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LETTER FROM THE *EDITORS-IN-CHIEF*

This journal began with a simple idea: one student wishing that their work fit within a space that did not yet exist. What started as a conversation about the limitations of traditional academic categories grew into a platform for interdisciplinary thought, bringing together perspectives from across the humanities and social sciences.

Our goal is to highlight the relevance of the humanities in understanding the complex issues that shape our world today.

This February, we shared our insights on intellectual property and ethics In publishing at the University of Toronto's National Student Journal Forum. We continue to create a space for students to engage with contemporary topics through diverse academic lenses. In doing so, we hope to encourage thoughtful discussion and meaningful inquiry.

We are grateful to the authors, editors, reviewers, and supporters who helped make this first issue possible. We invite you to explore their work and celebrate the beginning of our academic community.

Saleha Ranjha, Founder and Editor-in-Chief
Amrita Muralidharan, Editor-in-Chief



MISSION STATEMENT

This marks the first issue of *Contemporary Humanities*.

This interdisciplinary journal seeks to shore the humanity disciplines for undergraduate students at the University of Waterloo, providing a domain to showcase their strong humanities research. This student-led journal features contemporary, interdisciplinary research of topical importance from the philosophy, literature, law, history, political science, psychology, sociology, and health domains, among others.

This journal began to redefine and situate the humanities within a domain of critical relevance. Your interdisciplinary research could be published by our hardworking team in our second issue. Stay tuned for our next submission call!

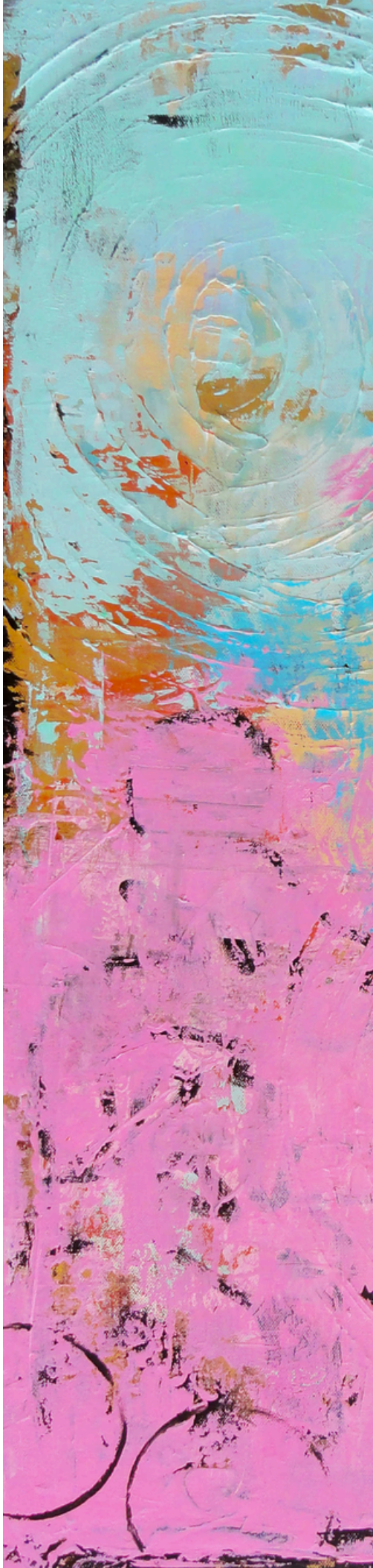


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Evaluating Emerging Technological Applications in the Identification and Intervention of Autism Spectrum Disorder

Saleha Ranjha

A clinical diagnosis of autism spectrum disorder (ASD) marks a child's neurodevelopmental deficiencies in social communication and interaction, alongside their repetitive and restricted behavioural patterns or interests (American Psychological Association, 2023). To alleviate the challenges experienced by children with ASD, professionals within the human-computer interaction domain continue inventing novel technological identification avenues and testing their effectiveness alongside clinicians. Several eye-tracking software developed to identify ASD-typical slow or absent eye tracking in children have been integrated in the clinical community, signalling more effective development in the early identification process with interdisciplinary collaboration than solely employing traditional diagnostic methods available to clinicians (Alabdulkareem et al., 2022, p. 11).

Although these technological applications abound, the broad clinical acceptance of most technologies remains contested, particularly for intervention purposes. These intervention methods may range from game-based to AI-based social and language learning paradigms. Although social learning robots have historically had demonstrable positive effects on the development of emotional and social learning, applications of emerging technologies such as generative-AI or deep learning (DL) software remain under scrutiny in the psychological community for their ethical concerns, lack of substantive research, and non-clinical roots (Boucenna et al., 2014, p. 1; Alabdulkareem et al., 2022, p. 11). This paper will evaluate these concerns by exploring if bridging the gap between the technological and clinical domains is effective in improving ASD identification in children and alleviating its associated social challenges. To research this growing fascination, this paper presents a literature review on varying emerging technological ASD identification and intervention applications through human-computer interaction,

psychology, and other research repositories– namely the ACM Digital Library, Springer, the University of Waterloo library, and the Omni library among others. This exploratory paper concludes on a note addressing the current limitations of emerging technological applications and the particular areas that, if developed, hold significant potential for improving the current repertoire of support options available to children with ASD.

Technological Autism Spectrum Disorder Identification Tools

Autism Spectrum Disorder usually sees its onset in the preschool years, yet the assessment process may begin at the point at which the child arrives at the clinic (American Psychological Association, 2023). Following this, the most widely existing eye-gaze tracking software and datasets, which may be used to track ASD-typical slow or absent eye-gazes in joint attention tasks (which direct others' actions by way of gesturing or making eye contact with them), are those for later identification of children six to eight years of age (Mundy & Newell, 2007, p. 269-7; Qi et al., 2024, p. 5848). However, the current technological exclusion of the age group that sees the onset of ASD lessens the possibility of capturing early deficits within the 9-14-month range, when joint attention typically develops (Clifford & Dissanayake, 2008, p. 1). Novel technological developments seek to encapsulate this earlier ASD identification age range, through further enriching pre-existing eye-gaze tracking models. It follows that if the measures of successful early identification technologies can record that a one-year-old child lacks the typical level of eye contact, clinicians may reliably predict joint attention and language development deficiencies when they are two years of age, as well as social interactions at nearly four years of age (Clifford & Dissanayake, 2008, p. 1; Charman et al., 2003, p. 319).

As well, pre-existing identification software and datasets lack the ability to pick up on biomarkers for autism due to heterogeneous factors such as gender and age, yet machine learning mechanisms concentrated on interpreting eye-gaze data have also begun making significant headway in early ASD identification. Novel measures integrating eye-gaze velocity with spatio-temporal scan-path images versus samples may stratify children with ASD as distinct from typically-developing (TD) children according to heterogenous differences on a more comprehensive scale (Atyabi et al., 2023, p. 6-18). Improved classification systems for combined eye-gaze and scan-path data may enable clinicians to accurately and reliably judge a child's temporal awareness, through variable measures such

as Visual Question Answering (VQA) or video-responsiveness (Qi et al., 2024, p. 5848; Atyabi et al., 2023, p. 7). These measures may involve using machine learning (particularly, deep learning) networks, such as the Dense Neural Network (DNN) and Convolutional Neural Network (CNN), to uniquely interpret and classify data non-linearly (Atyabi et al., 2023, p. 7). Machine learning (ML) and deep learning (DL) identification techniques may also function as a clinician's confirmation of ASD-typical facial features in a child, with a high experimental machine accuracy rate of 96.79% (Munto et al., 2024, p. 1). Such results may enable earlier identification, ensuring better brain development outcomes.

Current and Emerging Technological Interventions

Preceding the current exploratory interest in generative-AI applications, earlier technological software adopts interactive technologies such as social robots to support social communication deficiencies (Boucenna et al., 2014, p. 722; Pennisi et al., 2016). These social robots may target a range of empathy-centric areas, particularly reading facial and emotional cues (Bakir, 2025, p. 4). Additionally, embodied technological play that interconnects motor and social learning using both tactical and audiovisual elements may reduce the experienced social pressure on children with ASD in collaborative spaces to motivate their development of social skills and joint attention (Zhu et al., 2023, p. 611; Boucenna et al., 2014, p. 724).

Significant research-backed role- and game-based player games have also successfully been integrated into support tools to alleviate experienced language comprehension and expression delays in social communication for children with ASD (Boucher, 2012, p. 225). Games focused on gamification (non-game scenarios adopting game-typical elements), narratives, enhancing user interface, implementing minigames within themselves, and reducing non-compatible errors show promise in being able to support the social integration of children with ASD (Jiménez et al., 2023, p. 1-5).

Technological developments continue to build on these intervention measures, seeking to use generative-AI to improve the children's engagement with these games, improving the social and emotional learning of children with ASD (Tang et al., 2024). Employing narrative structures within these paradigms shows potential to support typically-developing children develop digital literacy while engaging cognitively and emotionally

(Moore et al., 2024, p. 18). In the context of ASD children, then, some social conversation partners and game-based paradigms adopt similar narrative structures, whose findings support that this framework encourages healthy social, emotional, and communicative development in children with ASD (Tang et al., 2024, p. 9).

Artificial intelligence conversation robots build on these traditional robotic conversational partners for children with ASD by way of their adaptive responsiveness, yet they build on successful findings from past social robots concerning narrative or game-based frameworks (Tang et al., 2024, p. 9). Unlike the preexisting technological conversation partners, which are limited by their adherence to rules, lack of language comprehension, high resource usage, and general ineffectiveness, artificial intelligence robots are more tailored to and accessible for individual children with ASD. Adaptive speech-generating devices (SGDs) may intervene in enhancing the social communication utterances of children with ASD past the preschool age, by way of improving their joint attention, symbolic play, engagement, and regulation (Kasari et al., 2014; Jia et al., 2022, p. 1466). Therapist training, as well as design and implementation costs pose a central concern of clinicians about the viability of technological integration into practice (Alabdulkareem et al., 2022, p. 11). SGDs may then be considered for their cost-effectiveness against social robots, since training on Large Language Models (LLM)-based programs is more generalizable than variable social robots, and in terms of manufacturing robots versus designing interface, the latter may implement a coded set of instructions on more accessible at-home devices. Socially assistive robots (SARs) may be further improved by focusing on real-time adaptiveness rather than costly anthropomorphic social robots that unsuccessfully attempt to replicate complex motor muscle configurations to depict human emotions (Scassellati et al., 2012, p. 279-91). This adaptiveness might be developed in the adoption of LLMs into these SARs, which would enable their greater contextual understanding of variations in an individual child with ASD. They may also take the form of touchscreen interactive programs, such as Proloquo2go, whose voice output feature may enhance academic performance in nonverbal children with ASD (Collette et al., 2019, p. 148).

Specifically, generative-AI conversational partners using LLMs and personalized text-to-

visual components can effectively address ASD across the spectrum, meeting those who classify as having high-functioning autism (HFA) (Tang et al., 2024, p. 17). This is explained by generative-AI being able to contextually tailor itself; for example, social robots such as EmoEden meet children with HFA according to their specific needs, significantly improving deficits in emotion expression and recognition. However, maintaining an ethical balance between use of social robots and generative-AI conversation partners with real-life social interactions is integral so that children with ASD are not deprived of the opportunity to develop their natural social skills (Bakir, 2025, p. 4).

Speech language pathologists (SLPs) further consider the implications of generative-AI and LLMs for intervention approaches to children with ASD (Lewis et al., 2025). Children with ASD may exhibit phonological difficulties pertaining to pronunciation or random utterances, as has been supported by pattern-recognition measures (Jia et al., 2022, p. 1466). These phonological difficulties may be mitigated with the use of speech understanding, language production, and language communication training administered through speech recognition devices such as dynamic augmented reality (AR) mobile application systems (p. 1465). Similarly to embodied technological play, generative-AI measures such as the application of Chat-GPT 4.0 simultaneously ease the child's learning in the low-pressure environment (Zhu et al., 2023, p. 611; Boucenna et al., 2014, p. 724; Du & Juefei-Xu, 2023, p. 2).

This follows from children with disabilities, including ASD, showing high levels of comfortability with social robots and entrusting them to conduct therapy (Robles-Bykbaev et al., 2017, p. 356). Additionally, LLM-based chatbots such as Chat-GPT 4.0 show high accuracy for their clinical assistance in report-writing, diagnostic support, and material drafting. However, Chat-GPT 4.0 does not presently integrate into therapy planning otherwise with much success (Birol et al., 2025). Its reliance on open-source data to train its accuracy may also over-enhance the generalization of its produced clinical judgement, as well as impede on the privacy of previous clients (Du & Juefei-Xu, 2023, p. 2).

Limitations and Ethical Considerations of Technological ASD Applications: Future Directions

Limitations in the clinical research on the effectiveness of generative-AI, machine learning, and other

emerging technological applications persist, particularly in the identification of ASD symptoms in the preschool age group. Machine learning (ML) and deep learning (DL) identification techniques of ASD-typical facial features continue to require clinician expertise on individual variation (Munto et al., 2024, p. 1). More research is also needed in the amount of use that constitutes the detrimental "overuse" of intervention measures such as social robots (Bakir, 2025, p. 4). Additionally, insight into if children with ASD develop digital literacy as typically developing children demonstrate when engaging with narrative- and/or game-based digital paradigms would benefit future research directions (Moore et al., 2024, p. 18). Yet, novel research addressing these gaps in the literature using technological applications are promising: the early stratification of ASD and TD diagnosis grows stronger, heterogeneous differentiations between age and gender are being established, and ASD subtypes (ex. HFA) continue gaining contextual support (Atyabi et al., 2023, p. 18; Tang et al., 2024, p. 17). The bank of evidence presently supports the clinical use of significant diagnostic and intervention ML and AI measures (Atyabi et al., 2023; Joudar et al., 2023, p. 58). Once the preschool age group is encapsulated within literature and existing datasets, the broad applicability of AI measures across age groups may be interpreted as a strength of the technology (El Shemy, 2022, p. 659-60). Moreover, intervention measures rooted in generative-AI and DL software are promising for their significant results in participant completion of the programs and positive engagement thus far, which has historically proven difficult for children with ASD to accomplish using traditional intervention measures (Tang et al., 2024, p. 13; Alabdulkareem et al., 2022, p. 11).

