Rose & Burke, 2004). The diggers only received 15% of the final sale of the Roman oil lamps. In contrast, reports from Julie Hollowell (2006) found that diggers on St. Lawrence Island who had corporate ownership of the archaeological artifacts were making up to 70% of the final market value, when the artifacts entered the international market legally. According to Brodie and Contreras (2012), it is the risks associated with smuggling the archae-

¹There was no clarification in the article, but I believe these values were in American dollars, as the article was published in Washington, DC.

ological artifacts that lead to the mark ups in price and low return for the Jordanian diggers. Brodie and Contreras (2012) also suggest that since the diggers are working illegally they may feel less cheated, due to a lack of legitimate employment. All of these findings reveal that Jordanian diggers are not making nearly as much money as they would if they were working in a legal trade market. The lack of recognition of the economic value of antiquities in legislation has allowed the black market to thrive, harming not only the cultural heritage of Jordan, but also the diggers who take part in the illegal antiquity trade.

One of the research programs that is working to combat the illegal archaeological trade is “Follow the Pots” (FTP). FTP is studying pots and grave goods found at Early Bronze Age cemeteries, specifically Fifa, Bab adh-Dhra’, and en-Naqa/es-Safi in the Southern Ghor of Jordan (Kersel & Chesson, n.d.). The FTP project looks at the “emergence of prehistoric urbanism and increasing social complexity in the Early Bronze Age of the southern Levant, and the multiple and contested values of this archaeological heritage to multiple stakeholders today” (Kersel & Chesson, n.d.). FTP is studying how people, including looters, collectors, individuals living in the southern Ghor, museums, and government officials, associated with the pots and grave goods found at the aforementioned Early Bronze Age cemeteries operate in relation to the antiquity trade. This project views archaeological objects as having two lives: the first life is as grave goods, and the second as looted and excavated artifacts (Kersel & Chesson, n.d.). To gain a deeper understanding of the use and possible reuse of Early Bronze Age artifacts, FTP is employing an integrated approach of ethnographic and archaeological methods (Kersel & Chesson, n.d.). Ultimately this project strives to provide a “nuanced and balanced set of answers to the question ‘Why Looting Matters?’” (Kersel & Chesson, n.d.). FTP claims that looting continues to happen because archaeologists have not spent enough time on understanding how different individuals see value in archaeological artifacts (Kersel & Chesson, n.d.). For example, Jordanian looters see archaeological objects as an economic resource. As FTP states on their website, “in the end, both looters and archaeologists excavate materials from the ground and send them along a path that removes them from their original context to be

valued in one way or another” (Kersel & Chesson, n.d.). The real difference between archaeologists and looters, as explained by the previous quotation, is how they value the archaeological objects they find. Archaeologists focus more on the value of these objects for the archaeological record, whereas looters focus on the economic value.

FTP strives to minimize these differences by practicing “community archaeology” (Kersel & Chesson, n.d.). “Community archaeology” is defined by FTP to be “archaeology by, and for, the people” with the key lying in ensuring that archaeologists are listening to the local population within the area they are working (Kersel & Chesson, n.d.). The FTP team go beyond the practice of community archaeology to seriously consider the question “who owns the past?” (Kersel & Chesson, n.d.). This is a very difficult question to answer. In many cases there are groups who claim to own the past that do not match the Jordanian law, which states, under Article 5 of Law no. 21 of 1988, “ownership of immovable antiquities shall be exclusively vested in the state” (Kersel & Chesson, n.d.). FTP points to the rapid destruction of the archaeological record, including development, illegal activity, and an increased understanding of the need to protect cultural heritage, as motivation for attempting to answer this question (Kersel & Chesson, n.d.). Recognizing the complexity of the differing values placed in archaeological objects by various parties is a crucial step in finding a solution to the issue of the illegal antiquity trade. The FTP program is an important stepping stone toward raising awareness among the academic community and the public on the various perspectives of archaeological looting.

It has proven difficult to get the general public of Jordan engaged in community archaeology and the issues of looting. As previously mentioned, many Jordanians participating in looting are either unaware, or simply do not care, about the consequences to themselves and others. So in an effort to make those who are unaware, aware of the consequences of looting, community engagement and education is crucial. One of the forms of engagement and education that Jordan is already taking advantage of is museums. Museums are an extremely valuable resource, especially in teaching the public about archaeology, as they allow the public to interact with and experience in-person the objects which archaeologists study.



(a) Figure 1



(b) Figure 2

Left: Replica of the Faynan landscape for “Discovering Faynan Heritage” (photo from personal collection). **Right:** Example of a didactic wall panel for the “Discovering Faynan Heritage” exhibit (photo from personal collection).

Having museums where the public is able to interact with objects directly is more impactful than simply relying on photos and the written word to convey the importance of archaeology for supporting a population’s cultural heritage. Object-centric learning experiences are what make museums stand out. Object-centric learning capitalizes on the scale, authenticity, value, and resolution and density of information of objects, as a method for enhancing a learning experience (Blaine-Moares & Gorbet, 2011). The resolution and density of information is typically known as how an object engages your five senses: what is the sound, texture, weight, and etcetera, of the object? Scale is another characteristic that is best displayed by a physical object. For example, seeing a Bronze Age Era pot in person will be much more impactful for an individual than trying to understand the scale on a photo. Otherwise, the individual looking at the object in an image is expected to have the training to understand the scale of the image which much of the public does not. In the case of archaeological objects, authenticity and value may be the most important characteristics. A great example is the bust of Nefertiti. Not only is the bust beautiful, but the meaning held in the object as a result of being con-

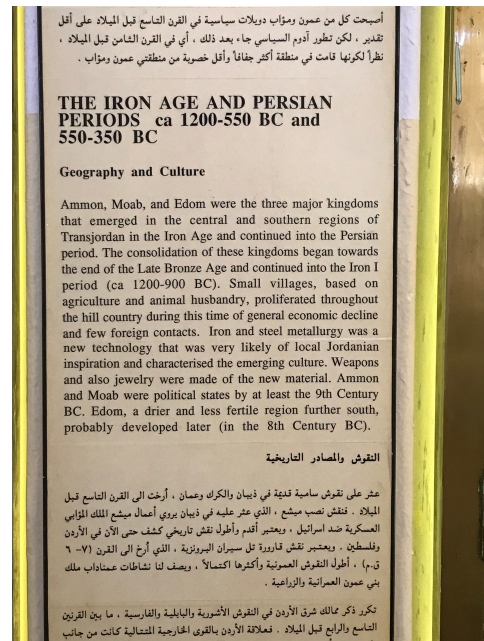
nected to Nefertiti is extremely impactful in person. The bust’s monetary value and the uniqueness of the bust’s beauty immediately prompts a reaction from viewers. An object’s characteristics, including the scale, authenticity, value, resolution, and density of information, suggest the uniqueness of object-centric learning found in museums. This is especially valuable in archaeology, as there are so many objects that can easily be displayed in a manner to effectively educate the public.

In Jordan there are many museums attempting to capitalize on object-centric learning. In the next section I will discuss three museums in Jordan that utilize object-centric learning: the Faynan Museum, the Jordan Archaeological Museum, and the Lowest Point on Earth Museum. These museums, while already well designed, with a few minor adjustments could be used more effectively as a method for combatting the illegal antiquity trade.

The Faynan Museum highlights the many archaeological discoveries of the nearby landscape. When I visited the museum in June of 2019, only the lobby of the museum was open, but it set the tone for the whole museum. The main exhibit is titled, ‘Discovering Faynan Heritage’, and features a replica of the



(a) Figure 3



(b) Figure 4

Left: The Jordan Archaeology Museum, highlighting the display of objects (photo from personal collection). **Right:** A didactic at the Jordan Archaeology Museum, highlighting the use of both English and Arabic (photo from personal collection).

nearly landscape with numbered notable locations (Fig. 1). Visitors can then trace the numbers displayed to the corresponding wall didactics (Fig. 2). Didactics are interpretive texts related to the display, typically seen on exhibition walls or as a label beside an object. These didactics are in English and Arabic making them accessible to a wide audience. The replica allows viewers to gain a sense of scale of the area and orientate themselves to their location and the relative locations of various archaeological sites. This is very effective in allowing viewers to engage and relate to the archaeological sites. As a result, it creates a greater sense for the local community of the cultural heritage of the area they are in.

The Jordan Archaeology Museum takes full advantage of all of the elements of object-centric learning. The museum is filled with various archaeological objects from different eras collected from all over Jordan (Fig. 3). This museum does an excellent job of making many of the objects that would normally only be available to viewers in images, publicly accessible.

For preservation purposes, many of the objects are held in glass containers and are not available for visitors to touch or physically interact with. However, even behind glass, the scale, value, and authenticity of the objects can be conveyed to the audience in an impactful way. With most of the artifacts displayed at the Jordan Archaeology Museum, there are accompanying didactics (Fig. 4). These didactics, like at the Faynan Museum, are presented in Arabic and English to target a wide number of visitors. However, these didactics are not as accessible to the general public. They contain a lot of language aimed at those with previous archaeological experience, such as the term metallurgy. In attempting to engage the general public with the archaeological objects presented, it would be more engaging to have these didactics written in simpler language and have definitions provided for those with little or no archaeological background. Overall, this museum is an exceptional place for tourists and locals alike to engage with archaeological objects.



(a) Figure 5



(b) Figure 6

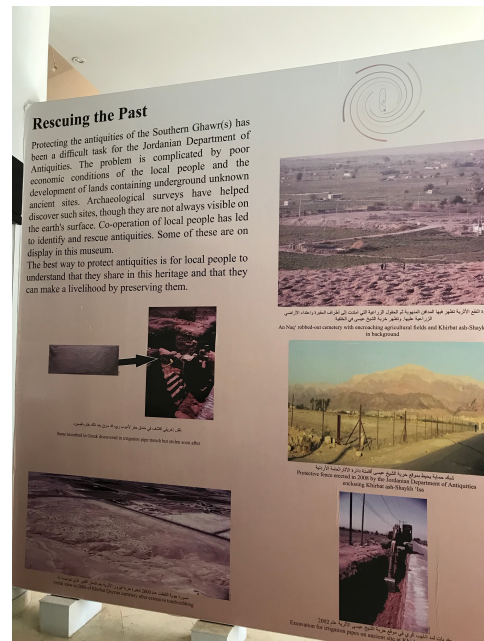
Left: Diagram of the landscape from the Lowest Point on Earth Museum (photo from personal collection).
Right: Pottery on display at the Lowest Point on Earth Museum (photo from personal collection).

The Lowest Point on Earth Museum is located 1318 feet below sea level at Safi in Jordan and was opened on the 18th of May in 2012 (Hellenic Society for Near Eastern Studies, 2012). This museum is operated by the Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities and was set up in collaboration with the British Museum (Hellenic Society for Near Eastern Studies, 2012). The Lowest Point on Earth Museum takes many of the best elements of the Archaeology Museum of Jordan and the Faynan Museum and brings them together. Right as you enter the museum there is a diagram of the surrounding landscape pointing out various archaeology sites that are referenced throughout the museum (Fig. 5). This map is not numbered, as the one at the Faynan Museum is, but instead uses the names of sites which viewers can refer back to as they explore the museum. The museum also has numerous archaeological objects on display with associated didactics, similar to those at the Archaeology Museum of Jordan (Fig. 6). What makes the Lowest Point on Earth Museum stand apart from the other two is the discussion on the need for conservation in archaeology. One of the largest features of

the museum is a huge mosaic with an accompanying didactic explaining the need for mosaic conservation (Fig. 7). The mosaic alone directly conveys to visitors its authenticity and value in its size and presence in the space. Behind the mosaic display is a window through which visitors can sometimes see archaeologists do conservation work on various archaeological objects. This is a smart addition to the museum because it allows for visitors to see the real-world application of what they are learning about. Another important didactic in the museum discusses the need for archaeological cooperation with local peoples in rescuing and preserving the cultural heritage unique to the area (Fig. 8). This is a direct example of how museums can be used to explain the value of preserving the archaeological record and why it matters to the local population. Adding in didactic wall panels discussing community archaeology, conservation, and/or the illegal antiquity trade is a simple step that all Jordanian archaeological museums could implement. Communicating this information is a valuable first step in combatting the illegal antiquity trade.



(a) Figure 7



(b) Figure 8

Left: Mosaic display at the Lowest Point on Earth Museum (from personal collection). **Right:** Didactic wall panel discussing “Rescuing the Past” at the Lowest Point on Each Museum, also has an Arabic version not pictured (from personal collection).

All of these museums are set up to cater to the local and tourist populations. An article highlighting the soft opening of the Faynan Museum discussed the support and engagement of the local school system in the opening of the museum (Palmer, n.d.). The ability for teachers to utilize these museums as an educational resource will be incredibly helpful in engaging with local populations to understand the importance of archaeology. In my research, I was not able to find any specific information on the social studies curriculum, at any level, of the Jordanian education system. I did, however, find a general statement that says “the Jordanian social studies’ curriculum is considered the developmental focus in all types and dimensions: The economic, social, cultural, technological, environmental, demographic, human, security, global, health, and future education” (Alelaimat & Taha, 2012). Field trips to these museums and discussion on the illegal archaeological trade would fit directly into this description of the curriculum. En-

gaging young Jordanians in the archaeology of their country would be impactful, as it would start the conversation in local communities on the harm caused by the illegal antiquity trade. Understanding the value of the archaeology and the lack of relative economic gain in the antiquity trade, starting at a young age, would be one strategy that helps to combat the illegal antiquity trade. Making small changes, such as more publicly accessible didactics, and more discussion of community archaeology, conservation, and the illegal antiquity trade, would ensure these museums could be used to their full potential. Engaging the older generations through demonstrations, local events, and lectures all hosted at the museums, would also be a fantastic way to communicate the importance of archaeology for preserving cultural heritage. This would take the object-centric learning that is unique to museums a step further and enhance the experience of both the local and tourist populations.

Due to the overwhelming complexities of the illegal antiquity trade, there is not one simple solution. Education, engagement, and communication

with local communities through museums and other resources will start the process of combatting the illegal antiquity trade. However, to accompany the

ideas being communicated there needs to be viable economic alternatives for those who are accustomed to making a living from the archaeological trade. As Roger Atwood (2004) said, “The biggest obstacle to stopping the looting of the ancient world is overcoming the feeling that it is inevitable . . . [that] as long as there are rich buyers, there will always be poor looters willing to supply them.” A solution he proposes is encouraging museums and governments to sell some of their interesting, but more common artifacts, fully documented, to dealers and collectors (Atwood, 2004). Full documentation would include key archaeological information such as where it was found and other important contextual information. The money made from these sales could be used to fund community archaeology projects and preservation efforts (Atwood, 2004). Selling these objects fully documented would set a high standard for future documentation, potentially making it harder for the black market to sell undocumented or inadequately documented artifacts (Atwood, 2004). Under the current system of heritage laws, which deny the economic value of archaeology, use of documentation would combat the unintended effects of these laws encouraging the black market (Atwood, 2004).

Another suggestion, to support those who rely on archaeology as an economic resource, from Lane Jennings (2006) would be to encourage museums and galleries to sell licensed reproductions. Modern crafts workers could be trained to recreate ancient artifacts, perhaps using traditional methods and materials, to market to tourists (Jennings, 2006). The Lowest Point on Earth Museum already sells crafts made by locals. Encouraging locals to adapt these practices and offering lectures and classes at the museums on how to create these objects would have a positive impact on the preservation of the archaeological record and the economy. Holding these classes and lectures at the museums, would also encourage locals to explore the exhibits and hopefully learn more about why archaeology is important. These crafted objects could be sold for a higher price than the \$7 that some looters are believed to be making from trading on the illegal antiquities market. This mobilization of the archaeological economy would effectively accompany an increase in communication on the value of archae-

ology for the cultural heritage of Jordan.

The question of “who owns the past” can often lead to a debate within the archaeological community about whether archaeological objects should leave their place of origin. Some archaeologists argue that all archaeological objects found in a country should remain under the ownership of that country. As a result, many countries have enacted new laws, and archaeologists go through strict processes in order to be given permission to excavate; for example, Jordan’s “Law No. 21 for the year 1988 — The Law of Antiquities” (Kersel & Chesson, n.d.). There have been numerous debates over whether items collected, often during periods of colonization, and displayed in museums internationally, should be returned to their home of origin. My solutions do not address this issue. Instead I have chosen to focus on combatting the illegal antiquity trade in its existing form. Some archaeologists might argue that my solutions would further remove an object from its place of origin, by encouraging a legal antiquity market, which could be harmful for an artifact’s cultural understanding and interpretation. However, with the increase in standards in the antiquity trade for full documentation, the interpretation and understanding of the artifacts place of origin would be improved. In the future, this could also allow for the object’s return to its place of origin.

To effectively protect the archaeological record, museums and government officials should follow in the lead of “Follow the Pots” and work with local communities, collectors, looters, and dealers to create a legal antiquity market that stimulates the economy. This could be accomplished through the sale of replicas and surplus antiquities. However, to get to a point when this is possible there needs to be an increased awareness of the value of archaeology within Jordan. Jordan is fortunate to have many museums that could be capitalized upon to convey this information to the public. Archaeological objects are a non-renewable resource and efforts to promote their conservation are of the utmost importance. By partnering with local museums, public education on the value of archaeological resources can be communicated, and the creation of a legal antiquity market can be supported.

AUTHOR BIOGRAPHY

Lindsay Williams is going into her fourth year of Knowledge Integration at the University of Waterloo. In addition to her studies in Knowledge Integration, Lindsay is pursuing a minor in Anthropology and a Collaborative Design Specialization. Lindsay originally wrote this paper for her final research paper for an archaeological field school she took part in during the summer of 2019 in Jordan. She was working on the Barqa Landscape Project in the Wadi Faynan region. While in Jordan, Lindsay became interested in the illegal antiquity market and all of its complexities. A major part of the Knowledge Integration program is studying museums and museum theory. So, for her final paper she was excited to write about how museums could be used to help combat the issue of the illegal antiquity trade. Lindsay is incredibly grateful for all of the hard work of the editors at the Journal of Integrative Research and Reflection and for this opportunity.

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The Impact of Fast Fashion on Women

Andrea Chang

FAST fashion refers to industries that produce low-cost clothing collections that mimic current luxury fashion trends (Joy et al.). It is an industry that has emerged over the past twenty years (Bhardwaj and Fairhurst) due to globalization and neoliberalism, as large corporations have replaced small, primarily female-run apparel businesses (McRobbie) and begun mass producing clothing to retail around the world and outsourcing their production to countries with cheaper labour in order to lower manufacturing costs. Nearly all of the Global North, as well as much of the Global South, wears fast fashion now (Horton 526), and thus is involved with the industry in some capacity. The Global North refers to the developed countries of North America and Europe, while the Global South refers to the often economically disadvantaged nation-states of Latin America, Asia, Africa, and Oceania. Fast fashion is tied to many global challenges, including environmental degradation, globalization, human rights, and feminism. This paper will consider how the constructed gender roles and stereotypes of women uniquely position them to be impacted by the fast fashion industry in terms of both the garment workers who create the clothing and the consumers. This research question is significant because the fast fashion industry has far-reaching negative social and environmental implications and disproportionately impacts women. Additionally, gender is a component that ties together the two major actors in the industry (both the manufacturers and the consumers). There is existing research that provides evidence for female garment workers and female consumers being disproportionately involved with, and affected by, fast fashion

(Lam; Khan; McRobbie; Joy et al.; Anastasia; Horton; Ahmed), but little literature exists that analyzes the role that gender construction plays in the inequality of impact. It is important to add to the literature on fast fashion and carefully explore, with nuance, the solutions to the industry's mistreatment of marginalized parties. This paper will approach this research question by first highlighting the problems associated with the fast fashion industry, followed by an analysis of the fashion industry's feminization, the procedures that lead to the exploitative labour of women in sweatshops, and finally the consumers of fast fashion as primarily female, which creates an unjust feminisation of responsibility. This paper will integrate sources from varying academic disciplines, in order to answer the research question with depth. Economic analyses of the fast fashion industry, labour studies and the study of human working rights, feminist theory and gender studies, fashion theory, geography, the study of the legislation of manufacturing clothing, and political and social science will all be drawn on throughout this paper. In this paper, I will argue that constructed gender roles and stereotypes make women especially susceptible to being exploited as garment workers in fast fashion sweatshops, and to consuming fast fashion at a rapid pace and therefore being held responsible for its implications.

Fast fashion has many negative social and environmental consequences, which mainly impact the female garment workers. Critiques of fast fashion have emanated from the academy, industry, popular media forums, and celebrities (Horton 516). Firstly, globalization has brought about systematic inequalities in the fast fashion industry, as garment workers, who

are among the world's poorest people, are exploited for the relatively rich to enjoy the luxury of the latest fashion trends (Crewe). The prevalence of the industry also means that there are now on-trend, fashionable pieces that are affordable for low-income people in the Global North to buy. On the surface level, more affordable clothing seems like a positive step towards equity. However, where the consumer is paying little, there is someone else paying the price. Bargain price clothing means that consumers are not paying for reasonable wages, working hours, or working conditions for garment workers, meaning that there is a human cost associated with the purchase (Perkins). The business model of fast fashion involves planned obsolescence, in the hallmark late stage of capitalism. Planned obsolescence refers to the practice of planning and designing products with an artificially limited useful life, so that it becomes obsolete after a certain period of time. This practice ensures that consumers have to repurchase items, which bolsters demand. In the fashion industry, this idea manifests in short-lived trends and garments that are of poor quality. Planned obsolescence encourages consumers to keep up with ever-changing fashions by shopping more often, which can only be done if the prices are low enough (Khan). This also has environmental consequences, as there is constant waste being generated because the very nature of fast fashion encourages disposability (qtd. in Joy et al. 275). Additionally, the cheaper materials that are now used in fast fashion items do not decompose and result in faster breakages, which leads consumers to buy more new clothing (Gunner 41). Fast fashion consumes a vast amount of resources, pollutes water, uses toxic chemicals, and produces toxic waste (Gunner 40). The pollution and environmental devastation that is felt from fast fashion most immediately impacts the developing countries in which the clothes are mainly manufactured. Thus, the social implications of the fast fashion industry disproportionately impact women, and the environmental implications disproportionately impact the Global South.

The vast, unnecessary size of global clothing production is abhorrent — it has more than tripled since 2000, and the industry now produces over 150 billion garments a year (Anastasia). The culture of disposable fashion that has permeated the Global North is only possible through the increasingly cheap manufacturing labour in developing countries (Khan). Ac-

ording to the Ethical Fashion Forum (2014), almost three-quarters of the world's clothing exports are made in developing countries often under unfair and unsafe working conditions (Haug and Busch 319). Most of the world's 75 million garment workers are women living in China and Bangladesh (Anastasia). They work in sweatshops, under dangerous conditions, often in windowless rooms being poisoned by the fumes from the chemicals used to manufacture and dye clothes (Anastasia). In these countries, wages are among the lowest in the world, there is minimal regulation of safety standards and workers' labour rights, and few opportunities for meaningful unionization or collective action (Khan). Retailers are willing to exploit this cheap labour, and there is a vast supplier network that mediates between these retailers and hundreds of thousands of garment factories. This enables the fast fashion industry to exist in the capacity that it does (Khan).

Haug and Busch have argued that traditionally, ethical fashion focuses on the responsibility of the providers and the consumers of unethical, or fast, fashion items. They claim that such an understanding of the problem of unethical fashion ignores many important aspects, and thus have written a paper in which they identify nine relevant actors that are responsible for the harm caused by the fashion industry (326-327): market regulators (institutions defining laws and regulations for the focal consumer market in relation to production, marketing, use of suppliers, product materials), supplier regulators (institutions defining laws and regulations for the production area in focus — often developing countries), consumers (those exposed to the marketing efforts of the fashion industry and those buying the fashion products), mediators (magazines, news media, forums, activist organizations), designers (those defining the fashion products), marketers (those advertising for and selling the product — retailers), producers (those making the decisions on which fashion items to produce, how to produce them, which markets to target), suppliers (those producing item materials and manufacturing the final products), and workers (the persons employed by the suppliers). They also mention the environment and animals as entities that are affected by the fashion industry without being able to act themselves. I believe that each of these nine actors have the responsibility to change the unethical practices of the fast fashion industry, though not all have

the same ability to act. It is also important to recognize that there is widespread change that has to occur in multiple sectors, and responsibility should not be placed onto few, often female, actors when there is much more at play.

It is especially women who suffer from the harmful implications of the fast fashion industry because it is inherently feminized. In the very development of fast fashion as an industry, it was the women's fashion sector that was accelerated first (Bhardwaj and Fairhurst). Gupta and Gentry's study on the construction of male and female identities when shopping for fashion products provides relevant insights to the feminization of clothing shopping. In Western societies, women, especially those in younger age groups, have traditionally been pressured by socio-cultural norms to be concerned about appearance, fashion, and beauty (Gupta and Gentry). Women also tend to be more motivated to purchase clothing than men because they often view it as a more pleasurable activity (Gupta and Gentry). Additionally, women are socialized into being an aesthetically skilled gender, which leads to women who tend to celebrate their skill and prowess in shopping (Gupta and Gentry). Finally, there are "established associations of fashion consumption with irrational and hysterical feminine traits" (Palmer via Beard 457) in popular discourse and academic fashion literature. Thus, it is unsurprising that the fast fashion industry disproportionately harms women in such a large way.

I will argue that women are predominantly employed as garment workers due to socially-constructed gender roles and stereotypes, which also make them susceptible to exploitation in these sweatshops. Bangladesh has the cheapest garment workers in the world, who work the longest hours and live in the most crowded and unsanitary slums (Crewe). There, wages have halved in the past 10 years, and children are employed (Crewe). The factories in which fast fashion clothing items are manufactured have dangerous working conditions for the workers (Crewe). Many of these factories are essentially sweatshops, and the garment workers who are trapped, as a result of gender construction in their culture, into working for them are mainly women (Crewe). A sweatshop, as defined by the United States General Accounting Office, is a business that regularly violates both wage or child labour and safety or health laws (Lam 623). A significant amount

of fast fashion is manufactured in Bangladesh, with its garment industry being the largest employer of women in the manufacturing sector (Ahmed). Khan suggests that the profitability of the textile and garment industries has long relied upon the exploitation of female labour, and the belief that women are compliant and docile, and do not need to earn a living wage (Khan). According to Posner, of New York University's Stern Center for Business and Human Rights, oftentimes these young women in Bangladesh or China are the first in their families to hold jobs. This means that their families are generally eager to get them into the factories as quickly as possible (Anastasia). They risk being fired if they miss a day of work for any reason — including sickness (Anastasia). One example of an inhumanely treated female garment worker is Taslima Aktar, who worked in the Windy Apparels factory in Bangladesh. Her manager refused to give her time off to see a doctor about a persistent fever, but she could not afford to lose her job, so she accepted it. Weeks later, she passed out at work. Her boss sent her immediately back to her sewing machine after she was revived, but shortly after, she died (Anastasia). Overall, there is evidence that these female garment workers are exploited and treated with utter contempt and apathy by the hegemonic masculinity that oversees them.

Ahmed's article explores the social, political, and economic contexts of the Bangladeshi women employed by the garment industry, and thus provides many relevant and useful insights to this paper. In particular, the claims and data in this paragraph have all been originally made by Ahmed, and they will be used to support my point that the social convention that women are expected to uphold in Bangladesh traps them in their sweatshop labour jobs. The Bangladesh garment industry, in its rapid growth at a compound rate of 125 per cent from 1977 to 1991, has provided massive job opportunity for young women in Bangladesh — nearly 200,000 young women appeared in Dhaka city, the capital of Bangladesh, almost overnight. Popular discourse cites this as evidence of a modern environment that allows talent to make it through sheer effort, making the garment industry hailed as the liberator of women. Women are discouraged from many forms of manual labour because of social convention in Bangladesh. However, the industrialists in Bangladesh created socially acceptable work for women in these garment fac-

tories, likely because fashion is a feminized industry. Originally, the industrialists persuaded reluctant male guardians to allow women to work by promising that the honour and propriety of the women would be protected in the factory by using spatial segregation of the sexes in the factories. This demonstrates the patriarchal social convention present in Bangladesh as agency is stripped from these women — they are not able to make the decision to work on their own. This segregation of the sexes in the factory parallels the gendered wage segregation, with men having jobs with more control and higher wages. Additionally, the risk of sexual harassment is a factor that prevents women from wanting to progress along the ladder. According to literature on the Bangladesh garment industry, employers prefer hiring women because it corresponds with a compliant and low-cost workforce. It is the “docility and dispensability” (Ahmed) of women that makes them so attractive to employers. Additionally, they are only paid \$0.25 an hour, compared to American garment workers being paid \$7.53 an hour (in 1999). The threat of imminent layoffs and the exclusivity of the male trade union movement in Bangladesh also prevents women from having a voice in their workplace. Garment factory owners are ever vigilant to the threat of unionization, as they are compelled by the imperative of low labour costs. There are workers selected as informers who turn in their colleagues if union action is being considered. Thus, women are prevented from demanding the national minimum wage through unionization. Ahmed also makes the astute assertion that the women in Bangladesh are socialized to be docile, and the rough and ready politics of the union movement frightens them. The women who work in the garment factories in Bangladesh come from different class backgrounds, so they have varying economic motivations for their employment. Often in Bangladeshi families, the women are poorer and have less control over finances than their male counterparts. Economic need does, in any case, compel women to work at these garment factories — a low wage is better than no wage at all, and it is one of the few accessible and socially acceptable forms of work. In Bangladesh, women have no voice on the factory floor, and so a sweatshop can never be a way out for women. Becoming a garment worker and keeping that job is synonymous with losing voice and staying mute (Ahmed). Thus, specifically in Bangladesh, where a significant

amount of fast fashion apparel is manufactured, the social convention of being a woman traps them in their sweatshop labour jobs.

Sweatshop labour exists in the Global North, as well, where similar gender patterns can be observed. The Fair Labour Standards Act in the United States, and similar legislation in other Western countries, regulate minimum wage, maximum hours, and child labour, which makes employers liable to their employees for violations of the Act (Lam 623). However, many employers, especially of labour-intensive industries like the garment industry, persistently violate these laws (Lam 623). The garment industries of fast fashion use small sewing factories that consistently operate under substandard working conditions in immigrant neighbourhoods (Lam 623). In these American sweatshops, the garment workers are most often a Hispanic or Asian female immigrant who moved to an American metropolis with her family in search of economic opportunity (Lam 624). There is drastic wealth disparity between these garment workers and the beneficiary of garment sweatshop labour, who are the apparel manufacturers (Lam 624). With little understanding of English and of their labour rights as employees, these immigrant women are susceptible to exploitation (Lam 626). The influx of immigrants provides a large pool of easily exploited workers to meet the production demand in the United States (Lam 632). Hispanic and Asian women account for nearly the entire labour force in the apparel industry in the United States as of the 1990s (Lam 632). New immigrants are driven to sweatshop employment by their financial needs as well as their lack of English language skills, creating a situation ripe for exploitation (Lam 632).

The consumers of fast fashion are typically understood to be women of the Global North (Khan). Fast fashion brands such as H&M, Zara, and TopShop are primarily marketed towards young, trend-conscious females, who are implicated in the forms of exploitation practiced by the fast fashion industry (Khan). Oftentimes, women are pitted against other women as consumers of fast fashion. Women who have the financial and cultural capital to shop conscientiously, are characterised as making the right choices, whereas typically younger women with a desire for cheap fast fashion are problematized (Khan). It is often their access to economic resources that affects how ethical or sustainable their practices are (Khan). Fast fash-

ion is also playing to an ever increasing and broadening global audience, because its prices are being reduced (Horton 515). Young women, even those living on low incomes, are now able to regularly and routinely consume and discard fashionable clothing (Horton 516). The role of the Global North consumer of fast fashion is complex. The fashion industry itself characterizes the consumer desire and demand as the driver of fast fashion (Horton 516). However, many critics instead argue that it is the system that positions consumers to be embroiled in superfluous consumption that serves the interests of capitalist production (Horton 516). Horton argues that the agency of even the most well-meaning and mindful consumer is corrupted by fast fashion. This is because the market is flooded with cheap clothes, so individual consumers are incapable of translating their ethical attitudes into ethical behaviours (Horton 516). Joy et al. conducted a study on this very idea and concluded that fast fashion consumers often share a concern for environmental issues, while still engaging in consumer patterns antithetical to ecological best practices. Oftentimes consumers apply strategies to justify unethical purchases, including ignoring information about production processes and denying responsibility for the victim (the sweatshop workers and the environment) (Haug and Busch 323). Additionally, consumers may also be unwilling to adopt more ethical or sustainable practices because they feel physically and culturally distanced from the problems in focus (Haug and Busch 324).

Fast fashion is a complex and geographically dispersed system in which Haug and Busch's nine actors, as referenced earlier, are implicated. The scale and the complexity of the fast fashion industry is what makes intervention or a solution difficult. Khan, in her article on women in fast fashion activism, provides many important insights on the problem with positioning the female consumer as the solution to the fast fashion industry. I will detail Khan's most relevant points in this paragraph to support my argument that the responsibility that falls on women in particular to stop the harm of the fast fashion industry is harmful and unfair. Many academics have only proposed a single distinctly individual and neoliberal solution, which is for consumers to change their personal shopping habits. While women are usually both the instigators and the targets of ethical fashion campaigns, it is nearly always a privi-

leged, white woman who is the agent of change. Many solutions to the fast fashion dilemma emphasize the agency of the privileged fashion consumer, and the voicelessness of sweatshop workers. However, it is important to recognize that there are forms of activism that do exist in these garment producing countries. For example, following the Rana Plaza garment factory collapse in 2013, widespread protests among Bangladeshi garment workers led to an increase in minimum wage. Additionally, although workers' efforts to unionize are often met with physical and sexual violence, some women still participate in collective action to place demands on factory owners and managers. It is problematic for popular discourse to dismiss these women's vital and continuing role in reforming the garment industry, in favour of focusing on the self-reflective, stylish fashion consumer as the solution. Many fast fashion critiques use a neoliberal activist strategy in which the individual consumer, characterised as a young woman, is blamed for the unsustainable and exploitative nature of the fashion industry. Although in most recent academic critiques, corporations are still held somewhat responsible, the consumer has been more responsible than ever before — both for her materialistic desires but also for changing into a more conscious shopper. Although consumer movements and boycotts have been advocated as important forms of anticorporate activism, this new discourse gives us a more serious moral weight attached to our individual fashion choices. I agree with Khan in her argument that the fast fashion critique sets out to be a structural one, but it is ultimately distilled into a neoliberal one, which asks us to reform and regulate ourselves, and favours the women who have the cultural and economic resources to do so.