As these applications operate at the confluence of clinical work and software development, those in policymaking, research, practice, and parenting roles should similarly continue to inform their practices in raising and supporting children with ASD by situating and understanding emerging technologies from a multifaceted perspective (Alabdulkareem et. al, 2022, p. 11). This would fulfill experienced gaps between clinicians' skills, social acceptance, and reliability of these designs. Exploring emerging technologies within the human-computer interaction domain may also broaden cost-effective approaches for researchers and clinicians alike, enabling researchers to widen their applications' reach and clinicians' access to them (Scassellati et al., 2012, p. 279-91). While

policymakers and researchers respectively continue minimizing privacy concerns and the homogeneous generalizability of client training data, parents and clinicians, such as speech language pathologists, might find integrating the clinical potential of these innovations rewarding for their significant developments in the emotional and social learning of children with ASD (Lewis et al., 2025; Dangol et al., 2025). As literature on this topic continues developing at a rate aiming to shore the gap between itself and the rapid development of emerging technologies, the practical limitations of generative-AI and other emerging technologies may continue being reduced with such cross-disciplinary collaboration.



A Voicemail to the Black Body: Ta-Nehisi Coates's 'Between the World and Me' is Our Lifeline

Kayla Russell

INTRODUCTION

Whiteness has an epiphany everyday. Black bodies receive sorrow from that epiphany everyday. What is that epiphany exactly? To continue to survive the ways in which they are slowly killing themselves or the black body is slowly killing itself. The system and symptoms of whiteness already live inside the black body, operating without being told to do so. That it lives inside the black body, as if to be as necessary as blood cells. But the disease is blamed on the body of which it is infecting. It could never be anything other than that body, therefore the black body is killing itself not the epiphanies that find new and old ways to reject blackness in the bodies it fills and fulfills. Black liberators argue that your voice, your body and your actions are all the power you need, an antibody against the disease of whiteness. To purge the black body of this oppressive cancer then, is to remove it "surgically" from the mind first. Many malignant tumours entirely made up of ideology are supplanted when you become conscious that they are there in the first place. But what are they supplanted with in exchange? This is answered from Ta-Nehisi Coates's "Between the World and Me" that helps us dissect race by exteriorizing the black body, to find the common widespread 'disease' killing black life, whiteness. As his writing reminds us of the dangers of being hypercritical and uncritical of whiteness and its legacy. In this self-reflective and analytical essay, I will pathologize whiteness to typify a disease. This essay is a voicemail to the black community, please answer the call.

BACKGROUND CONTEXT & DESCRIPTION

Ta-Nehisi Coates' early days were spent sponging up Maryland's town jewel, Baltimore. After being raised in Baltimore alongside 6 other siblings to William Paul Coates, Black Classic Press founder and Cheryl Coates, teacher and American activist (Howard University, 2015). In the first chapter of the book Coates speaks to these personal relationships which shaped him into the writer that he is today. That led to his 5-year journalism

education at Howard University, as he describes in his novel, as well as his move into self-publishing, freelance writing, and other efforts to become a better journalist. Of which is still his current profession. The bestselling author's latest efforts speaks to his continued activism toward education and illumination of the theories and ways of knowing we have succumbed to but also the dangers against black life and also the legacy they have inherited. His latest work "The Message" grapples with the idea of ways of knowing. In his novel "Between the World and Me," he takes us on the trajectory to understand how our world socially organizes itself and moves through the mechanisms of the social construction of race. He writes the entire novel to his son, Samori Maceo-Paul Coates, but more importantly to the world and those who are responsible for the "plundering" of black bodies that he speaks to. As it addresses whiteness and its aliveness, Coates also explores concepts of community, trauma, and his romantic relationships, all of which he candidly shares with his son in an effort to help him see his side of the story that the world would otherwise prefer to ignore. His art embodies the Black Arts Movement's objective, which is to allow black bodies to not suppress the experience of being racialized, but to pass it down to their offspring— the idea that their voice should and must exist in a racialized world. Coates' writing, particularly this novel, is how we may exist in our world, a lifeline for those who have been immobilized. His precise life story confronts whiteness and white supremacy.

CRITICAL ANALYSIS

Whiteness' epiphany is merely that it has power and enjoys being aware of that fact, as if it attained this power out of nowhere, but it also unavoidably maintains this consciousness. From the onset of the book we are brought into an interaction Coates has with a news reporter that sets off a chain of disturbance for him as she asks him what it means to lose his body. Now, I would qualify this as the exact function of how helpless, as in uncontrollable, whiteness is. It provides ideologies on the table for us to feed on and as Coates suggests it doesn't lead us to question what we are digesting or why we might ask the questions that we do in conjunction with the reporter, nonetheless, we must feast (Coates, 2015, p. 1). This is what this social construction does; it divides and operates to continue causing division. This is more than merely the entertainment of singling out Coates for a news story; she sees something within him and his world that prompts her question. In this we see race

doing its intended function of identifying and defining through division. Coates would define this as the reality of racecraft, saying, “But race is the child of racism, not the father” (Coates, 2015, p. 7). The reporter is thus perpetuating the notion of the “illusion of race” as put out by academics Barbara J. Fields and Karen E. Fields. But what Coates implies is that she is aware of this. She is aware of the invisible illusionary dividing line called ‘race’ that appears between her and Coates shortly after she asks her question, while Coates points out a “sadness wells up in me” (Coates, 2015, p. 6). This racial awareness or epiphany, then, brings sorrow, a sorrow that the black body, Coates, should expect to face in this world. So what does this mean for the black body? We are constantly witnessing the product of a social construction that values social imbalance and the social practice of ‘othering’. Racism and racecraft is proof that race is the child, it is born from racism (Fields and Fields, 2022). Previously, I used the word “uncontrollable” particularly because whiteness is a form of cancer. There are two definitions that show it is as a disease, “a disease caused by an uncontrolled division of abnormal cells in a part of the body” and “a practice or phenomenon perceived to be evil or destructive and hard to contain or eradicate,” (Oxford University Press, 2025). Coates is strategic in beginning the novel in this way. He is speaking to whiteness’ debilitating pervasiveness, like cancer. But also the ways in which whiteness is entitled, as it actively stands on the hierarchy it has built. While race is emphasized as an illusion meant to keep social domination alive, whiteness, the disease, becomes more aggressive when removed from the black body and the world. In the second chapter of the book, Coates explains the time he got into a conflict with a white patron at the movies with his son. The white patron, a white woman, proceeded to consciously push his son out of the way. There is a reason for this. Coates says the reality of race became externalized. He had seen his son and became increasingly aware of how much power he had in that moment. “There was the reaction of any parent when a stranger lays a hand on the body of his or her child. And there was my own insecurity in my ability to protect your black body,” (Coates, 2015, p. 112). Now, the point of this story serves Coates in demonstrating how this insecurity has been developing and reaffirmed to him his whole life. Of which that power was seemingly reduced to nothing when her white partner steps in and says “I could have you arrested,” (Coates, 2015, p. 112). When he continues to argue back with the woman, she recoils, what’s notable is him highlighting

that he had more anger to share with her but this was a “controllable” anger after remembering the small eyes watching him, his son (Coates, 2015, p. 112). Coates is signifying how uncontrolled whiteness is when you withdraw it from the body it resides in; this extraction is additionally recognized as calling out racism. Thus, this specific type of cancer attacks the mind. This disease is aggressive yet to get it “surgically” removed would require having tests done to prove its existence. Here is Coates confronting and putting whiteness to the test as it proved perilous without much effort. These epiphanies or racial awareness, rearticulate constantly that the tests will come back positive for being destructive to the black body. When her partner says “I could have you arrested,” Coates is able to translate what he is saying, and the patron understands what he is saying, but those exact words reveal something more is being practiced. Racism is essentially a social practice and this is what Field and Fields is propagating (Field and Fields, 2022). But how exactly does whiteness live in the black body if it is weaponized against them? When Coates is talking about the fear of not being able to defend his one and only child, this idea is not his own, but the invasiveness of whiteness that tells him his body is no longer his, his son’s body is no longer his and there is nothing you can do to protect your son from the ‘helpless’ whiteness. He was stunned that he could think like this. Of which he says his son was endangered by him defending him. Thus, the black body is often unaware of the disease within them, making them insecure, terrified and reluctant to live out their truth, the truth that is blackness. It is an inherited disease, a genetic copy of the terrors black eyes and minds have witnessed for years. In Coates’s case he is witnessing the entitlement of the ‘plunderer’ who never wants you to expel the ideological control this cancer causes. When it is placed under that microscope, exposed in the light of language, it recoils. So we must put this whiteness to the test. The results are primed to Coates' assertions of the great American nation as the catalyst in Black death.

Coates’ written work is exceptionally medicinal for this cancer. With the microscopic lens Coates is placing on whiteness inside the black body, it is a way of expressing what he witnesses from the body that is perceived to be state property. Everyday he is seeing how this disease is killing his people.Not just physiologically, but also in immaterial ways, they

are not immune to this malignancy. This malignancy is best described by American psychiatrist Dr. Frances Cress Welsing. “Psychiatrists and other behavioral scientists frequently use the patterns of overt behavior towards others as an indication of what is felt fundamentally about the self. If hate and lack of respect are outwardly manifested towards others, hate and lack of respect are most often found at deeper levels toward the self,” (Welsing, 1974, p. 37). The colour confrontation theory she argues for is responsible for the legacy of whiteness. This added lens to the discourse around whiteness points out how deeply psychologically rooted it is; it has branched out to equate albinism to superiority and melanin as a mistake (Welsing, 1974, p. 35). This disease is aggressive because once exposed the house of cards named hierarchy begins to crumble. But this disease is also aggressive because it being confronted means the social and structural systematizing efforts of whiteness will soon crumble too. Welsing claims racism to be the maintenance of structural violence that is rooted in ‘colour inadequacy’. Coate’s work helps us visualize this reality as it infects and affects him inwardly, as we see the slow spreading of white ideals throughout his body. Whiteness as a structure of entitlements has nothing to offer him, but when his thoughts emerge that endorse the narrative of whiteness as natural or in dominance, this supports the illusion of race further. White normativity, as academic Michael Morris claims, is to blame for this.

Whiteness serves a normative function by defining the expected or "neutral" range of human attributes and behavior. Other racial categories emerge as deviations from this norm, which places them outside the protection of the law and civil society. The normative function of whiteness has important, but unappreciated, implications for the treatment of whiteness as a legal category, and it complicates Haney López's call for dismantling the concept. White normativity accommodates and acknowledges the shortcomings of whites while simultaneously maintaining white privilege and whiteness's centrality in the U.S. racial classification scheme. Part I of this Book Review defines white normativity. Part Il describes its operation in particular areas of U.S. society. Part Ill explores the durability of racial categories and the prospects for dismantling the concept of whiteness.Part IV concludes by examining potential avenues for reducing the influence of whiteness and rendering society more egalitarian and just. (Morris, 2016, p. 952)

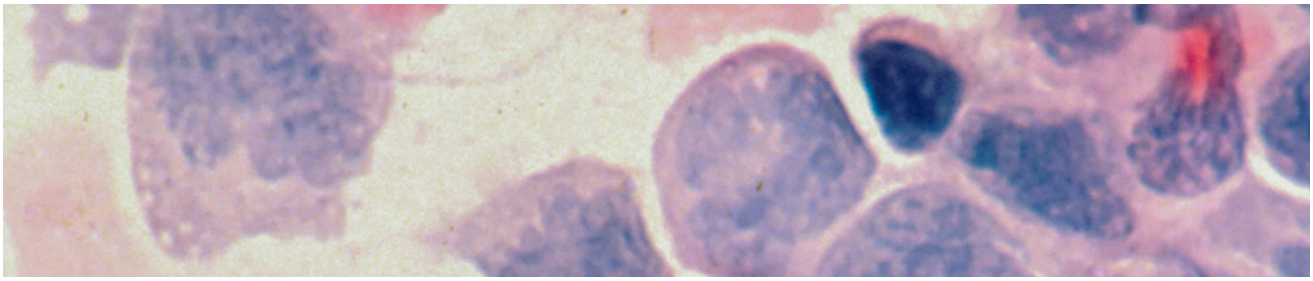
Whiteness serves a normative function by defining the expected or "neutral" range of human attributes and behavior. Other racial categories emerge as deviations from this norm, which places them outside the protection of the law and civil society. The normative function of whiteness has important, but unappreciated, implications for the treatment of whiteness as a legal category, and it complicates Haney López's call for dismantling the concept. White normativity accommodates and acknowledges the shortcomings of whites while simultaneously maintaining white privilege and whiteness's centrality in the U.S. racial classification scheme. Part I of this Book Review defines white normativity. Part II describes its operation in particular areas of U.S. society. Part III explores the durability of racial categories and the prospects for dismantling the concept of whiteness.Part IV concludes by examining potential avenues for reducing the influence of whiteness and rendering society more egalitarian and just. (Morris, 2016, p. 952)

This speaks to my earlier contentions on the idea of 'helpless whiteness'. Morris has classified "White as normal" and with this definition, this disease living inside of us telling us how to feel and who we can be, we think so too. When confronted with whiteness, we are often exposed to its malignancy from within, which are merely the psychological consequences that the perpetrator or racist wishes to implant. Additionally, author and educator, Maureen T. Reddy, speaks to the contentions around being critical or vocalizing the effect of whiteness. "Talking about whiteness is difficult. Being white - unless you are an out and out racist or a highly aware antiracist - generally does not include much consciousness of whiteness as a social signifier, as a state or condition of being freighted with meaning," (Reddy, 1998, p. 57).