In this section, I will draw on economic analyses of the fast fashion industry, critical studies on current global challenges, as well as feminist theory to present the idea that the female consumer of fast fashion is unreasonably expected to stop the harmful behaviour of the industry. For example, Horton argues that both scholarly and popular discourses position young women as “the main protagonists in the frenetic consumer culture of twenty-first century fashion” (517). She argues that these discourses simultaneously hold these young women as most responsible for the damage and destruction caused by the fast fashion industry, leading to the young women self-identifying as

such. For example, Micheletti and Stolle argue that consumer action in the anti-sweatshop movement is not particularly effective, but is significant because it is more than corporations and the government are doing. Horton argues that the era of fast fashion represents a particularly intense version of both the feminisation of consumption and the feminisation of responsibility and obligation. Khan's idea of neoliberalism being positioned as the solution to the problems of the fast fashion industry, as highlighted in the previous paragraph, might explain what Horton means by the feminisation of responsibility. Haug and Busch argue that consumer responsibility for changing the fast fashion industry is limited because the target market is teenagers and young adults, who often do not have the financial resources to buy the more expensive and ethically produced fashion items, and are often not among the most knowledgeable consumers (331). They conclude, however, after a detailed study, that the most important actor that would have the most impact in changing the fast fashion industry into one that is more ethical and sustainable is the high fashion industry — if they should make unethical clothing unfashionable, then fast fashion brands will have no choice but to change their production methods in their imitation of high fashion (334). Thus, the feminisation of responsibility placed upon the consumer is unfair when they have a more limited role than what most literature suggests.

Throughout this paper, I have looked at the extensive harm that the fast fashion industry inflicts on various groups of people and the environment. I will argue that it is the large fast fashion corporations, as the manufacturers of clothing that benefit from the system. It is so difficult to solve the problems of the fast fashion industry precisely because the corporations, who have the most power to change their own actions, derive so much profit from their practices. Lam also claims that the true beneficiary of the sweatshop system in the apparel industry is the manufacturer. As such, he claims that they should be held accountable for the problems that plague the industry (627). The sweatshop system prevails because manufacturers find substantial savings in using low-priced labour contracts rather than maintaining their own sewing and assembly labour force (Lam 631). Contract labour gives manufacturers a virtually unlimited supply of labour, without any responsibility

to the labour force (Lam 631). It allows the manufacturer to calculate production costs with complete disregard for the costs and circumstances of labour (Lam 631). A root issue with the fast fashion industry is that the manufacturers are looking to cut costs with no care for the harmful implications of their actions. According to Frankental, corporate social responsibility is imperative and must change so that it is meaningfully a part of major corporations (18). Although his research refers to major corporations generally, it can certainly be applied to the corporate giants of the fast fashion world. He argues that corporate social responsibility must change to embrace all stakeholders of the company, be reinforced by changes in company law related to governance, be rewarded by financial markets, have a clear definition which relates to the goals of social and ecological sustainability, have its implementation be benchmarked and audited, be open to public scrutiny, have compliance mechanisms in place, and be totally embedded in the corporation.

The ethical fashion industry is attempting to become a replacement or alternative to the fast fashion industry. The most frequently cited definition of ethical fashion is the one by Joergens (2006), which is that the governing principle of ethical fashion is “fashionable clothes that incorporate fair trade principles with sweatshop-free labour conditions while not harming the environment or workers by using biodegradable and organic cotton”. Ethical fashion tends to be more expensive than fast fashion, but it is understood as an investment worth making if one is serious about being a responsible consumer (Khan). However, this can be problematic in that buying into ethical fashion requires economic capital which not all women can access. Khan argues that the critiques of fast fashion and disposable consumer culture risk idealizing a conscientious consumer who is willing to pay more for their clothes. In doing so, it oversimplifies the kinds of ethical calculations that actually shape our everyday shopping choices (Khan). Consumption is a complex activity; for example, consumption in a family is a practice of care and responsibility that complicates ethical decision-making (Khan). There is a ‘rational choice model’ of consumption that assumes that consumers will shop more responsibly if they simply have better access to knowledge about the products and the effects of their consumption practices (Khan); however, this does not account for

the messy moral negotiations that take place if one is low-income, like a single mother shopping for her children on a tight budget (Khan). Ultimately, affordability is a significant constraint on consumption choice. Additionally, ethical consumption is a process that calls for the consumer to be concerned with future generations, and with garment workers around the world. However, this contradicts the self-interest of consumers — they would rather satisfy their short-term desires and buy less expensive rather than more expensive clothing (Haug and Busch 324). Although the market for ethical fashion is growing, it currently constitutes just 0.4 per cent of the UK market, and environmentally friendly apparel only accounts for about 1 per cent of the total global apparel market (Haug and Busch 319).

Thus, many academics argue that there are alternate solutions to the fast fashion industry, and alternate actors that must be held accountable for the plight of the industry other than the young, female consumer. Although I believe that the consumer holds some responsibility for the harm that the fast fashion industry causes, I think that the most pragmatic and impactful solution lies outside of the consumer and requires multiple actors. This is because oftentimes the fast fashion consumer has little choice in her purchase habits, because of the high price tag associated with ethical fashion and limited knowledge on ethical fashion. Instead, I think governments and regulators have responsibility to regulate working conditions and maintain transparency on the processes of clothing production. Additionally, fast fashion manufacturers, as the main beneficiaries, must also assume responsibility for the harm that the industry causes. Lastly, the media and high fashion have power to make ethical clothing fashionable, and

should do so. I believe that it is ultimately up to the fast fashion manufacturer to change its practices, but realistically they will not do so without the pressure of governments, regulators, media, and high fashion because, for the manufacturer, the benefit outweighs the harm.

In conclusion, the constructed gender roles and stereotypes of women position them to be uniquely impacted by the fast fashion industry because of the feminization of the fashion industry as a whole. They are disproportionately employed in the sweatshops of the garment industry, and also are mainly targeted as the consumers of fast fashion. However, because of the different levels of privilege that consumers and garment workers hold — although they are both affected by the fast fashion industry more so than their male counterparts — gender plays two different roles in these two different situations. Ultimately, many modern fast fashion critiques take a neoliberal stance in putting the responsibility on these young fast fashion consuming women to stop the fast fashion industry. However, alternate literature suggests that other actors have immense responsibility that is often overlooked. Thus, although these relatively privileged young women do have some responsibility in the horrors of the fast fashion industry, the feminization of responsibility for the practices of the industry are unfair. When a highly feminized industry like the fast fashion one becomes problematic, the responsibility for positive change is also placed upon females. The switch to ethical and sustainable fashion as the primary, and only, type of clothing to purchase is imperative. However, this switch should not only be the consumers' burden, but rather that of the fashion industry as a whole.

AUTHOR BIOGRAPHY

Andrea Chang is a student in the Arts & Science Program at McMaster University. The interdisciplinary thinking and perspectives that she has learned from this program have allowed her to make connections that align with the goals of JIRR. She changed her personal shopping habits when she became aware of the far-reaching negative implications of the fast fashion industry, to attempt to stop her contribution to the problem. In her Inquiry of Global Challenges class, she was given the opportunity to thoroughly investigate and write about any global challenge of her choice. She was excited to explore her personal interest in fast fashion in an academic context and contribute to the discussion surrounding it. She is incredibly grateful to the editorial team at JIRR for the opportunity to share her work on such an important topic!

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Marxist Commodity Fetishization Encoded in Illusory Environmental Policy: Exacerbating the Global North-South Divide

Sarun Balaranjan

Background: The Global North-South Divide and Climate Change

This geographic age of the Anthropocene is defined by advancement of human industry in molding the era within which we exist. Marx (1847) critiques this capitalist system when he states in *The Communist Manifesto* that “there breaks out an epidemic that, in all earlier epochs, would have seemed an absurdity — the epidemic of overproduction” (p.7). This phenomenon is obvious in the contemporary age of global inequality: wherein there is an overproduction of food while world hunger remains an issue. We live in a time where 1% of people own 82% of global wealth (Oxfam, 2018). This inequality is based in modern practices of consumption and is fundamentally linked to the most recent manifestation of capitalism’s shortcomings: the looming shroud of global climate change. Currently, an estimated 60-80% of climate impacts come from the household consumption of goods and services (Jacobs, 2016). Earth is hurtling towards climate catastrophe as a direct result of the epidemic of overproduction; an epidemic that has evolved into modern neoliberalism. This crisis, Marx would believe, is the inevitable result of the perverse pleasures that households receive from consumption. The capitalist structures embedded in unchecked neoliberalism have permitted this extreme level of consumption. This consumption must be harvested from *somewhere*, and so it has occurred as the despoliation, or plundering, of nature (Mittal & Gupta, 2017).

Instrumentalizing the environment for the sake of

unimpeded economic growth goes hand in hand with the exploitation of human labour (Stewart, 2017). Marx dictates in *The Communist Manifesto* that the history of society has progressed as revolutionary class conflicts, which assumed different forms in different epochs (1847). This class antagonism can be extrapolated to the relationship between the bourgeois that comprise the Global North and the proletariat that comprise the Global South. In the context of this paper, the Global North is understood to mean the developed nations of North America, Europe, Australia, and Asia while the Global South encompasses the developing nations in South America, Africa, and Asia. The ecological crisis, foreshadowed by Marx in his critique of overproduction, is founded on the impoverishment of the global South while the planet’s resources are consumed by its more affluent inhabitants in the North. The Global South predominantly exports primary resources while the Global North exports manufactured products (Parikh, 1994), and it is this very dynamic that Marx (1847) warns the reader about when he says “it has made barbarian and semi-barbarian countries dependent on the civilized ones, nations of peasants on nations of Bourgeois” (p.6). While literature has surpassed the derisive manner with which he refers to the Global South as barbarians, this dependence is an important relationship to note. In *Capital*, Marx (1867) strengthens this claim by stating that “personal dependence characterizes the social relations of production” (p.4). The transnational corporations based in the Global North are able to fet-

ter the Global South through commodity chains that provide to the Global North's consumers. The coffee that we drink, the valuable minerals and metals in our technology, and the labour that creates the clothes on our backs are all representative of the manner in which the North is able to exploit both the Southern natural resources and labour. It does so by setting prices that do not reflect the material costs of production, but instead the social costs of production (Foster, 2019). Marx's concept of "commodity fetishism", loosely understood to be the false view that relationships between people in a capitalist society are boiled down to social relationships between objects, is crucial to note in this context. The Global North is capable of ignoring exploitative labour because the fetishization of consumed commodities shifts the attention to the value of the object being consumed. In addition, it is pertinent to be mindful of the fact that climate change has more significant impacts on the livelihood of those in the Global South. Southern Nations at risk of increased hurricanes, droughts, and flooding are prone to longer-lasting aftereffects as the weak infrastructure and agriculture-sustenance systems fall apart (Parikh, 1994). Clearly, those who are most exploited are also those most at risk of the consequences of this exploitation.

Subsequently, as the world looks towards resolution, Lynn White's (1967) stipulation comes to mind: what we *do* with our environmental resources reflects the way that we *conceptualize* those resources. The methods through which we choose to tackle this convoluted issue are entirely dependent on the social character of these resources. Environmental policy today, exemplified recently by the 2019 UN Climate Action Summit, is a hot topic of discussion. Popular media has naturalized the idea that current environmental policy is working, that *someone* is acting to mitigate climate change as a result of climate protests, activist organizations, and international policy discussions. Marx (1847) stresses that to change society, "the proletariat of each country must, of course, first of all settle matters with its own bourgeoisie" (p.12). This goal must be applied to combat the environmental degradation rooted in North-South relations, to counteract the fact that our understanding and prioritization of class struggle in individual nations has waned. Instead, Marx must be transcribed to infer that resolving class conflict relies solely on the action of the South towards

the North. Ecological collapse is an externality that international environmental agreements ineffectively address, because they fail to capture the integral class antagonisms. For one, ensuring that institutions and development groups are held accountable for environmental damage is a difficult and nuanced problem. Furthermore, there is a delicate balance between enforcing environmental protection and progressing with economic development. This essay will aim to refute the paradigm of environmental policy practices being innately progressive through the process of demystification. I have chosen to end this preamble with the thought-provoking words of John Bellamy Foster (1999) in "The Vulnerable Planet: A Short Economic History of the Environment":

"As long as prevailing social relations remain unquestioned, those who are concerned about what is happening are left with few visible avenues for environmental action other than purely personal commitments to recycling and green shopping, socially untenable choices between jobs and the environment, or broad appeals to corporations, political policy-makers, and the scientific establishment—the very interests most responsible for the current ecological mess" (p.12).

Analysis: Commodity Fetishism and Marxist Rhetoric in Environmental Policy

Through the lens of Marxist rhetoric, I aim to show that climate change policy strategies are shrouded by their unapologetic emphasis of commodity fetishism. Through this, they inhibit their ability to mitigate climate change, and will instead serve only to broaden the absolute class conflict of our time: the Global North-South divide.

Limitless growth is one of the foundations capitalist structures are built on. Current international environmental policy fails to oppose the capitalist ideal of infinite growth. This is exemplified best in the most recent global climate change policy event: the 2019 UN Climate Action Summit. Political leaders and climate change advocates pat each other on the back for their progressive action when in reality, the international policy decisions reached during this conference do not bode well for the fate of hu-

manity. The U.S., apex of consumer culture, did not speak (Beuret, 2019). China, one of the most significant contributors to climate change, did not change any goals from the Paris Accord of 2016 (Beuret, 2019). India, a nation on the verge of possession by consumerist culture (Beuret, 2019), decided on unrestrained coal use in the name of economic growth (Beuret, 2019). However, the transition from coal or oil to renewables is not of paramount concern to my argument. Instead, it is the fact that nowhere in the agreements is it considered to be of dire importance to change the behaviours and views that result in the global usage of this amount of energy and resources.

Marxist theory challenges reactionary approaches to global problems, which can provide analysis of these global institutions' decisions. In *The Communist Manifesto*, Marx (1847) asserts that the "lower middle class... fight against the bourgeoisie, to save from extinction their existence as fractions of the middle class... They are reactionary, for they try to roll back the wheel of history" (p.11). This "lower middle class", shifted to a global scale, should be interpreted to mean everyone from working classes to upper-middle classes of the Global North. They are in fact still Bourgeoisie in a global context, and came out in droves for the climate protests. This subset of the Bourgeoisie, which Marx (1847) refers to as the petite or socialist Bourgeoisie, is characterized as "fluctuating between proletariat and bourgeoisie, and ever renewing itself a supplementary part of bourgeois society" (p.23). We, the denizens of the Global North, remain fearful of being demoted to the proletariat that constitutes the South, and so we become lawyers and activists and advocates against the symptoms of the financial crisis of climate change: environmental degradation. Hence, the majority of the North petite bourgeoisie look towards action that is reactionary in nature to enforce their existence as bourgeoisie and reassert existing economic structures of power. This is visible in the results of the aforementioned international summit surrounding climate change. The Global North's petite Bourgeoisie attack the true bourgeoisie that comprise the global top 1% with climate change policy that imposes moderate restrictions on these owners of transnational organizations, all the while ensuring their own place in the North. The petite bourgeoisie generate climate action that requires minimal motion on their behalf to change the behaviours and culture that has ensued

in this sordid state of affairs. Therefore, despite society's tendencies to infer that environmental policy is progressive on the political spectrum, it is entirely reactionary in nature.

The shrouded content of the 2019 UN Climate Change Summit can be further unclocked through John Bellamy Foster's (2019) statement in "Absolute Capitalism", that "in absolute capitalism, absolute, abstract value dominates. In a system that focuses above all on financial wealth, exchange value is removed from any direct connection to use value. The inevitable result is a fundamental and rapidly growing rift between capitalist commodity society and the planet." This returns us to inquire into how we *conceptualize* the environment, as the summit discussions unfolded with a distinct perspective. The exchange value of environmental resources is at the forefront of negotiations. As a result, nations like India are spurred towards harmful coal use in pursuit of a capitalist commodity nation reminiscent of the North (Beuret, 2019). This conceptualization of the environment can be further analyzed by rerouting Marx's definition of the *lumpenproletariat*. The *lumpenproletariat* is the lowest strata of the proletariat; a class that does not contribute to the economy while still experiencing the bourgeoisie's exploitation (Marx, 1847). Through this lens, we can understand the objective commodification of nature in Marxist dialectic. Nature does not contribute to an economy in the form of labour, but is exploited nonetheless as a resource, and so, the natural environment can be understood as the *lumpenproletariat*. This assertion can be linked with the Marxist (1967) provision in *Capital* on commodity fetishism: that relations connecting the labour of individuals are "material relations between persons and social relations between things" (p.2) to conclude the alienation of man from nature. The consumer of the Global North does not see either the Global South or nature as deserving of the dignity in social relations, but instead perceives them as simply the producers of material goods. Retrofitting the term *lumpenproletariat* to indicate "environment" elucidates that there is no social relation between the individual producer and the environment. This means that the relationship between producers of the Global South have been degraded by capitalist economic structures such that the environment wanes in social value and exists only for material use. The material relation is grounded

within the physical interaction between the producer who extracts resources and the *lumpenproletariat* being exploited, while any intrinsic value comes from the North's manufacturing of goods with these raw resources. Therefore, labour value can be equated to the natural resources of the environment under this new age of neoliberalism, and this conceptualization of the environment is crucial moving forwards.

With regards to decreasing carbon emissions, the president of the World Resources Institute, Andrew Steer, has exclaimed that "most of the major economies fell woefully short of increasing their targets. Those who promise to achieve carbon neutrality by 2050 are unsure how to do it" (World Resources Institute, 2019). This calls for further inquisition into the social character of the strategies being used to meet these targets. There exist two prevalent strategies through which nations aim to meet these carbon targets. Namely, these are the implementation of a carbon tax or the introduction of a "cap and trade" program. The carbon tax is paid by businesses and industries that produce carbon dioxide through their operations (Van Beuren, 2014). The tax is designed to reduce the output of greenhouse gases and carbon dioxide with the goal of environmental stewardship as firms opt out of producing carbon dioxide in their transactions (Van Beuren, 2014). In juxtaposition, the "cap and trade" is an initiative wherein the government issues a limited number of annual permits that allow companies to emit a certain amount of carbon dioxide (Van Beuren, 2014). The allotted level of emissions is what is referred to as the "cap". Companies are taxed when they exceed the limits of their emissions, but companies that reduce their emissions can "trade" these unused permits to other companies (Van Beuren, 2014). One must admit, there is an astounding absurdity in the two established solutions to capitalist-induced climate change being *further* commodification — this time, of pollution. John Bellamy Foster (2019) describes this peculiar direction of policy when he writes in "Absolute Capitalism" that "the principal strategic aim of which is to embed the state in capitalist market relations." Given these strategies, it is apparent that institutions aim to maneuver the mitigation of climate change, so it operates within the neoliberal state, but this feat is ineffective in achieving the original goal.

Marx (1847) substantiates the problematic nature of "cap and trade" when he asserts that free

trade is a veiled political illusion for brutal exploitation. This affirms the notion that the existence of "cap and trade" is merely an attempt, veiled under the guise of progressive climate action, for further exploitation between those who can afford the emissions and those who cannot. The commodification of carbon dioxide attaches a social relation between the carbon dioxide emitted by industrial producers, because commodity fetishization turns the social relations between people into social relations between material goods. The social relations between manufacturers is no longer an interaction between people but can be boiled down to an exchange of carbon credits. Marx (1867) enforces this notion by proclaiming that "the mutual relations of the producers, within which the social character of their labour affirms itself, takes the form of a social relation between the products" (p.1). "Cap and trade" policies have undergone exactly what Marx described. Producers, in an environmental context, are unable to correctly value the labour of the Global South because "cap and trade" allows them to view this labour in the context of social relations between carbon credit exchange. Essentially, the "cap and trade" policies intend to assign material value between humanity and the exploited environment, and, in doing so, demolish the social relationship with the environment that is crucial to stewardship. Instead, the social character of the *lumpenproletariat*, or nature, is reduced to social value in the form of the carbon credit products that nature "labours" to create. The social relation between carbon emissions and capital becomes the defining relationship between man and nature through commodity fetishism.

Ascribing monetary sums to carbon emissions in the form of taxation is, as Marx (1867) states in *Capital*, a "value that converts every product into a social hieroglyphic" (p.3). Members of society are now coerced into discerning carbon dioxide emissions' value based on the labour's peculiar social character which produces these pollutants. The social character of labour is the conditions and perspective from which that labour is valued. The economic freedom to release carbon dioxide has been commodified, which is peculiar in that the labour which produces these pollutants is generally lucrative to the Bourgeoisie. As is, the carbon tax transforms carbon dioxide into a highly valued commodity that is inversely proportional to the well-being of the planet. This is indica-

tive of this policy's flawed conceptualization of the environment; however, it is valuable to note that assigning negative value to carbon emissions is the most effective method of coaxing a sustainable relationship with the environment while the world is locked in neoliberal economic structures. Unfortunately, both the freedom to emit carbon dioxide and produce industrial goods are commodified in this system. Thus, it fetishizes nature and creates opportunity for exploitation.

Again, we must adjust Marxist rhetoric to unmask the preconceived notions that exist within the current economic climate. Marx (1867) asserts in *Capital* that "exchange value is a definite social manner of expressing the amount of labour bestowed upon an object, nature has no more to do with it" (p.6). Marx means to convey that the exchange of labour in producing a material good has socially constructed value that ignores the role in which nature plays as a supplier of natural resources. This assertion is clearly flawed given that nature plays the role of the *lumpenproletariat* in the current ecological crisis. As such, nature partakes in labour to produce natural resources, which warrants consideration of its exchange value. Through the carbon tax or "cap and trade" implementations, the environment is able to acquire social value. However, subsequently, nature is exploited under the guise of the environment being "paid back" for industrial damage in the form of taxes or imposed value in the form of carbon credits, which firms can transfer between each other. In reality, the social value placed on nature in the form of carbon taxes or "cap and trade" policies is an example of how commodity fetishization is utilized to further alienate mankind from the environment.

To truly decloak contemporary climate change policy, we must comprehend the economic role that such policy plays in stunting the Global South's development, thereby deepening the despotic dynamic between North and South. This suppression is the systematic failure of seemingly progressive policies to promote climate change mitigation. These policies are manifestations of this very class antagonism, because they do little to address the inequalities encoded within. Perhaps one of the most apt statements Marx (1847) unwittingly made regarding the modern class conflict was that "the socialist bourgeois want all the advantages of modern social conditions without the struggles and dangers necessarily

resulting therefrom" (p.27). The petite Bourgeois of the North crave endless variety in consumption — food, technology, fashion, etc. — while simultaneously dealing with the climate crisis through protests, metal straws, and poorly-adhered-to policy changes. Marx (1847) explains how the Bourgeois gets past these crises as such: "on the one hand, by enforced destruction of a mass of productive forces; on the other, by the conquest of new markets, and by the more thorough exploitation of the old ones" (p.8). The Global North is already conducting a methodical razing of nature, but to progress through the crisis of climate change unscathed requires further exploitation of the South. The commodity fetishism encoded in carbon emission policies shifts the focus of climate change resolution towards the arbitrary effort to lower these emissions, because, as previously established, carbon dioxide has been assigned tangible social value. This fetishization remains implicit in the current proposed strategies for mitigation, which do not call for fair trade of natural resources or tangible decreases of consumption, and in doing so, serve only to further pauperize the South.

While current climate change strategies have focused on limiting further carbon emissions, there is little being done to address the fact that natural resources, most of which are imported from the Global South, are underpriced due to their assumption of infinite availability (Van Beuren, 2014). These natural resources are the very substances being used to manufacture the products that contribute between 60-80% to global climate change (Jacobs, 2016). This is what the ecologist Garrett Hardin, in 1968, coined as the "tragedy of the commons". The North has no qualms with excessively extracting resources and maintaining minimal awareness for the suffering that occurs when this unprecedented consumption reaches its limit in the South. Underpricing resources to urge infinite consumption in the North has been achieved by utilizing the low costs of labour that occur within the very supply chains that fetter the Global South's developing economies (Foster, 2019). These relations' transfiguration is exemplified by Marx (1867) when he states that "the equalization of most different kinds of labour can be only the result of an abstraction from their inequalities" (p.2). The statement can be interpreted to mean that commodity fetishization of carbon emissions permits the different social character of labour between the natural environment and

citizens of the Global South. The difference in social character is clearly reflected in the environmental policy which assigns significant capital value to carbon emissions while ignoring citizens of the Global South to be exploited. The commodity fetishism rooted in how firms perceive carbon dioxide provides the economic structure to equate carbon output from the South to the vast emissions made by the North.

In this essay, the process of demystification occurred through a novel application of Marx's concept of "commodity fetishism" to convey the manner in which environmental policy fails to address the social relations of production. Initially, this paper

retrofitted Marxist terminology for modern interpretation in the context of environmental issues. The concept of commodity fetishization was then applied in tandem with contemporary Marxist terms to outline the rapidly changing social relationship between man and nature as a result of environmental policy. Afterwards, popular environmental policy was deconstructed by working through and with Marxist dialectic to provide a platform on which to condemn the manner that the capitalist structures embedded in these strategies intensify the divide between Global North and South.

AUTHOR BIOGRAPHY

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The Sustainability Crisis of Deathstyles: A Specific Look at Ontario

Adan Amer

ON January 1st of 2020, a new Vancouver by-law will allow customers of Mountain View Cemetery to share burial rights with complete strangers (Pauls, 2019). In other words, a grave site may be shared among non-family members, or people who may not even know each other. This change in legislation occurs in the wake of a land scarcity crisis. Due to an ageing population and limited resources, cemeteries are filling up, especially Mountain View, the only cemetery in Vancouver. Despite efforts to expand the property multiple times, the manager at Mountain View expects the cemetery to reach full capacity in five years. This is a result of gravesites being sold in perpetuity. Normally in Canada, individuals or families can buy rights to a gravesite “forever”, such that the provider cannot resell the site once it was purchased. However, Mountain View is one of the only cemeteries in Canada that allows graves to be reused for additional family members, albeit after a duration of 40 years. The practice of grave-sharing and reuse is advertised as both environmentally sustainable and economically friendly as a result of being less resource intensive. Despite these benefits, unconventional funeral practices still cause a level of unrest for the public. On the other hand, cremation is another option for reducing land-use which is widely accepted. In fact, the Cremation Association of North America (2019) estimates that 77% of Canadians will opt for cremation by 2023. However, a crematorium in Ontario was recently exposed for producing emissions that contained harmful pollutants (Environmental Registry of Ontario, 2019). These pollutants include particulate matter, polycyclic hydrocarbons, dioxins and furans. The effects

of these chemicals range from respiratory aggravation and increased risk of lung cancer, to the acidification of lakes and damages to forests (World Health Organization, 2013; Environmental Protection Agency, 2018).

These stories are instances of a bigger problem at hand: the issue of sustainability in the funeral and cremation industry. With an estimated seven million Canadians expected to die in the next 25 years, it is increasingly important to look at viable deathstyles which can sustain themselves (Pauls, 2019). The term “deathstyle” in this case refers to the way a person wants their body to be treated after their death, or “the ways in which we perform practices around death” (Christensen & Gotved, 2015, p. 5). In Ontario, the political instrument that governs funerary practices is the Funeral, Burial and Cremation Services Act (FBCSA) which regulates cemeteries, funeral establishments, and crematoriums, as well as outlines consumers’ rights regarding these services. The Bereavement Authority of Ontario (BAO) controls provisions for the FBCSA on behalf of the Ministry of Government and Consumer Services (BAO, 2019, p. 3). Interestingly, there is no standard set of by-laws that governs all bereavement services in Ontario. Instead, operators of cemeteries or crematoriums must create their own set of by-laws that comply with the FBCSA (BAO, 2017).

Given this information, we come to the topic of inquiry: what does this sustainability crisis entail for Canadians, particularly those in Ontario? What are some viable options for sustainable deathstyles, and do current policies accommodate or obstruct them? Aside from politics, what other barriers are in place

that could resist a transition towards these new funerary practices? Finally, how can we approach the regulation of these deathstyles given the significance they hold to people? To answer these questions, this paper will delve into the topics of funerary practices and social sciences by taking a look at the relevant literature surrounding sustainable death practices such as green burials, alkaline hydrolysis, and scattering. Current policies from the FBCSA and BAO will also be analyzed to see if they can accommodate these practices. The first section will review the conventional forms of burials, its alternatives, potential risks that need to be considered, and how current Ontario policies assess these alternatives and risks. The second section will do the same but with respect to conventional forms of cremation. The third section will be dedicated to addressing the social barriers to these deathstyles, particularly people's attitudes towards the dead and the resulting grieving process. In the final section, we will consider any tangible changes that could be made to current Ontario regulations such that they accommodate or promote sustainable death practices.

Burials in perpetuity, potential alternatives, and their risks

As mentioned in the Vancouver case, traditional casket burials have become increasingly burdensome due to land scarcity. This issue isn't local to Canada either. The competition for land between the living and the dead happens all over the world, from England (Woodthorpe, 2011), to Hong Kong (Hernandez, 2015), Singapore and Namibia (Kong, 2012). This makes sense since the earth has limited resources, land being one of them, yet burial rights are sold in perpetuity. Alternatives to the casket burial include grave-sharing, grave reuse and green (natural burials). While there isn't much information on the procedure of grave-sharing for Mountain View Cemetery, Rugg and Holland (2017) offer their own take: "graves contain more than one body, with coffins located one above the other, separated by six inches of earth between each, and at least two feet of earth above the final interment" (p. 2). After a sufficient amount of time, when the remains have reached an advanced state of decomposition, the grave can be reused (p. 2). On the topic of reuse, the practice is more common in European countries (Rugg

& Holland, 2017, p. 2), along with Australia and New Zealand (Coutts, Basmajian, Sehee, Kelty, & Williams, 2018, p. 130). Essentially the premise is that graves can be reused indefinitely given that the remains have sufficiently reduced in size. Lastly, green burials (or natural burials) encompass a wide array of burial styles with the main characteristics being that the body is not embalmed and it must be buried in a biodegradable casket, container, or shroud with no vault (Coutts et al., 2018, p. 131). Green burials are often advertised as a new form of green spaces, with a plethora of environmental benefits: microclimate regulation, solar radiation protection, wind-speed alterations, increased pollination, and support bioindicator species like lichens (Quinton & Duinker, 2019, p. 257).

Despite the benefits of these burial forms in reducing land use, there are substantial public health risks associated with the interment itself. According to Oliveira et al. (2013), parameters such as interment depth, geological formation, water table depth, interment density, soil type and climate must be considered when assessing the pollution potential for burials (p. 99). If these factors are not taken into account, the decomposing remains could result in a saline contamination cloud that slowly spreads throughout the cemetery and potentially spread waterborne diseases through direct or indirect contact with contaminated water or disease vectors (p. 103). While these risks also exist for traditional burials, the coffin slows down the dispersion of the cloud (p. 101). Moreover, the act of burying the remains also contributes to this risk because shovelling and backfilling increases the soil's porosity and permeability and disrupts the diffusion of gas and water. This favours the accumulation of water and air near the grave, which consequently encourages the saline plume (p. 101).

Formaldehyde from the embalment of corpses also poses health and environmental risks (p. 104), yet neither the FBCSA, nor the BAO, hold restrictions on the preparation of embalming fluids or the permissible amount for each corpse. These risks are relevant to the proposed burial alternatives for two reasons. First, the reuse of graves ensures numerous excavations, burials and backfilling which would cause the accumulation of water. Secondly, both the theoretical (Rugg & Holland, 2017) and practical (Pauls, 2019) cases for grave-sharing fail to mention the presence or absence of embalment. This

could mean that a large amount of toxic fluids would be present in a smaller volume of space, leading to environmental degradation at a worse rate if the entire cemetery has this layout. This is especially concerning since the Vancouver case mentions the use of shrouds instead of containers, so there is less of a barrier between the body and any groundwater that could percolate.

A review of current Ontario legislation was done in the hopes that some of these laws could prevent such catastrophes. Indeed, the BAO states that neither embalming, nor caskets, are required by law (BAO, 2019, p. 11). The FBCSA also states that cemetery operators should ensure that the cemetery has a proper drainage system (O. Reg. 30/11, s. 157). However, the other policies in place either obstruct some of these alternative deathstyles, or they ignore the risks associated with the ones that are currently allowed. For instance, the FBCSA states that no one can disinter any human remains unless they had prior consent from the interment rights holder, or prior notification was given to a medical officer (O. Reg. 30/11, s. 162 (3)). This challenges the reuse of graves because the interment rights holder could be a family member who opposes this practice, or they could be unable to give consent (for example, if they are already deceased); and inquiring about the disinterment with a medical officer could be burdensome if the request for reuse is frequent. On the other hand, the issue of water pollution for natural or shared burials is not acknowledged in the FBCSA, or by the BAO. In Canada, cemeteries or natural burials can acquire certification from the Green Burial Society of Canada (GBSC). The requirements for a certification includes the absence of embalment or vaults; the use of a biodegradable container, casket or shroud; a maximum depth of 1.2 m; and the omission of pesticides, herbicides, non-organic fertilizers, and irrigation systems (GBSC, p. 3). Yet, there is no restriction on the location or land type of a burial, which means that a green burial could be placed near or within a sensitive habitat, and potentially lead to groundwater pollution.

Cremation, columbaria, potential alternatives, and risks

Although the practice of cremation solves the issue of land scarcity via the physical reduction of human re-

mains, the combustion of carbon-based materials contributes directly to air pollution (Coutts et al., 2018, p. 131). The pollutants resulting from this combustion, along with other trace elements, includes: nitrogen oxides (NO_x), carbon monoxide (CO), sulfur dioxide (SO_2), particulate matter (PM), heavy metals, dioxins, and volatile organic compounds (VOCs) (Coutts et al., 2018; Mari & Domingo, 2010; Xue et al., 2018). Dioxins and heavy metals raise particular concern because of their toxicity and ability to bioaccumulate in the fatty tissue of organisms (Mari & Domingo, 2010, p. 131). Additionally, if the height of the chimney is low, which is usually the case, the pollutants disperse closer to the ground, which further increases the risk of these chemicals entering the food chain or sensitive habitats (Xue et al., 2018, p. 2).

Fortunately, there are some manufacturing changes and cremation alternatives that can reduce these risks. First, the use of a flue gas post-treatment system can reduce the concentrations of PM, CO, SO_2 , and VOCs by 97.6, 19.6, 85.2 and 70.7% respectively (p. 1). Furthermore, the emission of dioxins can be reduced by keeping the temperature of the main chamber at 800°C and lowering the temperature of the dust collector (Mari & Domingo, 2010, p. 134). Next, an alternative which does not require the use of combustion is alkaline hydrolysis. This is a process of dissolving the dead body through a mixture of water and potassium hydroxide, along with heat and pressure, which reduces the body to fluid and bone fragments. The fluid can be recycled at a wastewater treatment facility or be used as agricultural fertilizer, while the bones can be dried and reduced to ‘ashes’, and be given to the family (Rumble, Troyer, Walter, & Woodthorpe, 2014, p. 249). This process is less resource intensive compared to cremation (Keijzer & Kok, 2011, p. 34).