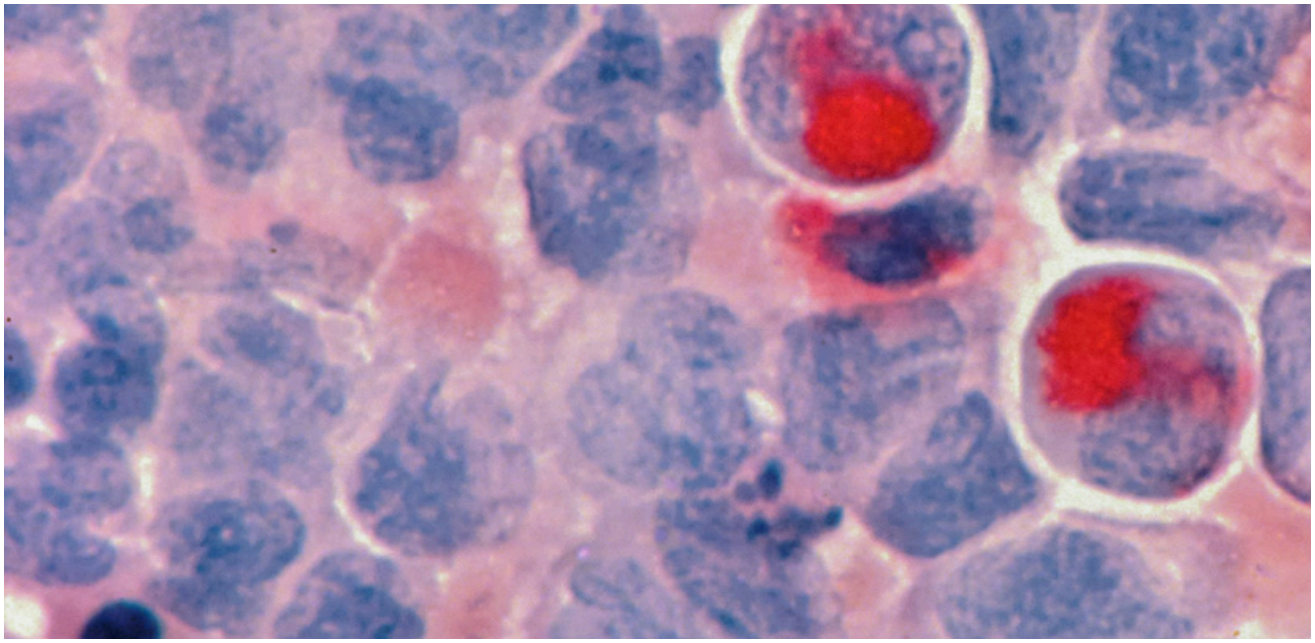
Since this disease exists and we believe that it is still killing many black people, we must still be critical of how it enters the black body. This is how it accumulates meaning socially by infecting us from within. Coates prescribes the pill of critical thinking (Coates, 2015, p. 35-37). As we witness him becoming critical of the American myths that have built his entire nation, he is burdened, still he encourages us and his son to realize the truth. "To acknowledge these horrors means turning away from the brightly rendered version of your country as it has always declared itself and turning toward something murkier and unknown. It is still too difficult for most Americans to do this. But that is your work. It must be, if only to preserve the sanctity of your mind. The entire narrative of this

country argues against the truth of who you are," (Coates, 2015, p. 98-99). The truth is Wesling, Coates and Reddy explain nobody wants or is ready for the truth but we all have some semblance of the white ideals within us keeping this illusion of race alive. Everytime he realizes how the 'plunderer' keeps him on his toes, questions his ability to protect his son and sees the logistics of black death take place, he is almost always reminded of white normativity and not colour inadequacy, racecraft or liberation.

The disease lives in the black body as its psychological compass. For this reason, we must be critical of the social construction of race while not being hypercritical. In reality, most black people cannot put into words the effects of this disease, but all of them and I mean all of them, know how it feels to be black. For this disease, it tells them how far and wide their blackness may reach the shores of the great nation of America. This stems from legal scholar Cheryl I. Harris and her cultivation of whiteness as property.

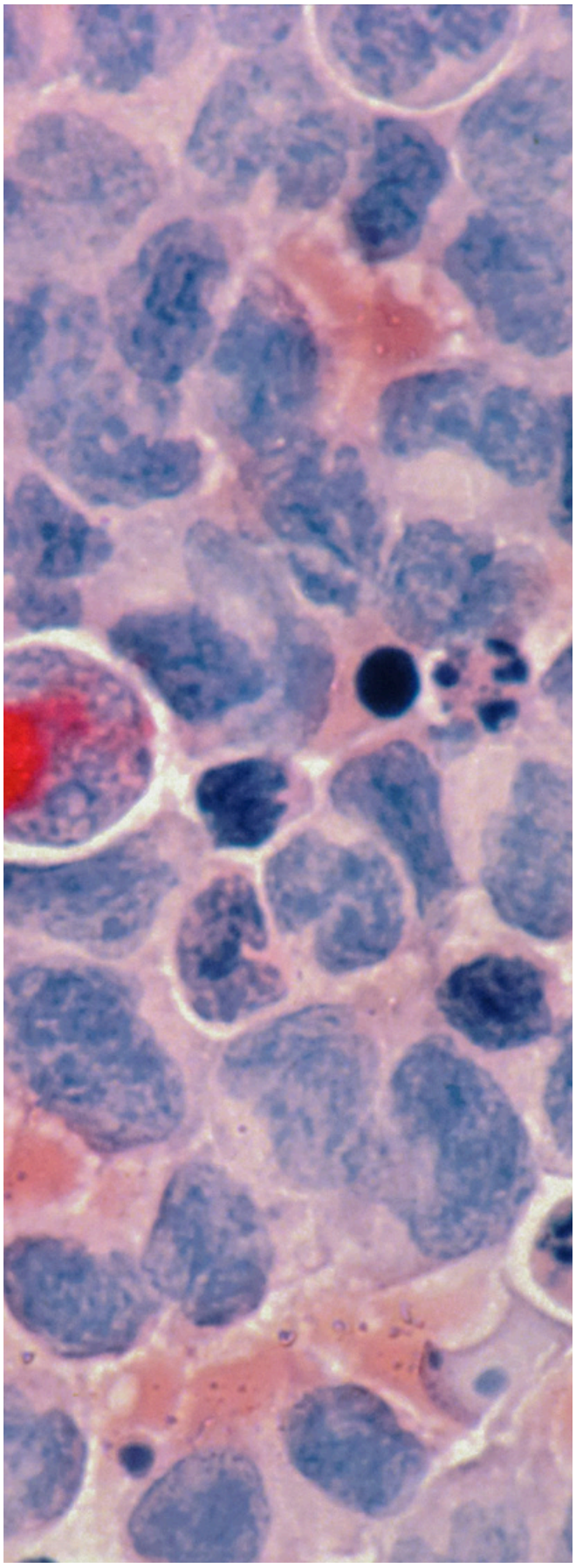


Possession of property includes the rights of use and enjoyment. If these rights are essential aspects of property, it is because "the problem of property in political philosophy dissolves into... questions of the will and the way in which we use the things of this world.""l14 As whiteness is simultaneously an aspect of identity and a property interest, it is something that can both be experienced and deployed as a resource. Whiteness can move from being a passive characteristic as an aspect of identity to an active entity that - like other types of property - is used to fulfill the will and to exercise power. The state's official recognition of a racial identity that subordinated Blacks and of privileged rights in property based on race elevated whiteness from a passive attribute to an object of law and a resource deployable at the social, political, and institutional level to maintain control. Thus, a white person "used and enjoyed" whiteness whenever she took advantage of the privileges accorded white people simply by virtue of their whiteness - when she exercised any number of rights reserved for the holders of whiteness. (Harris, 1993, p. 1734)



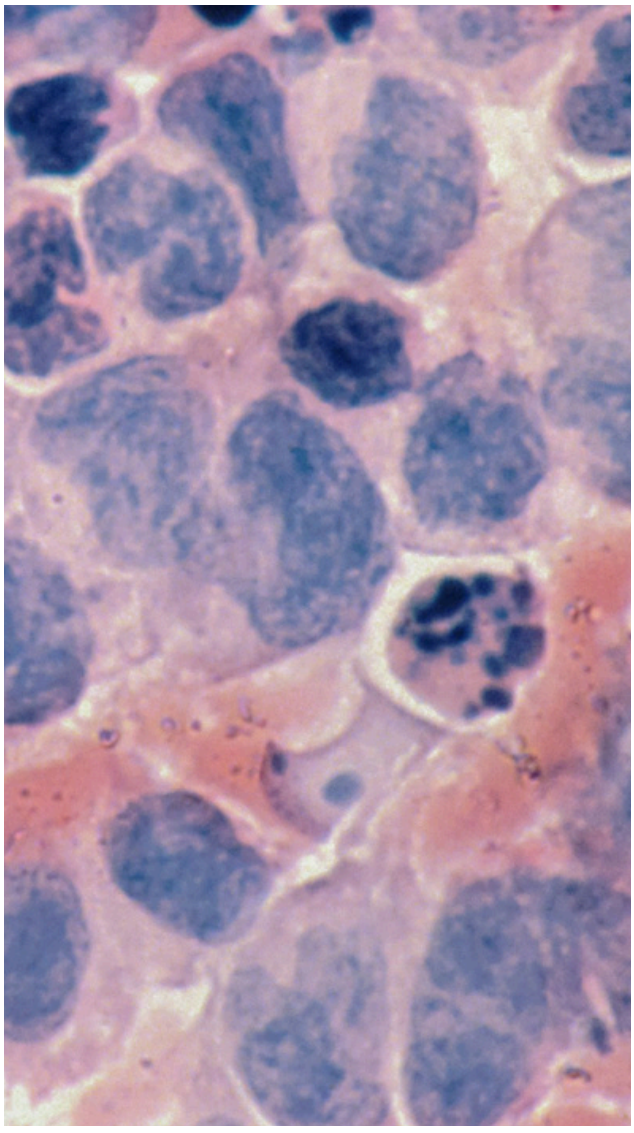
As stated previously, whiteness enjoys the crown it has bestowed upon itself. When witness is framed as a powerful instrument of dominance this means it is strategic as it spreads throughout the world. I like to think my experiences of racism, whether that be getting my hair done, being racially profiled and seen as the token at my workplace, have made me hypercritical to the experience of race in a black body. These are not small faults but eventually I am becoming hypercritical, I spend more time pointing whiteness out than finding ways to mobilize myself, again, falling into the social constructions strategic trap that wants to keep me immobilized. I give too much power to whiteness in those moments— I sign the deed to whiteness as property. Suddenly, everywhere I look whiteness lies in some shape or form, but this leaves little room for the imaginative ideals that can take me farther than whiteness ever could. When I complain about the experience of this social structure it becomes more real, and whiteness sits back and enjoys the fruit of its labour. While I minimize my light to keep the golden star of whiteness visible, I leave behind what I know to be true in order to strengthen whiteness. You must know that black power is all you need. We live in a world that does not always remind us of this but Coates, in the final chapter of his book, would argue this is our cure. “And black power births a kind of understanding that illuminates all the galaxies in their truest color,” (Coates, 2015, p. 149). Black power is not about

spewing hatred or being overly critical of a social construction that has simple explanations for its existence. It is about learning how to exist in a world with a legacy of consequences owed to social domination and colour inadequacy. Disrupting the enjoyment of whiteness as property means realizing race is about building socially organized practices to life. Disrupting this enjoyment is black power because it does not have to overly prove whiteness' evils, it will always show and be exactly what it aims to be. When you realize this, spend your energy expressing how you feel without slandering ladies like the one at the theatre or her partner, but rather "give reality to" their use of words, exteriorizing their language and gestures, images, music, and films. Extract the social meaning we have given whiteness, take it out of your body and examine its contents, really try to find the ways it is slowly poisoning you more than it is them because it is. Spend your energy knowing who you are; this is your power and that is your compass.



CONCLUSION

Although there are no meaningful enough scientific links that support my claims, of which I am not saying it is fact that whiteness is a disease killing black people. It is doing so without being figurative. This should be the hardest pill to swallow. But not only that, if structural violence can infect us with whiteness, how much more for the individual role we play in implicitly agreeing to being infected, because we have no other choice, “that is just the way it is”. The dice will always roll on whiteness then. I could have carried this essay over into using the metaphor of games or a game board as the broader idea of whiteness. Or a toxic best friend, a twisted movie, or a bad coworker. But the fact remains it is something so close to us that we have naturalized it to exist and pretended it doesn’t. I like to use this metaphor of disease because it is the only thing that can alarm us and get our attention about whiteness. Viewing it as a disease, means we can die from it and we should change that narrative. You making that decision creates a different environment from the one whiteness wants to build in your home, your temple, that is the black body. Whiteness is not inevitable but it can be everywhere. Your internal organs have seen this for centuries because it has passed down the symptoms of the systematic nature of this disease inside of you. Ta-Nehisi Coates, “Between the World and Me” is the kiss of life, helping us to exist in a world that depends on its ability to strengthen illusions of race. Do not think that whiteness should continue to exist within you; agency is a synonym for power, so live accordingly. END OF VOICEMAIL.





Call It an “Obi”, Not a Hut: Linguistic Resistance in Chinua Achebe’s “Arrow of God”

Zoe Achim

An italicized, non-English word in an otherwise all-English novel demands a certain kind of recognition on the part of the reader. It stands out, it overtakes. It kills any and all assumptions favouring the complete domination of English literature from the moment it appears on the page, and it forces a Western reader to acknowledge a global context of literary works. The third novel in Chinua Achebe’s acclaimed African Trilogy, *Arrow of God*, is no exception to this rule, and its consistent use of Igbo words firmly shakes a Western reader with no prior knowledge of the language out of their comfortable English stupor. In his article, “Igbo Words for the Non-Igbo: Achebe's Artistry in ‘Arrow of God’" Hugh R. Brown analyzes the novel by categorizing examples of this deviation from an established monolingual literary canon. He cites Peter Young’s “Tradition, Language and the Reintegration of Identity in West African Literature in English,” using Young’s classification system of the ‘non-deliberate’ (Igbo words whose semantic English meanings can be parsed by their surroundings), and the ‘deliberate’ (terms that do not have a direct English equivalent) (Brown, 1981, p. 70). However, Brown revises Young’s work to include what is essentially a third category of Igbo uses that he places as a subset of the ‘non-deliberate.’ Brown claims that “the nondeliberate category must be subdivided into two units: words whose general semantic meaning is at least relatively clear

and words that remain unknown" (70), a sentiment that I'd both agree and disagree with. It is true that there are defined Igbo words that still remain unclear to a Western reader in *Arrow of God*, but I'd argue that they don't exist as a facet of the 'non-deliberate,' rather they land somewhere in the middle of a 'deliberate'-'non-deliberate' spectrum. So while a foundational understanding of Young's classification method as well as Brown's revisions are both undoubtedly useful for an essay committed to understanding *Arrow of God*'s use of Igbo, their dedication to this binary notion of deliberateness threatens to unnecessarily complicate the discussion, as well as potentially undermine Achebe's craft ('non-deliberate' implying that a portion of Achebe's linguistic techniques are in some way a result of unconscious thought rather than the choices of a skilled author). Thus, a revision of my own is required. Going forward, uses of the Igbo language in *Arrow of God* that can have their general meaning parsed by monolingual English speakers will be known as an 'explained' use, while an instance of the Igbo language used because there is no conceptual English equivalent will be dubbed 'elusive;' both the 'explained' and the 'elusive' now existing on either side of a spectrum. I intend to use this new classification system to prove that the novel uses Igbo in a consistent and constant way, and then posit what Igbo in the novel accomplishes. By examining *Arrow of God* in conjunction with theories of postcolonial thought as well as postcolonial linguistic resistance, one is able to see that the novel refuses to yield to a Eurocentric ideal of literature and stubbornly asserts the importance of African culture in a global landscape.

The first use of an Igbo word in *Arrow of God* is decidedly an 'explained' use. Achebe writes that chief priest Ezeulu's "*obi* was built differently from other men's huts" (Achebe, 1964/2010, p. 2). A monolingual English-speaking reader can understand from surrounding context that *obi* means hut, but Achebe specifically does not use blatant and blunt translation methods. He does not say, 'Ezeulu's *obi*, or hut, was built differently...,' he forces the reader to discern the semantic meaning later in the sentence. Achebe, if only for a second, leaves a Western reader who does not know Igbo, disoriented due to their own lack of understanding of African languages. The novel does this again when it says, "'Here is a piece of *nzu*,' [Ezeulu] said as he rolled the chalk towards his guest" (p. 62). *Nzu* is explained as chalk after a few words, but Achebe again does not choose to aid the reader instantly. A Western reader

sits with these sentences in discomfort, searching for the meaning, and only discerns it with their own interpretation efforts. As mentioned however, this classification system is a spectrum, and therefore there are also examples of Igbo in the novel that land somewhere in between 'explained' and 'elusive,' words that can be parsed but whose true meaning still remains relatively unknown. When Ezulu first goes to his household shrine, Achebe writes: "His *ikenga*, about as tall as a man's forearm, its animal horn as long as the rest of its human body, jostled with the faceless *okposi* of the ancestors" (p. 6). Here, there exists no explanatory words whatsoever, only incomplete visual descriptors. A non-Igbo speaking reader has the surrounding context of a religious practice to help them parse the meaning, as well as the fact that an *okposi* is something that is "carved" (p. 6) and can be 'faceless,' but these definitions are not as clear as in previous examples. It is impossible for a Western reader to definitively know that an *ikenga* and an *okposi* are both religious idol-figures simply by reading this passage. We see this again with the line "But [Ugoye] was very pleased with the black patterns of *uli* and faint yellow lines of *ogalu* on her body" (p. 68). A non-Igbo speaker understands that the black *uli* and the yellow *ogalu* are artistic designs on one's body, and that Ugoye has these markings because of a festival so they are presumably saved for special occasions, but the explanation ends there. Are these markings ink or paint based? Permanent or temporary? What is the Igbo art style that would act as the foundation for these patterns or designs? While using the words *uli* and *ogalu* would immediately bring to mind a specific kind of body art for those that know the language and cultural practices, Western readers are left with a vague picture that will never capture the true image of Ugoye's decorative techniques. This then leads us to the completely 'elusive' uses of Igbo words, Igbo used for concepts in which there is no English equivalent. A notable case of the 'elusive,' is Achebe's use of the word *chi*. The closest English translation for *chi* is 'personal god,' but that in no way encompasses everything that *chi* is. *Chi* can be challenged or heeded, as Ezeulu tells the men of Umuaro. It can be a force or deity that protects and punishes in equal measure. Ezeulu recalls a story in which a wrestler provoked the spirits, saying, "Rather than heed the call to go home he gave a challenge to the spirits to bring out their best and strongest wrestler. So they sent him his personal god, a little wiry spirit who seized him with one hand and smashed him on the stony earth" (p. 26). Yet Achebe

writes later, “Perhaps Nwaka counted on the protection of the personal god of his village” (p. 39), suggesting a benevolent side to *chi*. When Ezeulu says “But let us leave Akukalia aside; he has gone the way his *chi* ordained” (p. 26), *chi* is placed on the level of the individual, but with the later line “Umuaro is today challenging its *chi*” (p. 26), *chi* becomes as big as a collective village deity. Brown summarizes it best, saying:

“It becomes increasingly clear not only that there is no English equivalent for *chi*, but also that the concept itself is rather complex. The best that the reader can do is to conclude that *chi* refers to spiritual forces fully respected but not fully defined, to the mystery of human life and behavior, to the extrarational that seems involved in ideas of fate, fortune, and luck.” (Brown, 1981, p. 82)

Despite all that a Western reader might desire, the true meaning of *chi* remains elusive for all except those who have an implicit understanding of Igbo. With Achebe’s handling of the concept, there is no possible way to comprehend every connotation without external investigation. Using the word *chi* in such a way calls to an aspect of Igbo culture that relies on personal experience with the concept to grasp its depths, and such an experience is not one a Western reader is likely to have.

One might be tempted to disregard the ‘explained’ uses of the Igbo language as unhelpful in any type of linguistic resistance. To explain an indigenous language to colonizers seems to do something closer to helping rather than rebelling against them. But Achebe, even through his explanations, refuses to abandon his postcolonial purpose. This is exemplified in how *Arrow of God* handles the *ogene*. The first time an *ogene* is mentioned is at the beginning of the novel, as Achebe writes, “[Ezeulu] beat his *ogene* GOME GOME GOME GOME” (Achebe, 1964/2010, p. 2). The reader then gets clarification a sentence later when Ezeulu puts “the stick back into the iron gong” (p. 2), explaining through context clues that an *ogene* is, in fact, an ‘iron gong.’ This particular kind of description continues throughout the novel. In Chapter Fourteen, Achebe writes, “Nwafo looked at the *ogene* which lay by the wall, the stick with which it was beaten showing at its mouth” (166), and in Chapter Seventeen an *ogene* is again referred to as a “metal gong” (p. 195). Yet, if a Western reader were to look at a picture of an *ogene* before they read Achebe’s explanation, it is highly likely that they would describe it as akin to a large bell-like instrument rather than a gong. An



African (or more specifically, Igbo-speaking) reader would understand exactly what Achebe means by virtue of knowing the language; while a Westerner, relying on clarification, is likely to spend the whole novel imagining the kind of gong that originated in East/South Asia instead. What's important to recognize though, is that Achebe is not wrong when he describes an *ogene* this way. An *ogene* still fits the description of a metal percussion instrument that one plays with a stick, it's the details that vary from Western assumptions. Achebe writes with the Igbo language as if his readers will always implicitly understand exactly what he means, native Africans being the vast majority of those that would be able to do so. This sentiment holds true for the 'explained' examples mentioned above. An *obi* is, as Young puts it, "The special reception hut of the Ibo [sic] head of family" (Young, 1973, p. 32). There is a level of importance to an *obi* that is conveyed clearly in the Igbo language in which there exists a separate word for the specific kind of building. To call it a 'hut' in English however, invokes the image of a run-down shack-like building in a Western mind, rather than the true meaning. The same goes for *nzu* being translated as 'chalk.' When a Western reader imagines chalk, they are likely to picture the kind used on the sidewalk or a blackboard. This does not match Achebe's prior description of "a lump of white clay" (Achebe, 1964/2010, p. 62), and thus the English translation is incomplete and inadequate. *Nzu* is chalk, and also it is not. An *obi* is a hut, but that's not all it is. The only people that would be able to understand *Arrow of God* in its truest form are those that speak Igbo, no matter how much of the general semantic meaning a Western reader might be able to parse. This is all to say that *Arrow of God* both does and does not aim to make the Igbo language understandable for a Western audience, but even when it entertains the notion of elucidation, it still refuses to submit to presumptions held by those with colonial-biased understandings of the world and its cultures.

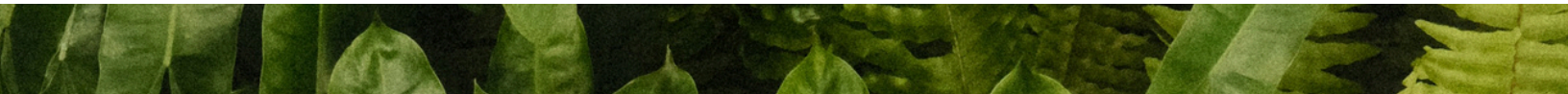
While the presence of this specific use of Igbo words and the Igbo language undeniably exists, proving the presence alone says nothing of what exactly such a use of form accomplishes. To do that, I'd turn to the work of Frantz Fanon in *Black Skin, White Masks*, specifically his commentary on Carl Jung's notion of the collective unconscious. Fanon criticizes Jung's conception by noting the lack of consideration for a non-white reality, and how what he might deem as neurologically universal is at once an

oversimplification and harmful. Fanon says, “Jung locates the collective unconscious in the inherited cerebral matter. But the collective unconscious, without our having to fall back on the genes, is purely and simply the sum of prejudices, myths, collective attitudes of a given group” (Fanon, 1967/2008, p. 145), and goes on to clarify that “The collective unconscious is not dependent on cerebral heredity; it is the result of what I shall call the unreflected imposition of a culture” (p. 147). To Fanon, the collective unconscious is not biological in nature, it is simply indicative of the values of the dominant culture. One can see these ideas mirrored in Ngugi wa Thiong’O’s “The Language of African Literature,” though with the added aspect of language as an inherent facet of culture. He says that “Language carries culture, and culture carries, particularly through orature and literature, the entire body of values by which we come to perceive ourselves and our place in the world” (Ngugi, 2007, p. 293), which manages to tether the collective unconscious (‘the entire body of values by which we come to perceive ourselves and our place in the world’) to culture, and then culture to language. Furthermore, when Fanon says that “An Antillean is made white by the collective unconscious” (Fanon, 1967/2008, p. 149), he is effectively declaring that the collective unconscious–as well as the presiding culture and its language–is inherently white, and therefore evaluates the merit of lives with the context of European colonization. Fanon, taken together with Ngugi, creates a collective unconscious that judges the worth of any given culture and/or language by the standards of a white European colonial force. Thus, African literature and language must contend with a communal attitude that fosters hostility and and loathing towards any expression of humanity that does not fit within a white colonial framework. Any African author is writing to an audience–both in and outside of the continent–that holds the English language as the foundation for culture and worthy collective knowledge.

Arrow of God, for its part, refutes that premise. It faces an audience that subliminally and unconsciously (or actively and consciously, depending on the level of bigotry) holds English and its accompanying values as an indication of worth, and proves their nescience. *Arrow of God* exemplifies the attitude of the early contemporary African writers who understood that culture and knowledge were used as instruments of control by their colonizers, and thus, decided to pick up those same tools to retaliate against their oppressors (Ugor, 2024). This specific use of

the Igbo language manages to reverse the power dynamic between colonizer and colonized, showcasing a situation in which the 'lesser' African people hold knowledge that the 'enlightened' Western world does not. The novel forces its Western English speaking readers to carry that same burden of learning, weighing them down with their own ignorance in regards to the Igbo culture in much the same way that colonial forces do to colonized populations with Western and European ideals. It evokes the African history of involuntary bilingualism, and uses it to shatter preconceived notions of total Western superiority. A collective unconscious, a ubiquitous judgement system, cannot be founded on Western standards alone, because that contradicts the way Igbo is treated in *Arrow of God*. If the white collective unconscious is an unquestionable authority, then why is there a veritable body of African knowledge that is used in such a way that it assumes the automatic understanding of its intricacies and lexicon? Why can African readers understand the text–the English text–in a way that Western readers cannot? Why are those that hold Western knowledge left on the outskirts of understanding? If the white collective unconscious exists as an unquestionable authority, then why can African culture supplant it?