However, there is a caveat with these cremation options. The storage of ashes in columbaria, niches, or burials establishes its own scarcity issue. In fact, Hong Kong has been experiencing this problem for a while as columbaria have become crowded, and private niches exceed \$16 000 CAD in price (Hernandez, 2015, p. 1). This is an extreme example due to Hong Kong’s high population density, and it may be less likely to occur in Ontario, but the assessment of viable deathstyles should involve the consideration of their long-term impacts. Indeed, the storage of

cremated remains, as opposed to intact bodies, only delays the point where we reach capacity (Coutts et al., 2018, p. 134). As a result, the scarcity issue that plagued cemeteries has reached the cremation industry. Thus, further measures must exist to reduce the space taken up by the dead. Scattering cremated remains or transforming them into condensed states are possible solutions. Governments in Hong Kong, and throughout China, have established campaigns to promote the scattering of ashes, either in the sea, on parkland, or on designated scattering grounds (Kong, 2012, p. 418). If families do not want to disperse their loved one's remains, they can have it condensed into forms that are easier to locate. For example, reef ball interment involves the mixing of cremated remains into a concrete form that can be placed on the sea floor; the purpose of these balls is to mimic reef formation and provide a habitat for coral and other wildlife (Nations, Baker, & Krszjanek, 2017, p. 406). The potential risks to consider with these options is mainly the effect of large amounts of cremated remains on water quality (Dwivedi, Mishra, & Tripathi, 2018).

Similar to burial alternatives, the relevant policies acknowledge some of the sustainable alternatives to cremation, while also restricting others. The BAO acknowledges the practice of alkaline hydrolysis and scattering in its consumer guidebook (BAO, 2019, p. 13). Moreover, it states that cremated remains can be scattered on private property with written consent from the landowner, or on unoccupied Crown lands and water if there are no signs prohibiting it (p. 12). However, there are no regulations for the emissions or resource consumption of crematoriums in the FBCSA, despite the fact that the purpose of the Act is to regulate the operations of these facilities. In fact, emissions seem to be dealt with on a case-by-case basis through the Ministry of Environment, Conservation and Parks. While this is still better than nothing, it seems counter-intuitive for the FBCSA to not have regulations on all the operations of a crematorium, especially for a significant operation such as the disposal of waste gases.

Social Barriers

The ways in which we treat the dead has immense social implications, both religious and non-religious. For religions such as Hinduism and Buddhism, cremation holds great cosmological and eschatological sig-

nificance (Hadders, 2018). On the other hand, burials are required for those in the Islamic and Jewish community (Pauls, 2018). So, it is apparent that there would be resistance when pushing certain deathstyles that are counter to these communities' beliefs. Meanwhile, the non-religious barriers that hinder the acceptance of unconventional deathstyles include attitudes towards the dead, and components of the grieving process. To start, people's attitude toward the dead and reverence for their ancestors is a strong factor as to why they may be opposed to unconventional funeral practices. This concern for the deceased is shown through regular interactions between the living and a fresh corpse: the face of a body is covered immediately after an accident, corpses are not displayed in an undignified manner (such as being undressed or posed inappropriately), and efforts are made to divert public gaze from the dead body of identifiable individuals (Rugg & Holland, 2017, p. 8). These attitudes could stem from the desire to let the dead 'rest in peace' by leaving them undisturbed (p. 4). This inherently establishes a notion of sentience for the dead, which promotes a moral obligation to take care of their remains (p. 9). This may explain the sense of discomfort regarding grave-sharing and grave reuse, as the former disrupts the notion of peace and isolation, while the latter involves directly disturbing the resting place of the deceased. In addition, this perceived sentience delays the grieving process because the bereaved continue to attach an identity to the corpse. For Nations et al. (2017), detaching the two is the first step in the consolation process. For some people, this step requires the person to say goodbye to the actual body (p. 409). This may explain sentiments in favour of embalming since this prolongs the state in which the bereaved can identify and interact with their loved ones. Another phase of consolation is the transfer of the deceased's identity from the body to a tangible substitute (p. 410). As the body decomposes, it becomes unidentifiable and almost inauthentic. As a means of avoiding this inauthenticity, people partake in rituals that bridge the manifestation of their loved ones to tangible objects, such as photos, possessions, cremated remains, and gravesites (p. 414). These objects become the new target of sentiments with the additional benefit of appearing timeless, unlike living beings. The act of anchoring a loved one's identity to ashes and gravesites may explain why people do not support grave-sharing, grave

reuse, green burials, or scattering. A shared gravesite would need a memorial that contains multiple names, which may alter the authenticity attached to it by the bereaved. The purpose of one permanent memorial is made redundant in the case of grave reuse, which removes the perception of its timelessness. The absence of large, identifiable borders and memorials in green burials makes it harder for people to attach meaning to the gravesite. Finally, the dispersal of remains through scattering and sea burials removes the ability to locate and care for the remains to the same degree as urns and columbaria. Overall, the ways in which we think about death and our deceased loved ones influences our support for some funerary practices and our rejection of others.

Possible steps towards sustainable deathstyles in Ontario

In the end, what does this issue mean for Ontario? What is a pragmatic approach to regulating deathstyles in the face of a sustainability crisis? This paper proposes two plans. First, changes should be made to the FBCSA to accommodate funerary practices that are eco-friendly, while restricting those which are harmful. This means following the steps taken in Vancouver to allow grave-sharing and reuse with a shorter buffering period. The Act should also include mandatory land assessments for any potential burials to avoid sensitive habitats. Likewise, the GBSC should include this requirement in its certification process. Furthermore, through the FBCSA and BAO, crematoriums should be required to meet emission standards, as well as install post-treatment systems. Secondly, consumer rights practices should adapt to these new processes as a means of quelling fears or unrest that may arise. This means that the BAO should take extra precautions to ensure that

consent is received from those who want to partake in the practice; while also assuring those who oppose it that their (or their loved one's) remains will be undisturbed.

Conclusion

In conclusion, funerary practices are not free from the grasps of sustainability discourse. In fact, the inevitability of death, along with an ageing population, should prompt immediate concern for sustainable deathstyles. Given the significance of funerary practices to society, especially for certain religious groups, it would be problematic to suggest a best option overall. There are countless options available as alternatives to the conventional casket burial and cremation, only a few of them have been mentioned in this paper. For those who want to be interred, a properly maintained green burial site or grave-reusing service would be ideal, as long as the site is located away from any sources of drinking water. A memorial wall may help the bereaved in anchoring their loved ones to a site. With regards to cremation, alkaline hydrolysis appears to be the most environmentally friendly option. The loved ones of the deceased should have jurisdiction over the use of the ashes. However, the most sustainable uses in the long-term are scattering grounds and reef balls as long as they also do not affect sources of drinking water. Regardless, current political instruments and social barriers hinder the possibility of adopting these new practices. It is beyond the scope of this paper to address all of these barriers and posit solutions. Nonetheless, increasing public awareness about this issue, showcasing possible alternatives, and pushing revisions for the FBCSA all serve as potential starting points for tackling this sustainability crisis in Ontario.

AUTHOR BIOGRAPHY

Adan is a student at McMaster University. She is entering her fourth year of a Combined Honours in Arts & Science and Mathematics. She wrote her paper for an Environmental Policy Inquiry course. The motivation behind the paper was to open sustainability discourse to unconventional topics such as death practices.

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The Letting Die of the South Asian Body: a Foucauldian Analysis of White Hegemony in Western Cardiovascular Medicine

Rishi Bansal

THE term “cardiovascular disease” (CVD) refers to a specific and particularly devastating group of diseases that affect the heart and its blood vessels, including coronary heart disease (CHD) and heart failure (HF) (Public Health Agency of Canada). It is the second leading cause of deaths in Canada, and claimed over 51,000 lives in 2016 (Statistics Canada). However, not all ethnic groups are proportionately represented among those with CVD. South Asians (i.e. people from India, Pakistan, Nepal, Sri Lanka, and Bangladesh) have both higher prevalence and higher incidence than other groups (Rana et al. E189).

Navdeep Singh Bedi is an active father of two young children. He does not drink or smoke, is not overweight, and has no apparent family history of CVD. For the average person, these factors would indicate no particular risk of a myocardial infarction (MI) or CHD. Yet in 2009, at age 35, Bedi underwent a double bypass surgery to clear blockage from his coronary arteries. Despite presenting symptoms like shortness of breath, physicians only suspected CHD after multiple visits. Only Bedi’s South Asian (SA) ancestry could have tipped them off earlier (Weeks). What is alarming is that Bedi is not alone. There have been numerous cases worldwide that sound eerily similar (Razak and Fernando; O’Connor). In each case doctors were ignorant of the SA CVD risk profile and continuously failed to recognize the signs of CHD until it was almost too late. It is important to clarify that, as Foucault mentions in his *Lectures at the Collège de France*, the

treatment that SAs face is not necessarily due to malicious intent; rather, any observed effects are simply the outcomes of the relationship of power structures to their object (Foucault 28). In this paper, I use a Foucauldian analysis to argue that Bedi’s story illustrates a much larger trend: disciplinary and regulatory mechanisms in medical practice, guidelines, and funding normalize the Caucasian body as ‘the body’ in Western medical best practices. Individuals and institutions are bound by discursive webs of power that are often unnoticed by the subjects who perpetuate them (Razack et al.). A Foucauldian analysis renders these power relations visible, thereby exposing the norms that make live certain populations while others are let die.

Examining the SA population through a Foucauldian lens begins with the empirical mapping of histories (Foucault 66), which in this case is the heightened CVD risk faced by SAs. The mechanisms of disciplinary power, used to enforce social cohesion through surveillance (33), are made manifest by examining power in its most dilute and regional institutions (27). In each instance, the State fashions itself a series of norms that codifies and stratifies society, making subgroups like SAs legible to power (255). These norms are enacted by doctors and included in guidelines, shored up through claims of “scientificity,” subjugating other knowledges that vary from the norm (7-8). In examining how this ‘science of subjugation’ is funded, the biopolitical control of populations is made apparent through the racist dialogue that thrums beneath the veneer of an “equal” soci-

ety (245). Thus, the presupposition of the Caucasian body as the norm in medical best practices “makes live” whiteness and “lets die” South Asian populations.

This essay is limited by the scarcity of Canadian-focused primary research in South Asian populations. This, in and of itself, is a mark of the indifference of the State toward SAs. As a result, it is necessary to use American research to supplement Canadian literature. Therefore, it is also important to mention the similarities and differences between Canadian and American SA populations. One important similarity is that, regardless of location, the physiology of SAs is unlikely to change based on geography (Anand). Key among the differences is the contrasting policies concerning cultural identity: Canada has a multicultural ‘mosaic’ policy approach, while the U.S. has an assimilation-based ‘Melting Pot’ perspective (Peach 7-8). These differences in policy surrounding cultural practices may affect any discussion of topics that are culturally specific, including the cultural sensitivity in treatment plans and patient-physician interactions.

As Foucault does in his lectures, this essay must first empirically map the relations of subjugation; in doing so, the ways in which SAs are manufactured and constituted by their relationship to power comes to light (45). The 2017 Canadian Cardiovascular Society HF guideline outlined many risk factors of CVD including: diabetes, obesity, dyslipidemia, diet, and sedentary behavior (Ezekowitz et al. 1344). Though there is a scarcity of large-scale randomized clinical trials (RCTs) and data pertaining to SAs (Fernando et al. 1139), recent publications have begun to outline the specific physiological ways in which the SA population is particularly susceptible to CVD (Rana et al. E183). The “thrifty gene” hypothesis is a popular genetic theory to explain elevated SA CVD risk; however, research to date is inconclusive regarding broad genetic patterns that might suggest a hereditary predisposition to disease (1144). That being said, most of the increased CVD burden in SAs can be explained by elevated traditional risk factors: and though they are not shored up by genetics, there are still crucially important differences between SAs and other groups. One major risk factor that is highly prevalent within SAs is type 2 diabetes mellitus (T2DM). Patients with T2DM have been shown to have a 2 to 3 times higher risk of cardiovascular death (Volgman et al.

e6). Not only do SAs have a 2 to 5-fold higher prevalence of T2DM than Caucasians or other ethnicities (e6; Fernando et al. 1142), but they also receive diagnoses up to 10 years earlier (Lau 102). This evidence was corroborated in a longitudinal study conducted between 2001 and 2012 in Ontario, Canada (Chiu et al. 2), and was paralleled in South Asian immigrants to Canada (Banerjee and Shah 2).

T2DM is also related to metabolic syndrome (MetS), which is a cluster of insulin resistance-linked factors including obesity and dyslipidemia. Obesity is usually measured using Body Mass Index (BMI), with a diagnostic cutoff of $\geq 25\text{kg}/\text{m}^2$ (Araneta et al. 814). However, this cutoff is inappropriate for SA populations, who have been shown to develop risk factors and metabolic abnormalities at BMIs as low as $21.0\text{kg}/\text{m}^2$, which compares to a BMI of $30\text{kg}/\text{m}^2$ in Caucasians. (Fernando et al. 1143). Furthermore, due to higher body fat percentages and abdominal fat retention, the association between BMI and CVD risk could be underestimated (Volgman et al. e6; Fernando et al. 1143). Thus, current screening standards for BMI both overlook many at-risk SA patients and underestimate CVD risk at each BMI level. Dyslipidemia is another important risk factor, characterized by abnormal cholesterol and triglyceride levels in the blood (Volgman et al. e7). SAs have consistently been shown to have low high-density lipoprotein (HDL) cholesterol, elevated low-density lipoprotein (LDL) cholesterol, hypertriglyceridemia (higher concentration of blood triglycerides), all of which could be pathophysiologically linked with insulin resistance and MetS (Fernando et al. 1143).

Finally, two modifiable, but important, risk factors in SAs are diet and sedentary behaviour. The SA diet is typically higher in carbohydrates and saturated fats, which are both associated with higher risk of dyslipidemia (Rana et al. E183). SAs are also less active than other groups (E183). This could account for up to 20% of the excess CHD risk in SAs, potentially through heightened risk for obesity and T2DM (Fernando et al. 1144). Ultimately, medical research to date has provided strong evidence to support a unique CVD risk profile for SAs. This suggests that ‘equal’ treatment of all ethnic groups may not be equitable, and providing the same drug and lifestyle interventions may actually cause harm. It is clear that in order for the SA body to live and thrive, the development of patient-focused and culturally sensi-

tive interventions is necessary.

An ascending Foucauldian analysis of power begins in the capillaries. By examining power in its “most regional forms and institutions,” it is possible to discern where broader power intervenes in the lives of citizens (Foucault 27). In these regional institutions, power is expressed through “mechanisms of disciplinary coercion,” exercised through “constant surveillance” that enforces the cohesion of the social body (37; 33). To clarify, the executors of power are not interested in the objects of their subjugation, but rather in the mechanisms of exclusion and any economic or political profit reaped thereof (33). These mechanisms set up the precondition of racism and differential treatment that “makes killing acceptable” (256). In medicine, the most capillary institutions of power are the clinics, where patients, primary care physicians, and specialists interact daily. In these spaces, doctors are the conduits for disciplinary power, and individuals are subject to intense scrutiny. Using medicalized knowledge to connect symptoms to disease states, doctors constitute their patients by their deviation from the mean “healthy body.” In an effort to “rehabilitate” the body back towards the norm of productivity, they assign treatments to resolve these variances (33). However, patients are also constituted by each other—physician interactions with Caucasian patients provide them with a ‘baseline’ against which they can compare their ethnic patients (Johnson et al. 263). Hence, through othering narratives and implicit bias, SA patients are further constituted not by their identity as an individual patient, but through their differences from Caucasian patients (263).

In a study done on care providers’ discussions about SA patients, these narratives were glaringly apparent and highly prevalent across providers (Johnson et al. 259). The racist practices were “radically heterogeneous” in their execution (Foucault 26), but commonly utilized language that distinguished “them [South Asians]” from “us [Caucasians],” and enabled the separation of SAs as a group (Johnson et al. 259; 263). For example, clinicians made particular reference to Caucasians as the compliant “idealized patient” who fit their clinical expectations (263), and made condescending and racialized assumptions about their non-ideal (i.e. SA) patients (264). These prejudices can lead to very real actions: providers have been shown to spend more time learning about

the needs of Caucasian patients while ethnic minorities are pushed aside (Hall et al. e61). Worse, the ignorance of physicians regarding the unique SA CVD risk profile puts patients at risk and diverts them from care: physician use of BMI in SA risk assessment means that some patients are overlooked (Araneta et al. 814); implicit biases result in lower cardiac rehabilitation recommendation rates (Mochari et al. 10); and the lack of culturally sensitive cardiac rehabilitation programs present a barrier to SA access and adherence to treatment (Banerjee et al. 215-16). As a direct result, the Caucasian population reaps the “economic profit” produced by these disciplinary mechanisms (Foucault 33). Not only do they receive more comprehensive treatment (as a function of increased facetime), but in a health system that is resource-strapped, every time a SA is diverted from care, those resources are necessarily given to another. In this way, the healthcare system also has a racist effect in that it has determined that Caucasian bodies are to be made live and South Asian bodies are to be let die. This serves to “justif[y] the death-function” of biopower—it appeals to the principle that, given finite resources, the death of SA patients means better prospects for others (258).