Achebe continues to subvert widespread deception peddled by colonial powers simply by including the Igbo language in *Arrow of God* at all. Of course, if language is "both a means of communication and a carrier of culture" (Ngugi, 2007, p. 291), then the presence of a language will always mean the presence of a culture. Culture, meanwhile, stands very specifically as an indication of humanity, and therefore worth. Erasing the language and a culture of a community erases everything that makes them human, and colonial forces understand this implicitly. Cultural control was a common tactic used to subjugate Indigenous populations, as colonizing nations spun a narrative of a 'dark' and 'barren' Africa filled with 'beasts' rather than people–a narrative that still, in many ways, persists today (Ugor, 2024). If Africans do not have culture, then they are not human, and if they are not human, they can be exterminated with impunity. The mere fact that Igbo words even exist in *Arrow of God*, is an unflinching attestation to the humanity of the Igbo, as well as indigenous Africans as a whole. Not only that, but the presence of Igbo undermines the blanket success of the aforementioned colonial tactics. Ngugi says that "[t]he domination of a people's



language by the languages of the colonizing nations was crucial to the domination of the mental universe of the colonised" (Ngugi, 2007, p. 294), but what we can see in *Arrow of God* is a language that isn't fully dominated. Igbo words peek through the cracks of a presumed monolithic English, and prove that the attempts to kill the language, to kill the culture, to kill the *people*, have decidedly failed. I picture European colonial forces plastering a domineering English over the native tongue, never to be seen or heard again. Yet despite attempts to the contrary, something still lives and breathes beneath the surface. Igbo words puncture through the covered and bound pages of English literature with an unmatched strength of will, claiming their authority and importance all the while. The presence of the Igbo language makes colonial claims as to the lack of African humanity impossible to substantiate, while simultaneously subverting the image of colonizing nations as all-powerful. Igbo as a language lives, and, like its people, will not bow down to the forces that threaten it.

Though for all this essay has claimed about Achebe and *Arrow of God* as a postcolonial work that rejects and supplants English, I would be remiss not to mention that Achebe does stand as a famous proponent for the value of English in African literature. In his essay, "The African Writer and the English Language," Achebe continuously champions English as a method of communicating African existences in spite of its history. He claims that:

"Those of us who have inherited the English language may not be in a position to appreciate the value of the inheritance. Or we may go on resenting it because it came as part of a package deal which included many other items of doubtful value and the positive atrocity of racial arrogance and prejudice, which may yet set the world on fire. But let us not in rejecting the evil throw out the good with it." (Achebe, 1975, p. 96)

This is a stark contrast to the attitude of other African critics, namely Obiajunwa Wali and Ngugi wa Thiong'O. In "The Dead End of African Literature?" Wali says contemporary African literature written in colonial languages "lacks any blood or stamina, and has no means of self-enrichment" (Wali, 2007, p. 282). He believes the practice exclusionary, and that "The ordinary local audience, with little or no education in the conventional European manner, and who constitute an overwhelming majority, has no chance at participating in this kind of literature" (p. 282).

However, *Arrow of God* seems to align more with the perspectives of Ngugi and Wali, despite Achebe's proclaimed stance. Even if it is written in English, *Arrow of God* speaks to the local population in ways that a Western audience cannot appreciate. Its use of Igbo does not capitulate to a canon that relies on English understanding. Writing about *Arrow of God*, Bawa Kammampoal claims that Achebe "succeeds in embellishing a foreign language with local idioms" (Kammampoal, 2022, p. 33), but this way of analyzing the Igbo language seems to reinforce the understanding that English is in some way more worthy of development. As Thiong'o asks: "Why…should an African writer, or any writer, become so obsessed by taking from his mother-tongue to enrich other tongues?" (Thiong'o, 2007, p. 288). English, globally pervasive as it is, certainly does not need to take more from the cultures it aims to quash. Brown says that "the African writer who uses words from his language so that they not only do not obtrude but also become at least generally clear to the monolingual English reader has achieved artistry" (p. 69), but is that really true? Should the worth of an African language in literature rely on how easily it can be digested and spun into English comprehension? Should artistry be defined by how well art yields to the sensibilities of a dominant colonial audience?

Despite all my posturing, I hesitate to end this essay with my own final opinion as to the value of the English language in African literature. Both because I–as a native English speaker born and raised in North America–will always selfishly hold somewhat of a bias in favour of the only language I can understand, and also because I don't believe I actually have the right to volunteer such a definitive opinion. I write in the context of a society intent on embracing colonization-based globalization no matter the cost, and such a collective requires a level of unified communication that is founded on oppression. However, it must be acknowledged that this oppressive attempt at unified communication is the only reason that I can read *Arrow of God*, as well as the work of any African author mentioned thus far. A violent and cruel history is the very reason this essay exists. I have to question my right to stand on this soapbox if my understanding of African literature and literary criticism relies on this argued "unassailable position of English in our literature" (Ngugi, 2007, p. 287). As Achebe says, "There is certainly a great advantage to writing in a world language" (Achebe, 1975, p. 97), yet I feel that my fellow Western contemporaries and I are the sole

benefactors. I can advocate for African languages all I'd like, but I'm still doing so in colonial English, I'm still a beneficiary of colonial practices. I have to wonder if Wali, Ngugi, and those that feel as they do, would read this essay and be repulsed by my attempts at solidarity. Truly, I couldn't blame them if they were. Admittedly, I don't exactly know where to go from here. I have no clear cut answer to preach. It is extremely likely that my voice will simply become another drop in the ocean of debates surrounding the English language in African Literature–and maybe that's how it was always meant to be. This essay cannot and will not provide a judgement on the English language from the perspective of a monolingual English speaking North American, and I don't believe it should. What it can do however, is provide a reading of Achebe's *Arrow of God* that demonstrates how one can subvert a colonial medium in favour of African prioritization. The use of Igbo in the novel rejects English as a worshipped monolith, and proves that despite all that has been and is still being done to try and completely ruin Africa in the name of colonization and white superiority, African culture still lives. It still thrives. A hut does not have to be a hut, it can be an *obi* instead.



‘Artivism’ in Afghanistan: Can it Survive the War?

Amrita Muralidharan



Kabul, the capital of Afghanistan is termed to be one of the ugliest cities in the world. This a rather tone-deaf statement, but as a city at war, Kabul is lined with dozens of concrete blast walls. Houses of powerful people, government buildings and embassies are lined with double rows of these concrete walls (Newsela | *Afghani Artist Puts Beautiful Images on Kabul’s Ugly Walls of War, n.d.).* This represents the divide in Afghanistan. Inside the walls, you are safe, but only if you are important to the Taliban – the terrorist group that has been ‘ruling’ Afghanistan for decades. Outside the walls, you are susceptible to all kinds of danger. Daily, the people of Afghanistan face suicide and car bombers and other extremist attacks. They are vulnerable to such danger by simply stepping out of their houses. While these walls are a visual representation of the class divide, they have also provided a canvas for artists to challenge the Taliban’s views. In 2014, a group of artivists called the Art Lords emerged. Their work is

centred around their campaign for peace and social transformation. The Art Lords paint murals on walls in Kabul that were damaged during bomb blasts in Kabul. They turn bleak corners affected by the war into colourful and vibrant places that promote peace and encourage a democratic future for their country. Their first mural, “I See You” (2015), focused on the high levels of corruption and the various issues facing Afghanistan. Their work immediately caught the eye of various international news outlets, and it brought to attention the state their country was in (Walla, 2020).

Human rights, especially the rights of women and girls are severely compromised under the Taliban’s rule. Women under the rule of the Taliban, are treated merely as commodities. An estimated number of 850,000 girls in Afghanistan are at risk of child marriage, and economic and sexual exploitation (OHCHR, n.d.).

This is exactly why pieces by fearless female artivists like Shamsia Hassani must be discussed. Her work brings to light how women in her country are dehumanized and disregarded, despite being women of the 21st century. In a country that erases



women, her work inspires thousands of women to stand up against the Taliban. The graffiti she paints around Kabul focuses on highlighting the serious tragedy women face in Afghanistan. Through her Dreaming Graffiti series (2013-), Hassani depicts Afghan women as strong, brave and rebellious.

The work that artivists in Afghanistan perform is extremely meaningful for the people there. It helps them maintain a sense of normalcy, express their pain through art and most importantly, ignites hope for a future of peace despite the bleak situation. However, the ground reality does remain that while pieces of street art like Shamsia Hassani's "Dreaming Graffiti" (2013) or the mural "I See You" (2015) by the Art Lords do not change the Taliban's mindset, they do help heal the people of Afghanistan and spread awareness. Building awareness beyond the country's borders is crucial to shed light on the Taliban's daily violation of human rights.

I aim to prove the relevance and impact of artivism by analyzing the work of the Art Lords and Shamsia Hassani. I sectioned every argument to elaborate on the selected artivists' local and international impact, as well as how they function after the Taliban resurfaced in 2021, and what makes their work and presence critical to keep spreading education about the human rights crisis in Afghanistan. Although it is uncertain how artivists can continue to make and publicize art despite the harsh rule of the Taliban, art continues to be a source of hope and serenity in turbulent Afghanistan.

Historical background – The Taliban and the US involvement in the War in Afghanistan (2001-2021)

The Taliban first gained control over most parts of Afghanistan in 1996, overthrowing the government. The United States briefly intervened in 2001, taking control of Afghanistan until 2021, when they withdrew. The departure of the US troops gave the Taliban an opening to take control of Afghanistan once again. Eventually, in September 2021, less than a month after the US troops left Afghan land, the Taliban had full control of the country and its governance. The Taliban is known for their extremist interpretation of Islamic Law and its harsh implementation.

The Islamic Law, called the Sharia, is fully and strictly administered throughout the Taliban's regime. There has always existed a history of debate surrounding Sharia law and its various interpretations. However, under the veil of creating a country of 'lawabiding' citizens, the Taliban has declared violent crimes such as public executions, stoning, flogging and amputations to be part of their judicial system. Clearly, this indicates a severe human rights crisis. According to the United Nations Human Rights Council, Afghans are trapped in a human rights crisis that the world seems powerless to address (OHCHR, n.d.). The crisis particularly affects women, who are barred from attending school or university; they cannot work, nor can they live a life of freedom and fulfilment. The Taliban ruled Afghanistan from 1996 to 2001. In 2001, the Taliban was overthrown when the US troops entered Afghanistan.

The US government spent nearly $145 billion trying to rebuild the Afghan economy. The US government also hoped that, through this investment, it would be able to eliminate the Al-Qaeda and Taliban regimes. While the costs invested into bettering the situation in Afghanistan served a significant level of change – especially in the areas of health care, maternal health and education, it was not enough (*What We Need to Learn: Lessons From Twenty Years of Afghanistan Reconstruction*, n.d.). Afghanistan and its people had suffered a great deal of trauma, and earning their trust was difficult. Further, the US government itself was overwhelmed with the task of quite literally, rebuilding a country. Eventually, due to the loss of life of both Afghan civilians and US troops, the US military withdrew in August 2021, without leaving a residual force. Afghanistan once again slipped into the power of the Taliban and faces yet another human rights crisis. Afghanistan has been in this war-like state for over 21 years, yet the lack of awareness regarding the actuality of the situation there is alarming.

Literature Review

In this paper, I aim to prove the importance and relevance of Artivism in a country severely impacted by years of war. To do so, it is important to understand who these artivists are, and how their personal experiences during the war impacted their work. Hence, it is crucial to my argument to utilize sources that directly quote the ideas of the artivists. I heavily utilized information directly from

the artivists' websites. Since both the artivists I discuss were street artists initially, their websites were relatively new. Nevertheless, they provided a synthesized review of all their work and the ideas behind them. Shamsia Hassani's website *(Shamsia Hassani - Official Website*, n.d.) provided short explanations of the artivist's inspiration behind each ofher pieces, making it incredibly useful to my in-depth analysis of the message behind her artwork. To better understand the artivists whose work I examined, I needed to read about their experiences under the Taliban. Personal and one-to-one interviews I found through research greatly aided me in better understanding the circumstances that took them toward the path of Artivism. Pabón-Colón's interview with Shamsia Hassani proved to be extremely helpful in aiding and abetting my arguments regarding the intent behind her art. It also provided a window into her thoughts and fears about being a female artist under the Taliban rule, which is crucial to the scope of my paper and helped examine the extent to which freedom of expression has been curbed in Afghanistan. Similarly, a first-hand collection of experiences shared by Kabir Mokamel (*Newsela | Afghani Artist Puts Beautiful Images on Kabul's Ugly Walls of War,* n.d.) aided in understanding and elaborating an argument on the vitality Artivism holds in healing then people of Afghanistan. The overlapping themes of personal anecdotes provided by the artivists' websites as well as interviews helped me highlight the relevance of their work.

I also analyzed specific pieces of art by these selected artivists to convey the essence of the artistic movement in Afghanistan. With the help of the Art Lords website (*Art Lords,* n.d.), I was able to examine their pieces I See You (2015) and I will build my homeland (2021). These two distinct pieces helped visualize the shift in their work during the Taliban reclamation of Afghan land. Hassani's website (*Shamsia Hassani - Official Website*, n.d.) also helped observe how her "Dreaming Graffiti" (2013-) series evolved and was kept alive despite not continuing as a form of street art. Later, I utilized her Facebook post from 2021 (Hassani, S. 2021, Facebook) to examine one of her paintings, Nightmare (2021), which expresses her outrage towards the new Taliban mandates banning women from schools and universities. The impact this piece had helped me tie back to my main argument regarding awareness and education about

the human rights crisis in Afghanistan.

For a broader perspective and a basis for an introduction to the paper, I utilized an academic paper by Eleni Zaras (*Art Lords: Effecting Peace Through Art In - ProQuest*, n.d.) on the Art Lords. It provided me with background information to frame an introduction to. Build on the later argument as to why Art Lords are at the helm of Artivism in Afghanistan. I also utilized statistics from the Human Rights Council in Afghanistan (OHCHR, n.d.), to reason why female artivists like Shamsia Hassani are so keen on highlighting the lack of women's rights in Afghanistan. For building on a more holistic introduction as to how and why Afghanistan ended up in a severe human rights crisis, I made use of the article *What We Need to Learn: Lessons from Twenty Years of Afghanistan Reconstruction.* It elaborated on the slow recovery of the Afghan economy under the U.S. regime and how their efforts were not sufficient, leading to the eventual slippage of Afghanistan back into the hands of the Taliban. It was important to examine this shift of power to understand how it affected the Art Lords and Hassani's work in Afghanistan.

The Art Lords, their work and purpose

"Afghanistan is known for its 'druglords' and 'warlords', but we wanted to reclaim the term through our organization's name – 'Art Lords'." – Kabir Mokamel (Newsela | Afghani Artist Puts Beautiful Images on Kabul's Ugly Walls of War, n.d.)

The Art Lords are a society of artists, brought together by two Afghan men – Kabir Mokamel and Omaid Sharifi. They aim at spreading awareness, healing, and togetherness through their murals across Afghanistan. The Art Lords started working in 2014, and since then, they have brightened up corners of Kabul with their work. The Art Lords work on concrete walls, which are meant to protect civilians from bombing. They turn the bleak greyness of the walls into colourful murals, all while encapsulating the message of peace and prosperity as an important piece of their country's future. For Mokamel, the artwork he makes acts as a healing mechanism. He remembers an incident from when he was just 10 years old. His father had rushed to his school to pick him up because the war in Afghanistan had started. He remembers hearing explosions, fighter jets and machine guns when he reached

home. These memories haunted him and marked the start of a new normal for all Afghan people. Children would now hear explosions daily. Years later, Mokamel painted a mural illustrating what he felt that day *(Newsela | Afghani Artist Puts Beautiful Images on Kabul's Ugly Walls of War*, n.d.).



Figure 1 'I See You' (2015)

The Art Lords aim to further the message of peace through expression in the arts. They desire to provide a platform to implement social and behavioural change among the people of Afghanistan. Their artwork highlights and illustrates their collective desire as a community to move away from a perpetual state of violence and war. Through their artwork, the Art Lords aim to generate dialogue and initiate discussion among Afghan citizens and the international world alike, regarding the cruel and unfair situation the country and its people have been subjected to. Their series of murals is painted on blast walls, typically near government ministries and focus on anti-corruption. One of their very first pieces was a mural titled 'I See You' (2015) (*Art Lords*, n.d.). The mural is an illustration of two huge eyes, depicting that the Afghan civilians see and notice the corrupt act of their so-called, political leaders. This mural, like most of their pieces of art, was painted on a concrete wall outside a government ministry. While these concrete walls are meant to protect all Afghan citizens from bombings, several government ministries and houses of people of supposed importance to the Taliban are lined with two rows of such concrete walls.

This demonstrates that the Taliban are ever ready to protect those whom they want to, while civilians are subjected to constant violence. Civilian casualties hit an all-time high in 2021, signifying that neither the Taliban nor the US troops cared about a commoner's right to safety in their own country. The mural is a pivotal piece of artivism for contemporary Afghanistan since it characterized the dawn of artivism in Afghanistan. It symbolized the start of peaceful activism through art in a country of war. 'I See You' (2015) represented that the civilians of Afghanistan were ready to stand up for their right to live a

peaceful and secure life.

The Art Lords, hence, succeed in their aim to change the negative psychological impact of the constant terrorizing environment created by the Taliban into a positive visual impact for the citizens of Afghanistan. Their work also serves as a means for Afghan people to express and emote their trauma and understand that what they as a community have been through is in no way justified. At a local level, the impact the Art Lords have on the people of Afghanistan is phenomenal. They regularly hosted group art therapy sessions, music sessions and worked with their community to paint their murals. By working on art together as a community, the Art Lords not only help themselves heal but also heal the people they involve in the process of making their art. They prove to be a ray of hope and quite literally paint a picture of a peaceful future for the people of Afghanistan. In January 2020, Sharifi and Mokamel appeared at the US Institute of Peace (USIP) in Washington to share their art and the vision behind it (*Art Lords: Effecting Peace Through Art In - ProQuest,* n.d.). They managed to garner extensive media coverage and gained a loyal community of supporters on an international level, and attended several events such as the one in USIP. These events enable them to not only garner support but also gain diplomatic recognition. The group is now heavily funded by international donors.

The Art Lords Post the 2021 Taliban Reclamation of Power

Sadly, not much can be done to change the ground-level reality in Afghanistan. The Art Lords receive constant death threats due to the supposed "Anti-Muslim" messages they convey through their work. They are threatened with kidnapping, bomb attacks and harassment by the Taliban and their supporters. Three members of the Art Lords were brutally murdered by the Taliban in 2021. When the Taliban regained power in 2021, they made it their first order of control to destroy the murals painted by the Art Lords on the concrete walls and replace them with messages that furthered their propaganda. They burned down galleries owned by the Art Lords throughout all the provinces in the country. Many artivists ended up destroying their own pieces of art to protect themselves from the Taliban. Sharifi describes this era of fear as a time when the artivists lost their 'human dignity as some of them fled and others were forced into hiding' (*Art Lords*, n.d.).

Despite the hostile and challenging environment, the Art Lords had a firm belief in their cause and continued working. They brought art into a toxic environment. An environment characterized by hatred and anger, and through art, they changed that. The Taliban regaining power in 2021 and severely clamping down on civil freedom did not stop them. When the Taliban burnt their galleries down, they launched new ones and even built an arts-and-culture magazine featuring a wide range of outreach programs. The Art Lords launched the 'Let's Talk Afghanistan' campaign that empowered youth to come together and work towards a democratic, inclusive, and peaceful future for their country. Due to extremely violent conditions post the Taliban takeover, the Art Lords decided to expand their digital and global presence.

Their newest piece, I will build my homeland (2021), illustrates a young Afghan girl carrying the country (Art Lords, n.d.). The piece illustrates that even though many Afghans are leaving the country due to its extremely dangerous environment, they continue to take Afghanistan forward with them. Afghanistan is divided by red and bloody lines in the



Figure 2, I will build my homeland (2021)

painting, signifying that even when the country is fragmented and broken, Afghan refugees continue to hold and honour a piece of their country. It signifies that despite coming from a place of trauma, the new generation of Afghan refugees are brave and resilient, and now more than ever are well-equipped to educate others about the war in their country and take their country forward, onto the path of healing. Today, the Art Lords continue working from exile, and they continue to propagate their belief in the transformative power of art. They now focus on building a community of artivists among Afghan refugees, across several countries, including the United States, Albania, and Italy.

Although the Art Lords now work from remote areas, the 2,000 murals they painted in over 20 Afghan districts have a lasting impact on the people of Afghanistan. The Art Lords sustain

an international impact and to date, send out ripples of inspiration to artivists in Afghanistan and other South Asian countries. Indeed, the Art Lords managed to unite and led a group of forty-five youth artivists from several South Asian countries and curated the region's first arts lab. Such initiatives brought forth by the Art Lords united communities, lessened regional disparities within Afghanistan and most importantly, spread awareness and educated the international community about the ongoing human rights crisis in Afghanistan. Even after facing extreme difficulties in 2021, the Art Lords continue to share the untold stories of civil society through their murals. "Art Lords continues its global advocacy for Afghanistan's artists, activists, and cultural heritage. This is not the end of our story", Sharifi proclaimed in one of his newsletters, and rightly so (Art Lords, n.d.). Artivism is flourishing in Afghanistan, and the Art Lords continue to be at the helm of the movement.



The Story of Women in Afghanistan – Through the Eyes of the artivist Shamsia Hassaini

Shamsia Hassani is Afghanistan's first female graffiti artist. While the Afghan government and several of its rulers' view women in a different light, portraying them as people without a voice, Hassani aims to give women a voice through her art. When Afghanistan was under the Taliban rule before 2001, they had barred women and girls from schools, universities, and employment and even barred their presence in many public spaces. Women were systemically segregated from social life and were even made to always wear the Taliban-mandated burqa if they were to be in a public space. They could not even step out of their houses without a male relative, by blood, accompanying them. Failure to comply with these stringent laws would result in public execution or flogging.

When the US troops came to Afghanistan in 2001, laws that oppressed women were eradicated. Women's rights improved, but this did not mean that the trauma several women faced as a result of the Taliban regime disappeared. Women had been subjected to years of emotional and mental torture, with several of them being married off at extremely young ages. Much like the Art Lords, Hassani aims to address the trauma women faced under the Taliban regime. She expresses her pain through art and, through that, represents the suffering of millions of Afghan women. Although her work encapsulates pain, it also displays elements of strength in times of adversity.

Hassani aims to empower women through her art. She started painting when Afghanistan was starting a new life, a new dawn, wherein women could dream and make their dreams come true. Hassani wants to cover all bad memories of the war with her graffiti."I could say my words with shapes to people, easily; the image has more effect than words, and it's a friendly way to fight, as I am fighting, now, for women's rights as well with my art." Hassani states (Pabón-Colón, 2022). Hassani wants her art to remain on the streets so that the tragedy women who faced under the Taliban rule is not forgotten. However, she portrays them not as victims, but as warriors and survivors. She wants Afghan women to be known as the unspoken soldiers who, despite years of war and oppression, are now on the way to making a new life for themselves.

This is what inspired her to begin her series of street art, titled ‘Dreaming Graffiti’(2013-). Most of her graffiti in this series contains an identical element, a young girl, whom Hassani refers to by her own first name, ‘Shamsia’ (A, Figure 3). Hassani, throughout this series, explains that little Shamsia, via her graffiti, walks through the streets of Kabul holding her piano.

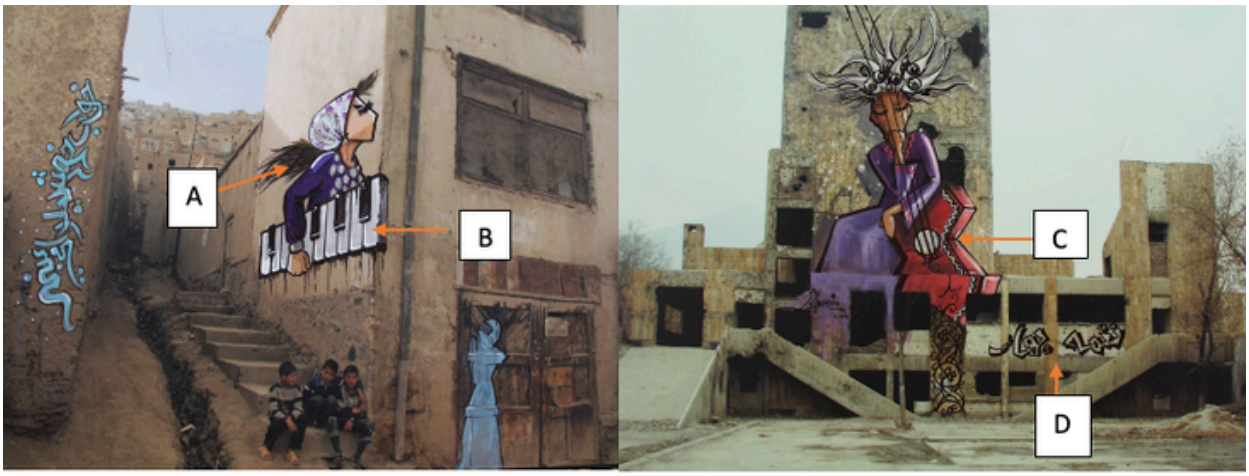


Figure 3, Dreaming Graffiti (2013 -)

The piano (B, Figure 3) illustrates the young girl’s artistic dreams, which she would not have been able to pursue under the rule of the Taliban. Some of her pieces also include a guitar (C, Figure 3) and some alphabets (D, Figure 3), which she terms as symbols of positive change. Just like the young girl in the graffiti, it was Hassani’s dream to paint the damaged walls of her beloved city, Kabul. She often mentioned how it would be difficult for her, as a woman and as a citizen of Kabul to be painting out in the open. She would often be subjected to security breaches and constantly be under the supervision of local orthodox groups, who believed a woman should not be painting in the streets.

Being a female artivist in Afghanistan

When the Taliban took over in September 2021, Kabul was pushed into a state of chaos, and Hassani had to flee the country. Yet, she still believed she had the responsibility to take forward the message of the existence of dreams and aspirations in a country of war. She continued working on her “Dreaming Graffiti” (2013-) series but painted on the walls of Kabul in a rather

unique and innovative way. Right before she left Kabul, Hassani took pictures of walls and alleys she wished she had painted on earlier. She printed out these pictures on a large scale, continued sketching out little Shamsia and kept her series, Dreaming Graffiti, alive. She started circulating her pieces on the internet, and it surely helped her reach a wider audience. Hassani wants her country to be known as a country of healing and art, not a country of war (Pabón-Colón, 2022).



Figure 4, Dreaming Graffiti, A piece from exile.

Hassani's work has always directly challenged the beliefs of the Taliban since it portrays women as proud, loud, and a force to be reckoned with, unlike what the Taliban believe in. Her work has uplifted and inspired millions of women in Afghanistan. Hassani's work threatens the existing doctrine of rules set for women by the Taliban, making her a direct threat in their eyes. She portrayed women clad in burqas, and sometimes not in burqas, highlighting the necessity for choice that needed to be given to a modern Muslim woman. While Hassani now works predominantly through a digital medium, her work used to once line the walls and alleys of Kabul. She used to finish her graffiti within the span of 15 minutes and immediately flee the spot, fearing an attack from the Taliban or other extremist groups that roamed the streets of Kabul at that time. One of her most famous pieces, titled "Secrets" (2016), used to be on a wall at the Darul Aman Palace in Kabul. It features a young burqa-clad woman seated on a stairway, with the caption "The water can come back to dried-up rivers, but what of the fish that died in the droughts?" (*Shamsia Hassani - Official Website,* n.d.). The caption signified the women lost, murdered, and brutalized during the years of war in Afghanistan. She claims that the trauma from the years of war is not merely forgotten, and the scars remain.



Figure 5, Secrets (2016)

On the other hand, she wants her country to flourish despite the severe blows it has suffered, and she wants the women of Afghanistan to be at the forefront of the new age of the country.

Hassani has always portrayed women in her art as dreamers, achievers, and vital contributors to society. Her work has gained international recognition, and through her work, she provides a platform to voice out the injustice Afghan women have faced. Being a lecturer at Kabul University herself, she values other women as equal patrons to the Afghan economy as men. Sadly, as of 2022, the Taliban is once again taken over the governance of Afghanistan, and even though they promised to value and respect the rights of women and girls this time, as of December 2022, female students are being turned away from universities and schools in Kabul (*Female Students Turned Away From Afghan Universities After Taliban Ban*, 2022). Expressing her pain and her solidarity with the women of Afghanistan, Hassani posted a new piece on Facebook, titled "Nightmare" (2021).