While disciplinary power operates on the level of man-as-body, other power mechanisms are needed to control the general population (Foucault 242). This new phenomenon, “biopower,” introduced mechanisms, including forecasts and statistics, that controlled the biological processes of man-as-species rather than identifying and modifying individuals (247). These functions intervened at the broadest level to influence the generality of population statistics by promoting certain norms of bodily conduct (246). Importantly, they attempted to establish an “average” for the population, compensating for the natural variation within the State in order to “optimize a state of life” and achieve social control (246). Thus, these functions make claims to universality while they are, in fact, particular (65). Yet, these claims to generality are the main expression of power, shored up through claims to scientificity (7). Medicine, in particular, has a stake in proclaiming its “scientificity,” casting aside other knowledges that do not fit the norm through so-called ‘justified principles’ (7). The localized knowledge of the patient or the doctor are dismissed as “insufficiently elaborated” and become subjugated (8). The life of

medicine as a discipline is in claiming these generalities, and moreover, claiming their application *to* localized instances. Medical school trains doctors in these medical generalizations; clinical practice guidelines (CPGs) provide ‘gold standard’ and ‘evidence-based’ generalized recommendations for practitioners (Canadian Cardiovascular Society).

Despite established risk factors, there is a paucity of SA-specific recommendations in Canadian heart CPGs. The guidelines for ischemic heart disease, systematizing inpatient referrals to cardiac rehabilitation, and pulmonary arterial hypertension make no mention of any differences for SA populations (Mancini et al.; Grace et al.; Langleben et al.). The 2016 update for lipid CPGs include a consideration for earlier screening in SAs, though the recommended screening methods are “not validated for South Asian[s],” (Anderson et al. 1266; 1265). These findings are startling, especially considering the wealth of recent reviews and studies that support a distinct SA risk profile. An explanation can be found by examining the evidence that CPGs are founded on. CPGs are themselves robust reviews of the literature and provide recommendations with varying degrees of confidence (Canadian Cardiovascular Society). The gold standard sources of evidence for strong recommendations are large, multi-center RCTs. However, as previously indicated, there is a lack of large-scale RCTs for SA populations (Fernando et al. 1139). As a result, findings from smaller studies become subjugated, as they do not provide high enough quality evidence; they are “below the required level of erudition” (Foucault 6). This dearth can be partially explained due to a lack of funding. RCTs are expensive to run, and researchers rely on government grants for capital—it is here where racism intervenes. In choosing what research is to be provided with a grant, government agencies determine which bodies are worth studying, creating caesuras among the biological continuum (255). This is how the medicalized “letting die” of SAs begins, with the relative indifference of the medical field to the increased CVD burden in SAs.

A U.S.-based article documented systemic racism in healthcare, showing that powerful decision-makers have historically been white, a pattern that persists today (Feagin and Bennefield 8). Research-funding institutions are racialized and largely white-oriented; as a direct result, research efforts to investigate health

disparities are largely underfunded (9). These trends are also highly prevalent in Canada. For example, Dr. Sonia Anand is a world-renowned researcher in Ethnic Diversity and CVD. Yet when she began her research more than 20 years ago, it took multiple grant applications to receive funding to study CVD in SAs. At the time, the government agency peer review committee was hesitant to provide funding to research SAs, who were deemed to be “not as important” as other research in mainstream Canadians (Anand). In other words, the agency was unwilling to fund research for non-white bodies.

Though there have been recent efforts to document the CVD burden in SAs (e.g. the MASALA study), these RCTs are still in their infancy and are located in the U.S. (Volgman et al. e5). Hence, guidelines are forced to utilize previously published RCTs, where South Asians are underrepresented among study cohorts (Quay et al. 1). It is important to note that some of the relevant barriers included cultural insensitivity, a lack of effort on the behalf of researchers to recruit diverse cohorts, and researcher bias (8). A UK study noted that affable patients are often “cherry picked,” for research (Hussain-Gambles et al. 157). Most often, these “idealized patients” are also Caucasian (Johnson et al. 263; Anand). While this study was conducted in the UK, it is likely that these attitudes are also present in Canada (Anand). Hence, CPGs based on these RCTs act much like the unjust kings of Roman history: they are partisan, but they speak as if they are not (Foucault 72). The recommendations do not, in fact, apply to all populations, for they are based on research conducted upon the white man’s body. Recently, efforts have been made to rectify this issue and improve diversity in both cardiovascular clinical trials and medicine as a whole (Ortega et al.). Yet underrepresentation of people of color, women, and other traditionally marginalized groups remains a persistent issue (Grumbach and Mendoza). These efforts are necessary, and must be intensified to achieve better diversity in the future, but there is significant work that remains before we achieve that goal. Fundamentally, biopower has intervened on the level of population dynamics, and has contributed to the creation of a normalized society, which is the “precondition” to the letting die of those outside the norm (Foucault 256). In this way, the ‘white body’ became ‘the body’ in medical practice, and the roots

of these generalities have long since been forgotten.

It is also important to comment on how this essay fits into a much broader context. Examining these power relations and making their effects legible is, in itself, a form of race struggle. Consequently, this essay also contains a counterhistorical function (Foucault 66). In this essay, I have attempted to act as a historian and cartographer, mapping the rituals of power and how SAs are constituted by power (67). This essay delineates the race struggle against white hegemony in medicine, situated in a counterhistory that was long-hidden in the “darkness and silence” of subjugation (70). However, this essay is not only a documentation or critique—it is also an “attack” on power, and a “demand” (73). Within this essay is a call to recognize the increased CVD burden in SAs, and moreover, a call for a healthcare system that is better equipped to treat the SA population. Finally, it is important to recognize that while this essay is specific to SAs, the medicalized letting die of bodies is not. The biopolitical mechanisms in society may operate in similar fashion for other groups, such as those defined by the isms (e.g. women, indigenous peoples). Moreover, many members of the SA population may possess intersectional identities that contribute to unique forms of discrimination beyond those documented in this essay. While this essay was limited in scope to the ethnic identity of SAs, these other aspects of identity are equally important. These groups also demand recognition, especially in the juridical form of the State (222).

Navdeep Bedi Singh’s case was tragic, but, luckily, he recovered from his surgery. Many others are not as lucky. Bedi’s case ultimately delineates the larger issue of white hegemony in medicine. Though it is clear that SAs pose a unique risk profile compared to Caucasians, this is not recognized by healthcare professionals. Rather, they utilize their own pre-suppositions to prejudicially [mis]treat SAs. While physicians’ actions are rarely intentional, the consequences are nonetheless real and highly prevalent. CPGs dismiss existing literature about SAs as insufficiently erudite, and normalize population recommendations based on research conducted with primarily Caucasian cohorts. Ultimately, these power relationships are structured and sponsored by the State when its agencies decide which bodies are worthy of study. These effects are not mutually exclusive; in fact, they amplify each other and intensify the making live of whiteness, and the letting die of SAs. Yet essays like this one aspire to have a counterhistorical function, and demand recognition of the SA body. As such, it is my hope that by contributing to the larger discourse and rendering the SA counterhistory visible, that this change will be forthcoming as the medical community strides forward into the future.

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Rishi Bansal graduated from the Arts & Science program at McMaster University, and will be entering the Michael G. DeGroote School of Medicine Class of 2023 this August. He is also a research student at both St. Michael’s Hospital and McMaster. As a person of South Asian ancestry, Rishi was interested to see what research had been done to examine the excessive risk cardiovascular faced by members of his ethnicity, but found a shocking paucity of studies. This essay documents his examination of the underlying power structures that have precipitated this situation. Rishi’s other interests include health leadership, systems innovation, and digital health. You can engage with him and his other work via Twitter “@rishibansal”.

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“Batavia”: An Analysis on the Pedagogical Possibilities and Limitations of Virtual Reality Art

Anand Sergeant

Introduction

MUSEUMS, and the works that they contain, have long been perceived and utilized as spaces for public pedagogy, historical representation, and critical thought. Many important pedagogical thinkers of old, such as Jerome Bruner, Maria Montessori, and John Dewey emphasized the importance of the arts in education, and this perspective is widely held today (Mastandrea and Maricchiolo, 18-19). Specifically, much work has examined the role of museums and their art in the formation of attitudes, identities, and perspectives of social groups and their histories (Borg and Mayo; Liu and Hilton; Coffee). In this paper, a particular emphasis will be placed on this formative role of works of art, specifically, in terms of their historical representations and the ways in which they may educate public audiences.

As educational scholars Carmel Borg and Peter Mayo describe, the museum plays a crucial role in legitimizing, representing, and defining what counts as “official knowledge” (25). Regarding history, a key component of this role is deciding which stories or representations are included and remembered, and which, instead, are hidden and forgotten (Borg and Mayo, 35). For instance, many museums in the West tend to focus on the perspective and the biased experiences of the ‘high-brow’—ignoring and erasing the histories of violence and struggle experienced by marginalized groups (Borg and Mayo, 42-43). In this way, these institutions can serve as a reinforcement of and means to propagate colonial narratives; many art museums disproportionately depict the voices and

the stories of the ruling forces. In doing so, museums often disregard and fail to educate the public on the “history, voices, and standpoints of the subaltern” (Borg and Mayo, 38). Importantly, this disproportionate representation can breed prejudice and a lack of public awareness regarding historical colonial injustices—justifying further colonial and neocolonial practices in the present. As Liu and Hilton describe: “Representations of history help to define the social identity of peoples, especially in how they relate to other peoples and to current issues of international politics and internal diversity” (537). Historical narratives, and the ways in which they are socially represented, play important roles in justifying the current circumstances and class of social groups, and informing our current responses to political and social challenges (Liu and Hilton, 538).

Important aspects of these historical representations are the ways that they are produced and displayed to the public. As art techniques, technologies, and representations change, the uses and social implications of artworks are complicated as well. In his 1967 text, *What is Cinema?*, André Bazin describes the ways in which the invention of photography and photographic art techniques served to fulfill society’s deep need for realism, which allowed other art forms to focus on alternative creative depictions (160-162). This fundamentally changed artistic purpose and practice. Similarly, in his seminal text, *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction*, Walter Benjamin describes the shifting nature of art following the creation and use of technologies which

enabled mechanical reproducibility (668-669). These theorists demonstrated the incredible shaping effects that novel artistic technologies can have on human artistic representation—and the ways in which these representations are experienced and analyzed by their audience.

An important form of modern artistic production and representation that is currently being implemented in museums around the world is the use of Virtual Reality (VR) technologies and experiences. Virtual Reality art technologies allow a viewer to immerse themselves in a multi-sensory, virtual world by use of a large headset, which enables participants to “manipulate and interact with the simulated environment” (Kelley and Tornatzky, 2). VR technologies differ profoundly from previous artistic representational technologies because the traditional roles of creator and viewer are blurred; the virtual reality experience involves the active participation of the user in the creation of the virtual reality content as they make decisions and immerse themselves in the three-dimensional simulation (Kelley and Tornatzky, 1-2). As virtual reality headset costs have decreased, these devices have become increasingly commonplace in museums. For example, the National Museum of Finland recently introduced *The Opening of the Diet 1863 by Alexander II*—a virtual experience which enables viewers to step inside one of the museum’s paintings, interact with important characters, and explore the Finnish political state of the 1860s (Hills-Duty). Further, in an effort to “bring lost worlds back to life,” Beijing’s Forbidden City “takes visitors through reconstructions of the porcelain factories during the Ming and Qing dynasties” (Gannon).

A particularly interesting application of these VR technologies used as artistic, immersive depictions of history is the ‘Batavia’ VR experience that has recently been introduced at the Westfries Museum in the Netherlands. The exhibition celebrates 400 years since ‘Batavia’, a colonial name of Indonesia’s capital city, Jakarta, was colonized by the Dutch in the early 1600s. Inspired by a map of Batavia from 1627 that was discovered and since held by the museum, the VR exhibit allows up to 30 visitors at a time to experience the old city using special VR glasses (“Batavia 1627 in Virtual Reality”). Visitors are taken on a three-dimensional, simulated, reconstructive tour through the city with narration from the original map maker, Floris van Berkendrode. Further, visitors can choose

to ‘land’ somewhere in the city, to witness the city’s various aspects close up and learn about its history (Sidarto). The exhibit offers an interesting example of the possibilities of immersive artistic experiences to connect viewers with significant historical periods, through the use of virtual reality headset technologies. However, the ‘Batavia’ exhibit has also been criticized for its glorification of a colonial past; it has been said to disregard important counter-histories of struggle and destruction experienced by the native Indonesian people (Sidarto).

Several aspects of ‘Batavia’ make it a particularly interesting case-study of modern VR art technology. Firstly, ‘Batavia’ is one of the most advanced examples of VR art technologies to date. While many VR exhibits in museums allow visitors to view three-dimensional virtual objects or artifacts, very few allow the visitors to shape their own experiences (i.e. choosing where to land and what to see) the way that ‘Batavia’ allows. As such, ‘Batavia’ serves as a relevant example of the current limitations and possibilities of VR art technologies, and creates a rich site for analysis due to its technological advancement. ‘Batavia’ also speaks to Indigenous historical representation, which is an extremely important and relevant issue in many countries of the world today, including Canada. Canada’s brutal colonial history and continued suppression of Indigenous stories and epistemologies—a trend which is common in many colonized nations—has reinforced colonial dominance and threatened Indigenous languages and culture (Reyhner and Singh). The ‘Batavia’ exhibit represents the Dutch colonization of Indonesia, which makes it an important focus of study due to its relevance to these issues of colonialism. The exhibit’s depiction of colonial history has important implications for Indonesian Indigenous peoples and colonial attitudes towards them. As such, it will be important in setting a precedent for future VR technologies in other countries which represent colonial and Indigenous histories. Finally, my research into ‘Batavia’ found that there was a fairly uncritical response to the exhibit in the media, and the museum did not seem to critically and fully address the ethical concerns regarding the project and its representation of colonialism (Sidarto; “400 Jaar Batavia”). ‘Batavia’ seemed to induce large excitement and celebration (it celebrates the 400th anniversary of Batavia’s colonization) in the Dutch media, which made a more bal-

anced critique of the exhibit even more important—I firmly believe that novel pedagogical technologies must be heavily scrutinized before they become normalized.

In this paper, I will examine the question: what are the ways in which virtual reality technologies complicate the narrative and representational capabilities of art as a pedagogical tool for history? To do so, I will first explore the immersive, active, and multi-sensory platform that VR provides to the viewer, and the ways that this technology might influence how historical representations can be engaged with and learned from. I will then consider notions of aura and objectivity in relation to VR art technologies, to explore some of the drawbacks and socio-political implications of these new art forms. I argue that while the immersive and engaging form of VR technologies may offer some interesting possibilities as an educational practice for history through art, if they are not used properly, VR-art technologies may serve to propagate colonial narratives and inhibit a critical lens on historical events. I will draw on the specific case-study of the Westfries museum’s ‘Batavia’ exhibit throughout the paper.

This paper involves the integration of theories of pedagogy, technology, and art. I was first intrigued by these relationships when I visited several local museums in southern Ontario which have begun to incorporate VR artworks in their exhibitions, and upon further research I noticed that this is a largely untouched area of study. As an academic I have a keen interest in the ways in which pedagogy transcends the classroom. It is often forgotten how educationally influential institutions such as museums can be, and thus I believe that applying pedagogical research with the use of novel technologies in these institutions could be a valuable addition to existing academic work. ‘Batavia’ served as a unique example of the intersections between pedagogy, art, and technology, and the ways that this intersection can be hugely influential socially and politically.

Studying these relationships also posed some challenges. Virtual reality has only recently been incorporated in educational settings, which made the analysis of its efficacy as a pedagogical tool more difficult. Further, museums are not always viewed as defining sites for pedagogy and public thought regarding historical events, which reduced the amount of existing research on this matter. Finally, I was never able to

personally attend the Westfries museum during the creation of this project. While I have spoken to several visitors of the museum and the ‘Batavia’ exhibit, it certainly would have helped my work to gain more of a first-hand experience. These sorts of challenges affirmed the importance of drawing on multiple perspectives and taking an interdisciplinary approach for this project. By drawing from work involving pedagogy, technological theory, and historical representations, it was more feasible to critically negotiate with the gaps in the current literature. Thus, the interdisciplinary nature of this project was crucial in hurdling some of the methodological and informational barriers that were inevitable in such a novel scholarly field.

The VR Art Experience

Perhaps the most striking and novel aspect of VR art is the way in which VR technologies fundamentally change the art experience for the user. In contrast to traditional museum art media, such as paintings, sculptures, or short films, where the viewer is inherently separated from the artwork and the creator, VR art allows a more participatory, physically immersed engagement with the art. As electronic artists Brendan Kelley and Cyane Tornatzky describe, contemporary VR headsets have both positional and gyroscopic sensors, which, by communicating with a computer, allow the VR program to update the user’s virtual position based on their action and position in the real world (3). This allows for an intimate connection between the user and the artwork that they are experiencing—the user is able to make (at least partial) decisions during their interaction with the art. The user chooses what they want to see and can personalize the artistic experience, blurring the lines between the creator and the user. Audience members are able to “look beyond two-dimensional surfaces and perhaps even enter into the mind of creators” due to the participatory nature of VR art (Kelley and Tornatzky, 3). This creates a unique, and very active artistic and pedagogical experience for the audience.

The personalized, active art experience is furthered by the multi-sensory elements of VR technologies. Through the VR headset, the user is immersed in a multi-sensory, three-dimensional experience which contains visual, auditory, and somatosensory elements. Users’ movements are tracked by various sensors, and this data corresponds to users’ ac-

tivities in the simulation (Kelley and Tornatzky, 3). These elements of VR artistic technologies create a far more holistic experience for the VR user, and allow them to experience and engage with artwork in a more extensive and interactive manner.