It depicts a young girl, a similar character she uses in all her pieces, hounded by a group of rather scary-looking men, who



Figure 6, Nightmare (2021)

The girl holds her piano in her hands, as she walks away in sadness from the Taliban. This highlights all the freedom women slowly gained after the Taliban left the country in 2001, was now lost.

Hassani continues to raise her voice through art and continues to question the Taliban's decisions through her work. Women who have access to her art use it as a means of empowerment and a vision of hope. Her art portrays young girls in Afghanistan who continue to dream, despite all odds. Hassani has been able to publish her work in several international magazines and newspapers, and this has given her and the women of Afghanistan a voice. It emphasizes

the need for action needed in Afghanistan and the human rights crisis that falls upon the people of Afghanistan, for the second time in two decades.

Conclusion

Artivists in Afghanistan, as examined in the cases of the Art Lords and Shamsia Hassani, find it extremely difficult to function under the Taliban, who have newly reclaimed the power of governance of the country in 2021. But we find that despite the situation being against them and their work, they persist and continue to spread their message. The international traction these artivists bring with the help of their artwork, only helps spread the message of the human rights crisis the people of Afghanistan are now facing. To the artivists themselves, their work is a form of expression of their trauma and their experiences. They get to heal, and through the process, help those with whom they engage in their work heal, too. The people of Afghanistan finally get to find themselves within these pieces of artivism.

To most Western media, the human rights crisis in Afghanistan is a mere passing headline. On the other hand, the artivists live through these experiences and and can memorialize their experiences under the Taliban rule and constantly keep it alive through their artwork. Their work of Artivism continues to be a reminder that the people of Afghanistan have been living in a warlike situation for over two decades and the fact that there has been little to no international support to aid them. Artivism has no direct impact on changing the Taliban and its mandates.

Although artivists like Shamsia Hassani and the Art Lords are indeed doing far more for raising awareness about their country than any other national or international figure of power. It signifies that the citizens of Afghanistan are still fighting, in a peaceful and thought-provoking manner and are hoping to build a peaceful future for the newer generation of Afghans. They are willing to fight for a future of colourful walls, walls that share their country's stories. The artivists of Afghanistan have had enough of grey and plain concrete walls that merely protect the elite and hide their struggles from the international eye.



The Ford Government Goes Nuclear

Jack McMillan

INTRODUCTION

Ontario, along with the rest of the world, has entered into a new era of energy transition. Ontario faces a projected 75% increase to its electricity demand by the year 2050 (Ontario Newsroom, 2024). This demand is projected to continue to grow beyond this, due to rapid industrial electrification, population growth, and the ever increasing utilization of electricity in our modern society. Meanwhile, governments across the world face societal pressure to decarbonize their electricity grids, while ensuring long term sustainable energy reliability. In order to meet this task, the Ontario government under Premier Doug Ford has pushed forward its strategy to expand nuclear energy investment and capacity, while at the same time restructuring the province's energy and environmental governance frameworks. This approach is embodied by Bill 214, the Affordable Energy Act, which has restructured how energy decisions are made, shifting power away from independent regulatory institutions and toward direct ministerial control. An equally important piece of legislation to understand the Ford government's approach to nuclear energy is Bill 5, the Protect Ontario by Unleashing our Economy Act, which aims to speed up infrastructure and resource development by amending environmental regulations and standards, yet has met pushback from key indigenous and environmental advocacy groups. This amended governance framework has come at the same time as federal-provincial alignment between the Ontario provincial government and Canadian federal government on the fast tracking of major nuclear projects, such as the Darlington Small Modular Reactor (SMR), which the federal government designated as a “nation-building project” in 2025. That being said, it is clear that the Ford government recognizes the need for Canada to make a clean energy transition. They also recognize the competing objective of commercial and industrial growth. Therefore, nuclear energy investment is a pragmatic middle

ground that appeases the voter base through job creation, infrastructure development, and the fact that it is not being stylized as a solution to climate change, rather as a national security necessity and economic opportunity. Investment in Ontario's nuclear sector will continue to elevate its position in the world on its tech, and perhaps foster a competitive advantage in nuclear energy production over all other jurisdictions. Hence, it is vital to ask, why is the Ford government pursuing nuclear infrastructure investment so heavily, and why is it choosing nuclear over other clean energy options? This paper will demonstrate that the Ontario government is doing so in order to foster job creation, industrialization, competitive advantages in nuclear technologies, and to meet future electricity demand, in a manner that elevates Ontario's place in Canada, and on the world stage. It is doing so as a political and economic industrial strategy rather than as a climate strategy. This paper sets out to examine the wider implications of the Ford government's approach to the expansion of nuclear energy as a means to these ends, as it exists within the context of Ontario's ever evolving energy landscape, complex federal-provincial relationship, and the political economy of clean energy infrastructure development as a whole.



BACKGROUND

The Ford government is attempting to reduce regulation surrounding Nuclear Energy infrastructure in order to expedite its development and construction of necessary facilities. This is only possible due to federalism and cooperation between Ontario's provincial government, and the Canadian federal government. The Ford government is pursuing this path given the inevitable renewable energy transition the world is undergoing, and the Ford government's preference for nuclear energy over other types of renewables has been clearly articulated through its policy (Crawley, 2024). That being said, nuclear is not technically a renewable energy source. Instead, it is considered a low-carbon or clean energy source, given its use of a finite fuel, uranium, yet it releases minimal carbon emissions in its energy generation process. Such an approach to clean energy and infrastructure governance has generated significant debate over how the balance between infrastructure development, environmental protection, and government transparency should be struck. Supporters of Ford's approach argue that nuclear energy expansion, in particular SMR's, is essential to meeting future electricity needs, while securing Ontario's place on the world stage as a clean energy producer and nuclear technology exporter, made possible by domestic technological advantage.

From 2009 to 2017, the previous Ontario Liberal government under Premier Kathleen Wynne utilized, then phased out, feed-in tariffs as an energy policy tool (Stokes, 2013). A feed-in tariff (FIT) is a policy that guarantees a fixed price for renewable electricity fed into the grid, encouraging investment in green energy technologies like solar and wind. Policy experts consistently characterize feed-in tariff (FIT) policies as the most effective instrument to support large-scale, rapid renewable energy deployment (Stokes, 2013). Ontario's feed in tariff policy was largely successful, attracting investment used to support numerous projects that progressed the province towards a more diversified and cleaner electricity mix. Despite this, the FIT program came up against mounting political and financial criticism over the tenure of the Ontario Liberal government. Concerns included high electricity costs, contractual obligations, and

the unequal distribution of sites chosen for renewable energy projects. Ultimately, the FIT program and its contracts were formally ended in 2017 as the Ontario Liberal government underwent a period of fiscal tightening. This was a defining moment, signaling the shift away from an expansive renewable energy program that had been the norm throughout the 2010s.

One of the Ford government's first policy actions when they came to power in 2018 was to dismantle what remained of the Liberal renewable energy agenda, including the cancellation of over 750 renewable energy project contracts, which included projects already under construction (Crawley, 2024). This was justified on the grounds of cost saving, and ending wasteful, ideologically motivated Liberal spending. This move was also one of the first indications of the Ford government's strategy, shifting to a centralized, capital intensive, big government approach, despite the parties branding as small government. This must be situated within the context of the Ford government's policy behavior. The Ford government has consistently pushed for deregulation, project fast-tracking, red tape reduction, and a consolidation of power to ministerial authority. This is evident in numerous recent government bills and actions, such as Bill 214, Bill 5, and Bill 33, all of which remove bureaucratic processes, and consolidate power within Ministries. For example, the greenbelt scandal exposed the Ford government's attempts to get around planning processes and environmental regulation. These examples highlight the various instances in which the Ford government moved to roll back regulation, and illustrate a consistent governing ideology or philosophy in which regulatory and bureaucratic processes are seen as obstacles to economic growth, job creation, and infrastructure development, and that they must therefore be done away with. That being said, the Ford government’s approach to nuclear governance complicates this understanding. Nuclear energy is federally regulated by the Canadian Nuclear Safety Commission (CNSC). The CNSC oversees safety regulation, licenses nuclear facilities, and has direct authority over radioactive materials (Canadian Nuclear Safety Commission, 2025). Therefore, provincial governments are unable to directly regulate nuclear and radioactive substances, but they do have a say in infrastructure approvals, the



GOVERNANCE RESTRUCTURING

Bill 214, the “Affordable Energy Act”, passed in 2024 embodies the Ford government's approach to energy policy, and marks one of the largest shifts in Ontario’s electricity governance in decades. The bill replaces Ontario’s long term energy framework, which previously included a multi-year consulting process led by the Independent Energy System Operator (IESO) alongside the Ontario Energy Board (OEB), and replaces it with new integrated energy plans (Ontario Ministry of Energy and Electrification, 2024). An integrated energy plan issued by the Minister includes goals pertaining to the affordability of energy, energy availability, reliability, transmission, and distribution, the enhancement and expansion of energy infrastructure and resources to support economic growth and trade, energy infrastructure and resources to support economic growth and trade, energy infrastructure modernization, indigenous consultation and reconciliation, and finally the prioritization of nuclear power generation to meet future increases in the demand for electricity in a manner that is consistent with the policies of the Government of Ontario. The wording of Bill 214 clearly illustrates the Ontario government's prioritization of nuclear energy in order to meet “future increases in the demand for electricity”. This is a landmark objective in a country that is so economically dependent on oil and LNG. Bill 214 also emphasizes *“the role of electricity, natural gas, hydrogen and other energy resources, as well as energy efficiency, storage and demand management, in building a clean energy economy”*

(Ontario Ministry of Energy and Electrification, 2024). The choice of words of “clean energy” rather than “renewable energy” again emphasizes the Ford government's commitment to nuclear energy over renewables. The objectives of Bill 214 are consistent with other Ford government policies. In particular, it follows the trend of “slashing red tape” around infrastructure projects. Bill 214 largely achieves this goal in the field of energy. It is important to note that removing bureaucratic or legislative obstacles to infrastructure development is no longer a partisan or controversial issue.

The Carney government has largely sought to do the same on a national scale through Bill C-5, One Canadian Economy Act. Bill C-5 seeks to reduce federal barriers to interprovincial trade in order to make it easier for goods, services, and workers to move between provinces and territories (Prime Minister of Canada, 2025). It also aims to designate, and subsequently fast track, so-called national interest projects. These are projects that the federal government, through the Major Projects Office (MPO), sees as vital to Canada’s economic growth. The MPO acts as the singular reviewer of project assessments, taking a “one project, one review” approach (Government of Canada, 2025). The coincidentally named Ontario provincial Bill 5, the Protect Ontario by Unleashing our Economy Act has similar aspirations. Schedule 9 of Bill 5 creates the Special Economic Zones Act, 2025 (SEZA), which grants the Lieutenant Governor broad powers to create regulations which designate certain areas of the province as special economic zones, while granting power to the Minister of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade to designate projects which SEZA would apply to (Cockburn et al., 2025). After a project has been designated, the Lieutenant Governor can exempt trusted designated projects from requirements under any act within a designated special economic zone. The intention is to streamline project approvals, environmental assessments, and infrastructure projects in general, however the broad sweeping powers granted to the Minister and Lieutenant Governor have raised concerns over how these powers could be used. For example, the Minister could simply exempt a major polluting project from completing environmental assessments if the project fell within an SEZ. This has garnered significant pushback from many environmental and indigenous

groups (Ruf, 2025). That being said, the coordination between federal and provincial governments on major energy projects can be understood as a form of energy federalism. Federalism plays an important role in the governance of energy infrastructure, particularly when there are provincial and federal bills focused on the same or competing objectives. Research has demonstrated that when overreach by the federal government occurs, conflicts may arise with provincial governments over things such as land use, electricity grid expansion, and local acceptance of federal policy (Saurer et al., 2020). On the other hand, so-called "cooperative federalism" has promoted policy adaptability and resilience for provincial governments to be able to withstand sudden policy shifts in federal priorities. From this perspective, the Ford government is fortunate to have a federal government who is also seeking to slash regulation and centralize energy governance on similar terms to itself.

In 2025, the Darlington SMR project was designated as a nation building project by the federal government, which makes it eligible for fast track approvals through the Major Projects Office established under Bill C-5. This is notable, given the partisan differences between the Ontario PC's and the federal Liberals, yet both governments have clearly aligned on nuclear energy as a strategic national priority. In addition to this, the CNSC has determined that the already existing environmental assessment for the Darlington nuclear project can be applied to the GE-Hitachi SMR reactor design, expediting the process by eliminating the need for a new environmental assessment. This significantly shortened the project timelines, yet was widely criticized by environmental and indigenous groups who argue SMR's, and the project fastracking itself, pose environmental and safety concerns. Criticism has also been levied over the cost of the project itself. Observers have pointed out that the recently completed Saskatchewan 377 megawatt natural gas power station cost $825 million, opposed to the $21 billion it will cost to construct the four BWRX-300s at Darlington (McClearn, 2025).