Westfries' 'Batavia' is a pertinent example of these more personalized, multi-sensory artistic experiences produced by VR art exhibits. In the exhibit, users fly through three-dimensional scenes of the city while hearing sound effects and a historical narration. By looking at certain marked points in the virtual world, the visitor's virtual self is able to travel in that direction and is subsequently told more about a specific aspect of Batavia ("400 Jaar Batavia"). The viewers thus engage with an immersive and multi-sensory experience in which they have a certain amount of autonomy regarding their particular engagement with the art. How, then, does the active, multi-sensory and immersive experience of art created by VR technologies complicate the pedagogical possibilities of historical representations, and what are the implications of this complication?

Pedagogical Possibilities

An important aspect of the pedagogical experience of VR art technologies is the more active, experiential participation that they create. According to Mary Wright, who discusses the short-term educational benefits of experiential learning, personal experiences can facilitate more active interest in educational content, and can lead to better understandings of abstract sociological connections in students (117). VR-specific research has also demonstrated the ways in which active VR modelling technologies have shown benefits in the *visualization* of information and giving "abstract concepts concrete form" compared to learning the same information through a textbook (Eggarxou and Psycharis, 120). This sort of research points to an interesting potential for VR artists to create more experiential and involved artistic experiences. Rather than the traditional observational learning which distances the viewer from the art piece, VR art allows the viewer to take a far more active and experiential role in the art, potentially enabling the viewer to learn and understand artistic representations of history on a more profound level. These VR technologies could seemingly allow users to gain deeper and more personally relevant understandings of artistic depictions—as suggested by

the literature on experiential learning—compared to more observational and traditional forms of art such as paintings, sculptures, or photographs. The experiential aspect of VR art, then, could provide a pedagogical advantage for viewers, in their learning of history through art.

In the 'Batavia' exhibit, for instance, the multi-sensory, immersive VR environment of the old town, and the participatory elements of the exhibit may offer benefits as a pedagogical tool for Dutch colonial history. Rather than an observation and analysis of the ancient map of Batavia, which is what previously constituted this portion of the Westfries museum, the 'Batavia' VR experience thrusts the audience into a much more experiential involvement with the art and the depicted history. This active immersion could provide viewers with the suggested benefits of a more experiential pedagogy—namely, a clearer understanding of Dutch and Indonesian history and the ability to visualize and ground abstract historical information regarding this old town in an immersive educational experience. This speaks to the potential transformative nature of VR when it comes to historical representation and pedagogy. As discussed previously, art can play a huge role in shaping cultural attitudes towards historical events, and defining social identities in relation to history and the present (Borg and Mayo; Liu and Hilton). Thus, in experiencing the 'Batavia' exhibit, the conceptions of the Dutch public in relation to their colonial past could plausibly be more vividly revealed, clarified, and critically questioned—potentially inducing a phenomenon that Liu has identified as "value threat... [when] the morality of the group has been called into question by historical misdeeds" (Liu, Hilton, 546). Through a more active and experiential pedagogical experience, the colonial past of the Dutch people may be more thoroughly examined, and provoke visitors to examine Dutch history more actively and critically.

Work has also been conducted on the potential of virtual reality to make learning more engaging and motivating for the user—another possible pedagogical benefit of these technologies. Freina and Ott's 2014 review of the uses of immersive virtual reality experiences in education reported on a diversity of studies demonstrating the advantages of virtual reality in "increasing the learner's involvement and motivation" due to the multi-sensory, 'authentic' sim-

ulations (2, 6). These findings suggest a significant benefit of VR in the domain of museum learning. Research has demonstrated that visitors typically spend “less than 15 minutes in any museum gallery,” which “diminishes the chances for sustained inquiry or narrative” regarding the artwork; creating incomplete educational experiences which likely do not optimize the museum’s pedagogical capabilities (Bartels and Hein, 40). Further research has also suggested that museums are not attracting many young individuals today, due to a lack of curiosity, and a sense of boredom associated with these institutions (Mastandrea and Maricchiolo, 5-6). Thus, VR art’s ability to create immersive, more engaging, and ‘fun’ art experiences—in some ways gamifying the experience of art—may serve to encourage increased engagement with the art from the public, especially in young populations. For example, in the ‘Batavia’ exhibit, rather than studying an old map of the town, and reading blurbs regarding its history, it is plausible that the new, multi-sensory ‘journey’ through the old town involving an engaging narrative by a famous historical figure could promote increased user engagement with the artwork. Clearly, coupled with the potential pedagogical benefits of a more experiential learning opportunity, this use of VR art to depict history could provide a very potent mechanism for public pedagogy regarding Dutch colonial history.

Drawbacks and Considerations

Yet, though virtual reality artworks offer interesting pedagogical possibilities for art institutions, they also come with important considerations and drawbacks that must be analysed carefully. For instance, though VR technologies may provide an engaging and amusing environment that may motivate more viewers to experience the exhibit, the gamification of the learning environment could undermine the importance of true critical thought and reflection following the experience of the art. As Wright describes, successful experiential learning requires establishing the learning expectations from the outset of the experience (preparation), and a critical reflection following the experience (Wright, 118-119). Establishing the educational goals of a VR art experience such as ‘Batavia’ before users enter the simulation, and a post-simulation critical reflection of what the users learned may be necessary to truly reap the benefits of the immersive and engaging art experience. This

raises an interesting tension, because while the gamification of art exhibitions through VR may promote more user interest and participation, it may simultaneously undermine the educational benefits of historical representations through art by failing to add the necessary educational context to the experiences.

This tension can be explored further through a comparison with Walter Benjamin’s discussion surrounding the ways in which the introduction of cinematic technologies complicated notions of art contemplation and absorption. To Benjamin, while the static structure of a painting invites the viewer to contemplate and be truly absorbed by the work of art, the multi-sensory and constantly moving film continuously interrupts the viewer’s process of contemplation and association (682-683). Since the film is constantly interrupting the viewer’s train of thoughts with moving images, even though the viewer is in the position of the critic, the viewer “is an examiner, but an absent-minded one” (Benjamin, 683). The overstimulation and ever-changing notion of the film technology thus promotes the treatment of art as something that is distractedly absorbed by the public, rather than something that itself absorbs viewers and can potentially promote critical thought (Benjamin, 683). In relation to VR, Benjamin’s analysis of film raises questions concerning how the shift to virtual reality technologies and their immersive, game-like simulations may affect an audience’s ability to really engage critically with the VR’s historical representation. In exhibits like ‘Batavia’, users do not have much time to stop and critically reflect on the histories they are experiencing—the experience involves a near-constant narration and moving journey through the old town, full of sensory stimulation. As described in Wright’s work, the use of more experiential learning is generally only useful when it is coupled with a critical reflection on the experience. If, then, VR art experiences—which offer similar if not more constant changes and stimulations than Benjamin describes in films—do not allow viewers to critically analyze the work and the significance of the displayed history, their benefits as experiential learning experiences may be undermined.

Another useful mechanism by which to examine the pedagogical experience of VR art is Benjamin’s notion of ‘aura’, which is complicated by modern VR art technologies and representations. To Benjamin, the unique existence of an original, authentic work

such as a painting or sculpture gives it a sort of ‘aura,’ which embeds the artwork in tradition, and imbues upon it a cult-like, ritualistic value (Benjamin, 668-670). In the age of mechanical reproduction, however, as art-forms such as photography and film are reproduced and recreated, the original works begin to lose their aura, which frees them from their connection to ritual (Benjamin, 670-671). In this way, reproducible art forms can take on a more widely accessible, political role; in the absence of an aura or ritualistic value, the artwork can be critically analyzed and viewed with more of a socio-political significance (Benjamin, 671). In relation to VR, on one hand, VR art technologies and experiences are extremely reproducible; for instance, the Batavia exhibit allows 30 viewers at once to experience the exhibition, and could quite easily be replicated in other artistic institutions. In this way, the aura that has the potential to emanate from a uniqueness in space and time is undermined through its reproduction, both spatially and temporally—removing the distance and unapproachability of the art from the audience (670). This would then suggest that VR art, similar to other reproducible art forms such as photographs and films, could exist free from a cult-like value which generally precludes a critical examination of the artwork from the audience. VR art could potentially, then, serve broader political purposes regarding historical representations and pedagogy. By rejecting the unexamined ritual-like notion of art, and allowing for a more reproducible accessibility, VR art could encourage a more widespread public discourse regarding histories such as Batavia.

However, one could also argue that VR art experiences, which are controlled by and shaped by each individual user in slightly different manners, do actually offer unique and personalized art experiences. VR art exhibits, such as ‘Batavia’, allow participants to immerse themselves in the artwork, and make decisions regarding their specific experiences of the art—in some ways forming a unique existence of the art piece in time and in space. While VR art is certainly more accessible and reproducible than art forms like paintings and sculptures, it may still involve a sort of ‘aura,’ created by the unique and personalized multi-sensory experience offered by the art. Research has demonstrated the ability for immersive VR to produce moving emotional experiences through the use of “imagery, sound, story, and meaningful interac-

tion” (Goslin and Morie, 100). In this sense, the awe-like sentiment experienced by a user of these VR art technologies may, as suggested by Benjamin, actually *discourage* a critical appraisal of the work’s content. The aura produced from unique VR experiences depoliticizes the art because of the emotional, cult-like value of the experience which distracts viewers from critically examining the content of the art piece. For example, in the Westfries’ ‘Batavia’, the goal of the artwork is to provide visitors with an engaging art experience, while simultaneously teaching visitors about an important piece of Dutch colonial history in Indonesia. Yet, while the VR art may entice users with its appeal as a unique, personalized, multi-sensory experience, the produced emotional ‘aura’ may, as Benjamin describes with traditional art forms, actually serve to distract users away from the political significance of the history it represents.

This challenges the sentiments of some art curators, such as Bruno David from the National Museum of Natural History in Paris, who believes that VR art is not a threat to other forms of art such as paintings because “people are coming to a museum to see real objects because real objects are emotional” (Coates). On one hand, there is a sentiment that artwork viewed through replaceable forms of technology cannot offer the sort of ‘aura’ that more traditional forms of art can provide. However, as was discussed, research demonstrates the ability of VR to produce moving emotional experiences, and these unique and personalized experiences may confer a ritualistic aura on the art. Here, it is important to recognize the ways in which VR art technologies blur dichotomous notions of aura. VR art exhibits such as ‘Batavia’ offer, perhaps, a possibility to simultaneously produce original and emotional experiences for the audience, while also enabling the artwork to be a reproducible and collaborative art experience. For education, the aura and unique experience offered by these artworks must be considered closely; a balance must be struck between the extent to which these experiences can entice viewers, and the extent to which necessary pedagogical context is included. Perhaps, then, these exhibits can harness both the enticing emotional response evoked by the artwork, and the political and pedagogical possibilities of this reproducible experience.

VR Objectivity

It is clear that, when used properly, VR art could offer intriguing pedagogical possibilities for historical representations. However, this discussion rests on the assumption that these art forms actually offer a balanced and accurate depiction of the history that occurred. VR art exhibits such as ‘Batavia’ are being sold as realistic and accurate depictions of earlier historical periods and events, which makes the examination of their objectivity even more important (“Batavia 1627 in Virtual Reality”). While artworks such as paintings and sculptures can be assumed to contain personal and political biases from the artist, historical VR art exhibits in many ways assume a realistic and ‘true’ depiction of the past. As Bazin described with photography, the affirmation of photographs as the most accurate representations of reality legitimized photographs as representations that transcended time and depicted historical events objectively (162). The attitude of realism surrounding current VR art exhibitions such as ‘Batavia’—which is sold as being “as accurate and detailed as possible”—similarly implies a sort of objectivity to these VR art forms; viewers enter the simulation expecting an objective depiction of the past (Sidarto).

There are several concerning aspects about this attitude of realism towards virtual ‘reality’ technologies. If they do not represent historical times appropriately and fairly, they could serve to delegitimize other, ‘less accurate’ art forms that may represent important histories of struggle and injustice experienced by marginalized groups. Similar to the way that the increased objective credibility given to photography stripped other traditional art forms of their authority, VR art depictions of history and their assumed ‘improved’ representations of the past may delegitimize and suppress important art depicting the perspective of marginalized groups.

For example, the ‘Batavia’ exhibit has been criticized for ‘glorifying’ the colonial history of Batavia by failing to demonstrate and critique the structural violence towards the native Indonesian people or the suffering of slaves which occurred throughout the brutal Dutch destruction of the old city in 1619 (Sidarto; Kehoe, 5). As Kehoe describes, the city of Batavia was built in a way such that “Dutch residents could dominate the other ninety percent of the population,” including the 13000 slaves (18-19). Moreover, as Bayuni asserts, Indonesian people today have ques-

tions about their history as they know their ancestors “were killed, tortured, raped...and stripped of all dignity of human beings,” yet there is very little literature available in Indonesia or the Netherlands on these topics (Bayuni). This affirms the importance for ‘Batavia’, which is supposedly an accurate depiction of history with historical authority, to represent more holistic and objective depictions of Indonesian perspectives. If it does not do so, Indonesian histories of struggle and subjugation will be further marginalized, especially if ‘Batavia’ is offered in Indonesia down the road—as Westfries museum director Ad Geerdink hopes (Sidarto).

Despite being criticized for propagating a revisionist history, the creators of the ‘Batavia’ exhibit insist that the program does discuss these colonial misdoings, “just not in a judgemental way, but rather in a presentational way” (Sidarto). Yet, the presentation of colonial wrongdoings without depicting the true emotional and physical suffering they created cannot do justice to the experiences of the marginalized, nor does it offer any critical lesson for reconciliation or future colonial action. As Mamdani describes, post-colonial story-telling and biography can influence present understandings regarding past injustices and can create the assumption of a neutral, anti-colonial identity (602-603). ‘Batavia’ thus sets a dangerous precedent for the future possibilities of these VR historical depictions, and the ways in which these depictions may fail to represent important colonial narratives under the guise of objectivity. These marginalized narratives are crucial for developing a critical historical pedagogy through art. ‘Objective’ representations of histories that fail to include colonial brutality can serve to propagate dominant settler discourses and interfere with the ability to promote reconciliation and decolonization through education.

Recommendations

There are several key elements, then, which must be negotiated with and implemented in future educational VR art exhibits to ensure that the representations are portrayed accurately, and audiences are able to receive productive pedagogical experiences. Though ‘objectivity’ is a difficult goal to define due to its subjective and changing nature, creators of VR art exhibits must create their artworks with a conscience of the artwork’s socio-political implications, and demand several questions of their work throughout the

production process. When considering a historical representation through VR, I argue the creators must ask themselves the following questions: What are we trying to depict? What does the depiction imply? Through what perspective are we telling the story and what perspectives are missing? By asking these questions, creators would be forced to consider the implications of the artwork on a socio-political level, and reflect on the biases that are present in the narration of their stories. This could greatly minimize the production of harmful colonial content. For example, had these questions been asked in the production of 'Batavia', producers would have likely realized that the exhibit demonstrates a glorified colonial history largely through the Dutch colonial perspective, which is bound to reify and justify colonial attitudes and practices. By demanding these questions, and including the missing perspectives of the Indigenous Indonesian people who suffered greatly from these colonial endeavours, the audience could be enlightened on the darker aspects of colonialism and the histories of struggle and oppression that existed. By experiencing both perspectives of the story in the VR exhibit, participants would not only learn about the history of powerful nations and the damage promoted by colonialism, but also the ways that colonial processes can be romanticised to justify continued oppression in the present. Engaging with the socio-political implications of their work in the production process would allow creators and museum curators to produce far more accurate, holistic, and pedagogically beneficial artworks in the future.

Finally, in the presentation of artworks, I argue that museums must ensure that audiences are adequately prepared before their experience on the artwork's significance, and that audiences are encouraged to critically reflect on the artwork after their experience. This recommendation is based on Mary Wright's research on experiential learning discussed earlier in this paper, which describes initial preparation and post facto reflection as crucial for optimizing experiential learning opportunities (Wright, 118-119). In an exhibit such as Batavia, this could consist of priming the audience before the experience on the historical significance of the colonization of Batavia, and encouraging them to reflect after the exhibit on the colonial experience of the various perspectives depicted. In this way, museums can strike the right bal-

ance between the enticing aura of the work and its social and political significance—ensuring that audience members are able to think more critically about the artwork, and understand that the depicted history is not just a 'fun VR game' but depicts relevant historical information.

Some may argue that these sorts of precautions are overly imposing on audiences in museums, and that they may ruin the freedom or enjoyment of customers. However, if museums wish to present biographical depictions of history which have significant social and pedagogical implications, they retain a responsibility to ensure that these depictions are presented accurately, and that the audience is able to think critically upon them.

Conclusion

Art displayed by public institutions greatly affects public education, attitude formation, and historical representations, which often inform current responses in the social and political sphere. In this paper, I analyzed the ways in which novel VR art technologies and depictions complicate public art's pedagogical capabilities for history education. VR art technologies present intriguing possibilities for the future of artistic pedagogy by offering an interactive, emotional, and multi-sensory experiential platform from which viewers can learn, and understand more completely, important colonial histories. However, the implementation of these technologies must be done with caution; the gamification and 'aura' of these technologies may lead to an uncritical pedagogical experience, which could serve to treat VR art as a form of entertainment and neglect marginalized historical narratives. The analysis of 'Batavia', a contemporary example of VR art technology which represents Dutch colonial history, demonstrates the importance of a careful implementation of these technologies. The ability of VR art to act as an objective authority of the past could, potentially, serve to propagate and reinforce dominant colonial narratives, which would be detrimental to decolonization and reconciliation processes. Going forward, it is crucial to responsibly acknowledge the pedagogical implications of novel art technologies and experiences, by critically analyzing who is telling the stories, what the stories may imply, and their socio-political implications.

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Anand Sergeant is a third year student in the Arts & Science program at McMaster University. He has a wide variety of interests including pedagogy, psychology, health, and philosophy. Anand wrote this paper as a capstone project for a class on Technology and Society. He was interested in studying this topic because of its intriguing interdisciplinary relationships, and the relative lack of scholarly work in the novel field of virtual reality art and pedagogy. Anand is thankful to JIRR for providing the opportunity to share this work, and hopes that it may provide some interesting insight as artistic technologies continue to evolve.

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How Restorative Justice Practices Create Safer, More Caring School Communities

Sage Streight

Introduction

TRADITIONALLY, the Western model of justice has been one that reflects a retributive paradigm. The structure of this model has been hierarchical and offender-focused, with the primary goal of punishing offenders for their actions and getting “an eye for an eye” (Drewery, 2004, p. 334). Offenses are deemed to be offenses against the state, and so it is the state that is responsible for sentencing and punishment, according to the law (Drewery, 2004). This retributive paradigm is most prudently observed within Western criminal justice systems, but is also reflected within Western educational systems. Within schools, the main feature of student-to-teacher relationships is based on control (Varnham, 2005). School principals, teachers, and administrators are to enforce and protect the rules in schools and wherever students engage in disruptive, anti-social behaviour by which relationships and school community are threatened. Schools react to deviant behaviour by imposing exclusionary sanctions such as detentions, suspensions, or expulsions that aim to control (Varnham, 2005). When I use “traditional school behaviour mechanisms”, I am referring to these. In fact, suspensions are widely used in schools with little evidence that they make schools safer and prevent misbehaviour (Gregory, Clawson, Davis, & Gerewitz, 2015). The American Academy of Pediatrics issued a statement describing the effectiveness of exclusionary sanctions as “increasingly questionable” (Gregory et al., 2015, p. 1). A further study discovered that with each additional suspension of a student, his or her odds of

graduating high school decreased by 20% (Gregory et al., 2015, p. 2). Additionally, pre-emptive measures are introduced into schools to prevent such behavior, which creates a feeling of distrust within school communities and has proven to be ineffective at fostering long-term school safety (Varnham, 2005).

Clearly, the current retributive model used in schools is widely becoming recognized as harmful and ineffective in its goals to deter misbehaviour, make schools safer, and create communities of care within schools. The concern of safety in schools is one of physical safety as schools have high incidents of bullying and physical violence (Morrison, 2003). Due to this, many efforts have been put towards dealing with issues in schools through a restorative justice paradigm. Restorative justice (RJ) is rooted in indigenous traditions based on practices that value living in harmony and restoring that harmony when it is disrupted (Ortega, Lyubansky, Nettles, & Espelage, 2016). In contemporary Western society, RJ focuses on repairing the harm caused by wrongdoing and bringing together victims, offenders, and the wider community to do that (Ortega et al., 2016). This physical act of bringing people together to resolve conflict creates understanding and connection that strengthen communities and develop “communities of care,” which means community that recognizes how harm can result and values restoring the harm done together.

There are varying forms that RJ practices can take, and many schools in North America have been implementing RJ practices in various ways to address

prominent issues of bullying, disciplinary issues, and interpersonal conflicts (Karp & Breslin, 2001; Stinchcomb, Bazemore, & Riestenberg, 2006). One type of RJ practice is the peacemaking circle. Circles are processes that encourage participants to resolve conflicts and matters of injustice together through facilitated communication and collective decision-making (Coates, Umbreit, & Vos, 2003). This paper will seek to prove the effectiveness of circles by first presenting the role of schools in the broader social community and then go into more details about what RJ is, why it fits within the school context, how RJ works in schools, and the use and results of RJ peacemaking circles in schools. The remainder of this paper will show that, due to the current ineffectiveness of traditional school behaviour mechanisms in schools and the growing use of RJ practices, the use of circles in schools is proven more effective at creating communities of care, ultimately making schools safer.

The Function of Schools

It has been stated that RJ practices are helping schools move away from a retributive paradigm to one that is more therapeutic and holistic (Gunn, 2018). This is important in schools because these institutions are tasked with a very important role in Western society: the socialization of children. Social institutions facilitate socialization, moral integration, and social control (Karp & Breslin, 2001). In fact, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child state that education should be directed to “the preparation of the child for responsible life in a free society, in the spirit of understanding, peace, tolerance, equality of sexes, and friendship among peoples, ethnic, national, and religious groups, and persons of indigenous origin” (Varnham, 2005, p. 100). Therefore, it is easy to see how the structure of school, treatment in schools, and things learned in school have a huge influence on the norms and patterns of behaviour that people develop. Because of this there is strong support for the idea that a school culture needs to cultivate values of worth in young persons, and encourage participation in all matters within a school community in order to not only benefit the school, but instill positive social behaviour that will benefit the future direction of society (Varnham, 2005).

In addition to the task of socialization that our schools undertake is the obvious task of behaviour management. Many children, especially in younger

years, misbehave in schools not because they are “bad”, but because they are not able to deal with their needs in a productive, positive way (Pakan, 2007). Through various responses to and punishments of misbehaviour, kids are taught how to behave; however, traditional school behaviour mechanisms fail in that they focus on individual penalties when rules are broken and do not constructively respond to incidents of misbehaviour that teach children how to deal with their needs more constructively or to understand the repercussions of their negative actions on others (Cameron & Thorsborne, 1999). Research has found that this lack of positive behaviour management in schools causes students who misbehave to not truly experience accountability for their actions and thus become a high risk for repeating such behaviour outside of the school environment (Varnham, 2005, p. 88). Schools clearly need to move to more constructive ways to deal with misbehaviour, methods that teach students positive ways to meet their needs and facilitate more meaningful involvement in building community.

The final reason RJ is needed within schools is that schools have high levels of violence (Morrison, 2003). Insidious violence such as bullying, aggression, intimidation, and exclusion are not only harmful in themselves but feed into a wider cycle of violence and alienation within social communities (Morrison, 2003). Additionally, these forms of violence usually have long-term negative effects on both offenders and victims (Morrison, 2005). Current punitive reactive measures to violence are not effective at ensuring safety in schools; it is clear that there is a need for RJ values and practices to restore relationships and bring accountability, helping make schools safer (Varnham, 2005).

Socialization, behaviour management, and violence in schools are three things that are contributing to how schools operate and, therefore, how safe they are. These three factors teach staff and students within schools what is appropriate and what kind of environment the school will be. Therefore, it is imperative that these three things be managed and addressed in the most positive and constructive way, which is not being done with the current retributive approach. The rest of this paper will seek to show how RJ practices are necessary in schools as they help to reduce delinquent behaviour and foster positive socialization that is beneficial to the whole

of society.

RJ and Its role in Schools

RJ is defined as “a non-adversarial, non-retributive approach to justice that emphasizes healing in victims, meaningful accountability of those responsible for harm and the involvement of citizens in creating healthier, safer communities. Restorative justice works to repair the damage and promote healing and growth” (Pakan, 2007, p. 2). RJ emphasizes respect and relationships while upholding dignity, addressing human needs, and empowering participants to discuss their experiences openly and honestly (Morrison, 2003; Pakan, 2007). RJ brings parties together to talk through what happened, who was affected and how, and what needs to be done to repair the harm (Morrison, 2003). The objective of RJ is to build a peaceful community, one where it is possible for various people to get along and understand each other (Drewery, 2004). RJ does this as it empowers individuals to be responsive to their own needs and to the needs of the community through participation, being accountable, and showing support (Morrison, 2003). RJ provides an opportunity for all involved to learn and grow together as it values “healing over hurting, inclusion over exclusion” (Morrison, 2003; Morrison, 2005). In this way, RJ at a community level is about reducing crime and harmful behavior, and at a personal level, is about enabling individual change through discharge of negative feelings and building of positive feelings (Morrison, 2003). RJ practices turn conflict into cooperation and facilitate behavioral changes (Morrison, 2003).

RJ practices have been criticized for being inapplicable to broader “crimes” in schools, such as cheating on tests, that do not directly seem like interpersonal issues. But, in the school environment, RJ is used in reactive and preventative ways to create an “ethos of care and social and emotional learning,” showing that RJ is more than a set of procedures that occur after a rule infraction, but is used to change how a school operates on a day-to-day basis (Gregory et al., 2015, p. 4). RJ changes school communities in the same way, by facilitating cooperation and behavioral changes among staff and students and between them. This results in understanding, community, and an atmosphere of safety that comes to view harm done in schools not in terms of its technical violation but by its effect on others within the school commu-

nity (Cameron & Thorsborne, 1999; Karp & Breslin, 2001). This paradigm shift in the notion of harm, facilitated by RJ, means that in a response to acts of misbehaviour and violence, schools will look at the web of relationships, the needs unmet, and deeper issues present that have manifested in harmful behaviour (Morrison, 2003). This means that RJ practices in schools seek to address all matters within incidents of harm and provide understanding and lessons learned that can be used for personal growth and positive community relations (Cameron & Thorsborne, 1999; Pakan, 2007). To use the example given above, instead of just being given a fail or detention, cheating on a test could be dealt with by discovering why the cheating occurred, understanding that the cheating is harmful to the integrity of the school, and also harmful to the personal integrity of the individual, and disrupts their educational development. If a student is given the chance to see the depth of impact that this cheating has on the school and themselves, it creates a sustainable change in behaviour. This is how this shift in understanding of harm is extremely powerful as it is one of the main reasons RJ in schools has proven to be effective, making schools safer by fostering understanding in communities of care rather than excluding and punishing individual students.

Additionally, an RJ approach to problem-solving in schools makes individuals accountable for the aspects of structure, policy, organization, curriculum, and pedagogy that have contributed to harm and injury within school communities (Cameron & Thorsborne, 1999). RJ empowers students, teachers, administrators, victims, offenders, and the whole community to take a step back and look at who is responsible for the harm done, and what is the best way to deal with that harm in order to ensure growth, deterrence, safety, and rehabilitation for those directly involved and for the wider school community (Morrison, 2005). RJ encourages everyone to play a part in keeping their school safe and building a school community that cares (Varnham, 2005). Clearly, the themes of RJ align with a school’s goals of reducing harm and making schools safer through distinct techniques that effectively instill these messages in students.

Tools of RJ: The Circle

Usually, when students are in trouble at school they sit across from an adult and are confronted with their

behavior. This is a situation where great authority and power are given to the adult while the child is put on the defensive (Gunn, 2018). As explained in the introduction, this dynamic does not allow misbehaviour to be constructively resolved. Circles remove this concept of authority and punishment, physically opening all participants to face one another (Gunn, 2018). The goal of circles is to hold a space that promotes understanding, self-responsibility, and action (Ortega et al., 2016). The circle is a facilitated dialogue in which all individuals are supported by the facilitator in understanding each other and taking responsibility for their choices. Facing one another, participants have frank and open discussions about academic and classroom-specific topics that allow students and teachers to learn about one another, respond to breaches of trust, and potentially develop a sense of shared authority and ownership over the classroom climate, resulting in increased accountability and community (Gregory et al., 2015).

These goals are all proven successful in a study done by Ortega et al. (2016) where they implemented circles in many schools in the US. In the study, it was found that over 40% of the circle participants indicated that having offenders take responsibility and being held accountable for their actions was one of the most important results of the circle process (p. 464). This fosters respect and connection with others, empowering individuals to act in the interest of the group, which increases pro-social behaviour and decreases anti-social behaviour in the school context (Morrison, 2005). This outcome is hard to achieve in more isolating, punitive practices such as those currently used in a traditional paradigm (Gregory et al., 2015). In fact, Ortega et al.'s study (2016) conclusively found that adult participants acknowledged the ineffective nature of current punitive ways of handling misbehaviour and conflicts (p. 466). Furthermore, circles have been proven to lower suspensions in favor of social-emotional strategies that foster relationships (Gunn, 2018). Circles have also been found to improve emotional intelligence, encourage productive conflict resolution, and create an environment where concern for well-being is fostered between students and teachers (Morrison, 2003, p. 700). Braithwaite (2001) states that circles invoke a hidden curriculum that teaches students to "listen, to accommodate others' perspectives, and to live in a civil society where democracy can flourish because individuals have been

educated how to properly govern their own behaviors and lives" (p. 46). Circles are clearly in line with the ultimate goal of schools to prepare young citizens for success in broader social communities, and are more effective at achieving this than traditional mechanisms.

These results of RJ circles in schools are not hard to believe when we understand that circles create positive dialogue and promote communities of care that ultimately make social spaces safer. This positive dialogue and understanding go hand in hand with creating a community of care in schools. "By recognizing the potential for healing, empowerment of individuals, bringing relationships back into balance and strengthening communities, schools have begun to adapt and to adopt restorative justice practices" (Pakan, 2007, p. 12). A shift to RJ practices and use of circles can change the social culture of school communities, reduce violent behavior, and make schools safer (Morrison, 2005). These changes are not to be taken lightly when schools are tasked with such important functions like socialization and behaviour management.

Implementation of RJ Circles

At this point, it is necessary to talk about how circles can be implemented in schools as a restorative justice practice. The discussion is based on the suggestions and vision of Braithwaite (2001). As mentioned, existing programs have failed to effectively deal with youth problems because the current traditional paradigm approaches young people as isolated individuals. Since offences are community-driven, the resolution must be too. Therefore, circles would not aspire to treat students as isolated individuals, targeted because of their problems. This treatment stigmatizes them as individuals, which, as presented, is an unsuccessful mechanism for conflict resolution. To avoid targeting in an unproductive way, circles would be provided universally to young people in a school, not just to the problem students (Braithwaite, 2001). Circles would allow for choices to opt for rehabilitative services in networks of support that build commitment to make them work (Braithwaite, 2001). Braithwaite (2001) envisions circles implemented at every grade level within classrooms as a consistent practice in grade schools. Braithwaite (2001) wants to create an institutional infrastructure to foster the emergence of this informal support in schools. This

“institutionalization would build a citizenship obligation to participate in circles and that the circles would lend ritual power to informal support” so that circles will become an everyday practice that people use to resolve conflicts (Braithwaite, 2001, p. 245).

It is important to note that RJ circles can be criticized for focusing so much on practice and interpersonal behaviour that it forgets institutional procedures that sustain school communities, such as a board of directors making decisions on health and safety regulations. Building a safe and healthy school community does need to go hand and hand with how schools are regulated (Morrison, 2005). What RJ practices, and specifically RJ circles, seek to expose is that policy development and practices need to be embedded into the school community, rather than “handed down” by higher authority in order to be responsive to the school community needs (Morrison, 2005). This relationship between policy and individual is widely recognized as the effectiveness of a policy is only as great as the policy’s ability to fulfill individual needs. This is where the use of RJ circles in schools is powerful: they effectively allow necessary “top-down” procedures to be implemented and processed at an interpersonal level through open conversation, understanding, responsibility-taking, and the natural creation of a community that cares when people take the time to develop trusting relationships. As such, they are easy to implement, require little resources, and are a healthy and productive use of school time.

Conclusion

An education system that embraces greater participation in school decision making and restorative justice practices offers a perfect opportunity to work towards addressing the concerns that schools face with

the current traditional school behaviour mechanisms. Schools need communities of care, proper socialization, and proper behaviour management in a cohesive and holistic manner (Varnham, 2005). RJ practices, specifically circles, enable school communities to be more responsive, restorative, and responsible in addressing harmful social behavior. More specifically, RJ practices increase a school’s capacity to build human and social capital, and to ensure the social and emotional well-being of the school community, which is imperative to effective learning and safety to all (Varnham, 2005). RJ and circles in schools satisfy the social and emotional needs of the school community, reduce the risk of violence in schools, and harness the capacity for the building of civil society (Morrison, 2001). Overall, circles as an RJ practice increase a school community’s capacity to learn and grow together through fostering responsible citizenship where individuals are aware of the consequences of their actions, given tools to constructively deal with their needs, and are instilled with a vested interest in the well-being of those within the school and wider community. A powerful statement by Kiare, a grade-nine student attending an Oakland, California school, sums up the effects of circles in schools at creating communities of care that ultimately make schools safer. She says that “circles have made me treat people better because I see how people are” (Friedman, 2012, 6:03). This statement shows that when we see who people are through conversation and connection, then we come to recognize how our actions influence those around us. More so than traditional mechanisms, circles as an RJ practice facilitate this awareness in schools which creates communities of care where people think empathetically rather than selfishly, ultimately filling schools, and society at large, with more thoughtful and caring people.

AUTHOR BIOGRAPHY

Sage Streight is a 2019 graduate from the University of Waterloo, and holds a Bachelor’s degree in Peace and Conflict Studies, Legal Studies and Sociology. Her undergrad experience was primarily filled with learning about issues of justice, finding a passion for conflict resolution, and being inspired by those pursuing peace at the University of Waterloo and in the KW region. This paper was written for a Peace and Conflict Studies class that focused on conflict resolution in the classroom. The course discussed many themes present in this paper, but she wanted to dive deeper into the specific practice of restorative justice circles. This class pushed her to understand the incredible impact conflict resolution processes and experiences influence individuals, relationships, and communities at a grade school level. In her research she found circles to be

highly effective and simple to implement. This inspired the paper and desire to see it published so others could learn as well.

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