SOCIO-ECONOMIC INCENTIVES

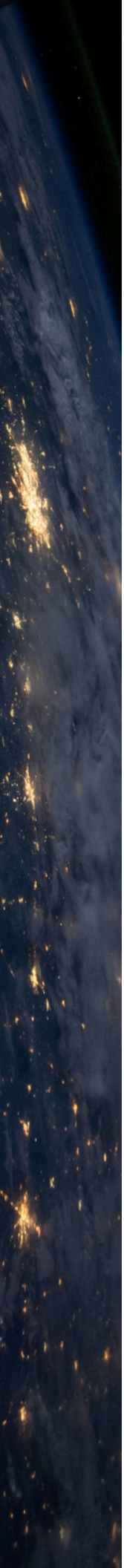
The economic incentives behind the Ford government's investment in nuclear energy infrastructure are important in understanding the context in which the aforementioned legislative decisions are taking

place. Bruce Power, with eight CANDU pressurized heavy-water reactors, until 2016, was the world's largest fully operational nuclear generating station by total reactor count and the number of currently operational reactors as a case study. Bruce Power, in 2001, employed 3% of Bruce County's population (Bruce Power, 2001). This partially demonstrates the economic incentives and job growth from investment in such projects, particularly in rural areas. When completed, the first small modular reactor in Darlington is expected to provide 300 megawatts of power, enough electricity to supply about 300,000 homes. The federal government says the reactor would support 200 high-paying jobs, in addition to 1,600 jobs during construction (Draaisma, 2025). These projects will also provide future jobs given the need for maintenance and repairs over time. This is especially important for the Port Darlington and Durham region given the fact that GM is shifting much of its production from Oshawa to Fort Wayne, Indiana (Raveendran, 2025). The loss of manufacturing and trades jobs could have potentially devastating effects on the local economy, and therefore further investment in nuclear infrastructure in this area is a necessity to secure people's livelihoods. Hence, it is clear from this perspective why the federal government would promote the jobs created by investment in these types of nuclear projects, especially in convincing local populations of their benefits. This hasn't always worked for nuclear energy projects. For example, the community of Teeswater, near bruce county in rural Ontario voiced significant opposition to government plans for a nuclear waste storage dump near the community (Trevithick, 2024).

On the 26th of November 2025, Minister Stephen Lecce announced the Ontario government has approved Ontario Power Generation's (OPG) plan to refurbish four CANDU nuclear reactors at the Pickering Nuclear Generating Station for $27 billion dollars. The stated reason for this refurbishment is to protect Ontario's long-term energy security, as it will allow the Pickering facility to provide affordable and clean power for as long as 38 years. This refurbishment will also create 37,000 jobs, according to the. Ontario government, 6,700 of which will be sustained past refurbishment. This is yet another Ford government policy targeted at establishing, or in this case refurbishing, nuclear energy infrastructure in the province. The title of the news release of this

particular initiative is particularly interesting and reinforces the narrative that Ford's nuclear strategy is really about job creation, industrialization, and growth. The Ontario government news room titled it "Ontario Greenlights Pickering Nuclear Generating Station Refurbishment to Create Nearly 37,000 Jobs" (Ontario Newsroom, 2025). Once more, the jobs created by this infrastructure project are clearly the most important aspect of it, given the Government's choice to include the statistic in the title, rather than choosing to highlight something like the amount being spent on it, how much clean energy this will provide, or how this will progress Ontario towards a clean grid. Once the refurbishment project at Pickering has been completed, it will generate an increased capacity of up to 2,200 megawatts of electricity, equivalent to powering 2.2 million homes, according to the government.

In addition to domestic development, the Ontario government is using nuclear energy and SMR's as a means to expand inter-provincial and international trade and relations. For example, in October 2025, Ontario's Minister of Energy and Mines Stephen Lecce joined Nova Scotia's Premier and Minister of Energy Tim Houston in Halifax to sign an agreement to collaborate on the development of small modular reactors (SMRs) (Ontario Newsroom, 2025). This was followed by a $60 million deal with New Brunswick in order to improve the productivity of the Point Lepreau nuclear facility (Hansard, 2025). In this sense, nuclear energy investment and development appears to be a common goal of many provincial governments, and has fostered interprovincial collaboration on the matter. In addition to interprovincial agreements, Minister Lecce also met with Belgian officials to explore the potential deployment of Ontarian SMR's technology in Belgium (Hansard, 2025). Including previous contracts and agreements, such as with Poland and Estonia, Minister Lecce claims there to be 24 SMR agreements or projects secured to date. According to the Minister, this nuclear infrastructure build out plan is expected to contribute $160 billion to Canada's GDP in the construction phase, and $630 billion during operations, with around 80,000 jobs created during the former, and 64,000 during the latter (Ontario Newsroom, 2025). This demonstrates the Ontario government's commitment to interprovincial nuclear



investment, but even more interesting is the international. It is clear that the government sees significant potential for the sale of Ontarian SMR technology to allies in Europe and across the globe. This is extremely interesting, especially given the geopolitical context in which Europe exists, heavily reliant upon Russian LNG and energy exports. Therefore, given this analysis, it becomes clear that the Ford government is strategically positioning itself as an alternative partner to Russian and Chinese SMR's, Russian energy exports, and renewable energy projects, in the hopes that Ontario becomes the primary market for clean nuclear technology.

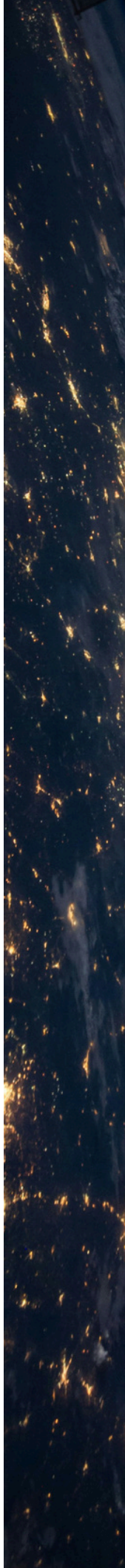
NUCLEAR VS. RENEWABLES

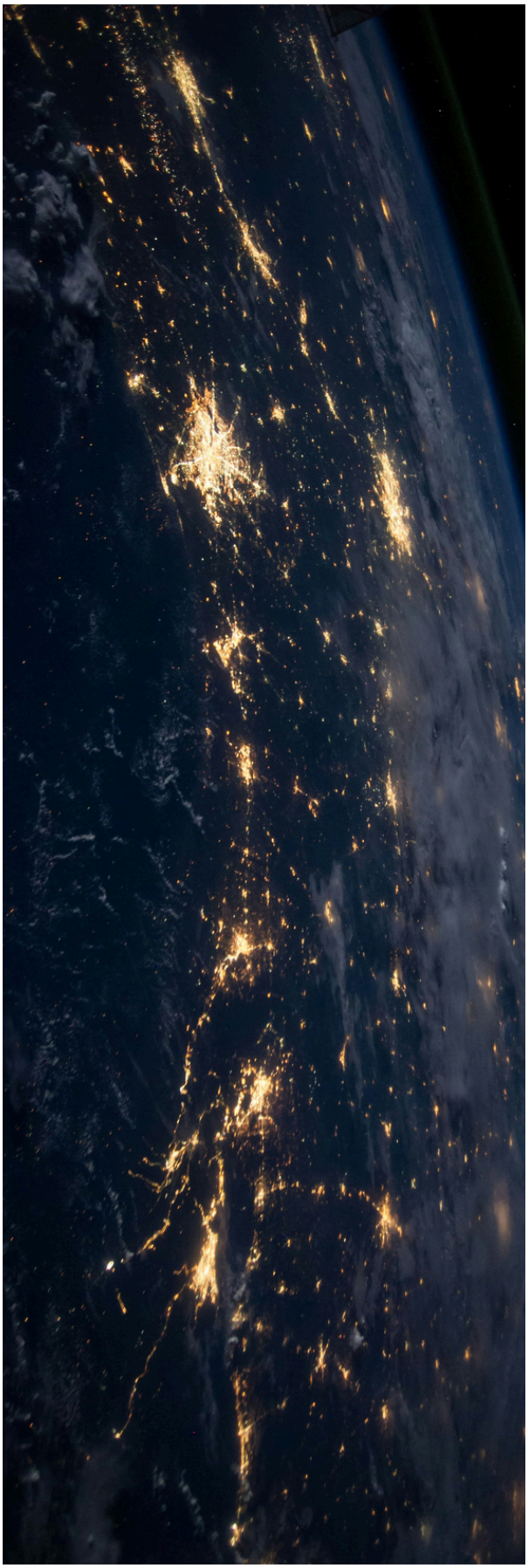
The Ford government's focus on nuclear investment as opposed to other types of clean energy raises an important question. Why focus on nuclear rather than cheaper and faster renewables, such as wind and solar? We can begin to answer this question by calling back to the Ford government's cancellation of 750 renewable energy contracts, their vocal opposition of wind projects, and a general political stance emphasizing the unreliability of renewables. This framing hits home with many PC party voters, who may associate renewables with rising electricity costs and a negative disposition towards environmental regulation. Nuclear energy, on the other hand, is being styled by the Ford government as technologically sophisticated, capable of powering the province into the future and fueling economic growth, creating a modern techno-industrial development narrative. Critics of SMR and nuclear infrastructure investment point to long construction times, high costs, and low rewards. They argue that the development timelines are not aligned with Ontario's 2030 emissions targets (Goranson, 2025). This is evidenced by a report on SMR's, which predicted their baseline electricity cost to be 16.3 cents per kilowatt hour (kWh) (Canadian Small Modular Reactor Roadmap Steering Committee, 2018). On the other hand, onshore wind electricity costs an average of 4.5 cents per kWh, offshore wind an average of 10 cents/kWh, solar farms an average of 6.6 cents/kWh, and hydro an average of 5 cents/kWh (Goranson, 2025). Therefore, critics argue that the opportunity cost of SMR development is too high, and that Ontario would be better off investing in solar, wind, and hydro energy projects that are cheaper to construct, and produce

energy to consume. That being said, it seems highly unlikely that the Ontario government is soon to change from favouring nuclear to renewables, given their current intensive investment into the nuclear sector.

RISKS, TRADEOFFS, AND POTENTIAL MITIGATIONS:

Reduced oversight from Bill 214, alongside a consolidation of authority to the Ministries, creates risk in the form of reduced oversight and the expedition of government processes. It opens the door to inefficiencies and errors. Bill 214 and Ontario's Bill 5 together represent a dramatic restructure of Ontario's energy governance, moving authority from independent regulators to direct government control. The creation of SEZ's where projects are able to bypass environmental and other project assessments according to the will of the Lieutenant Governor and Ministers poses significant risks if projects are fast tracked without due regard for safety and environmental conservation. Bill 214 replaces the previous long-term energy planning framework, which was led by the Independent Electricity System Operator (IESO) and overseen by the Ontario Energy Board (OEB), with a system in which the Minister of Energy issues Integrated Energy Plans that the IESO must support and implement. This change gets rid of the IESO's role as the primary designer of long term planning, as well as the transparency and consultation requirements that previously existed within the process. Meanwhile, the environmental concerns surrounding nuclear waste, and the potential disastrous political consequences in the unlikely event of a nuclear incident, leave little room for gaps in processes, assessments, or information. Nuclear waste disposal and storage is often an afterthought in these discussions, however it is one of the most important aspects in expanding nuclear power generation. Without proper storage plans, sites, and facilities, the environmental consequences of improperly disposed of nuclear waste can be disastrous. This issue is compounded by the fact that communities near nuclear waste storage facilities may push back against their construction, as occurred in the case of the community of Teeswater. That being said, investment in the expansion of Ontario's nuclear infrastructure has the potential to foster long term benefits that offset the upfront cost. As previously mentioned, Ontario is an early investor in SMR

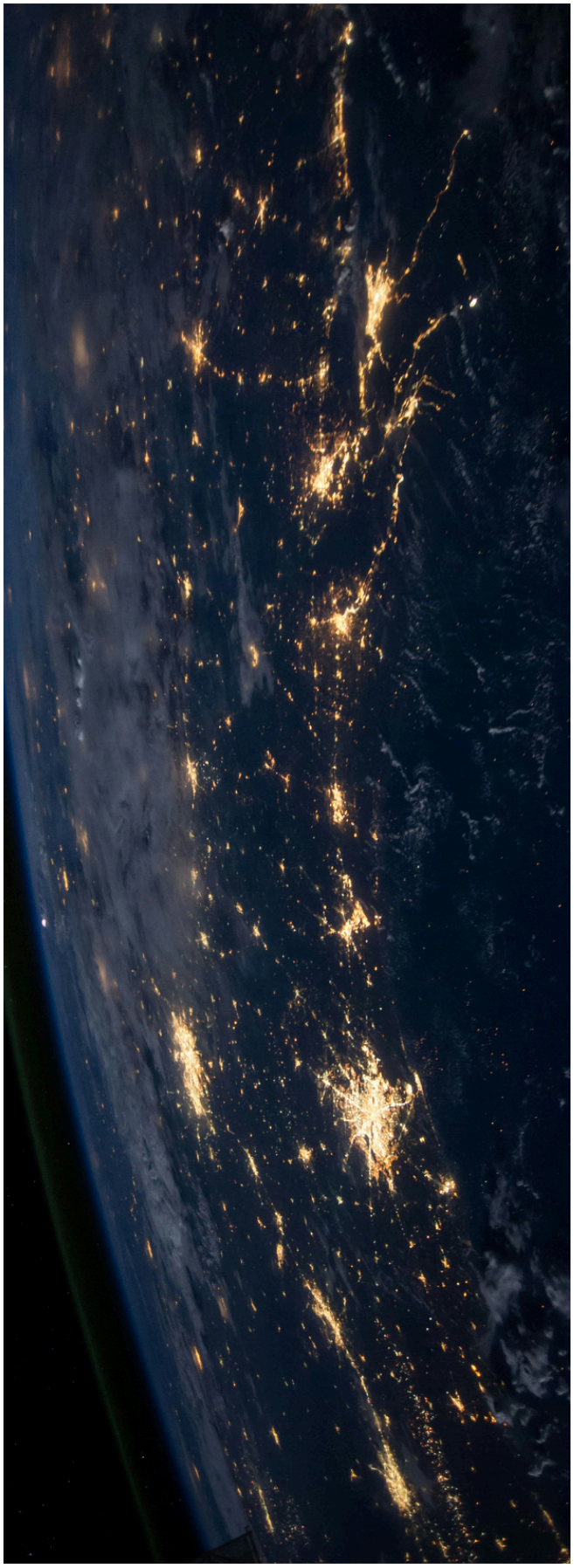




technology, which is still an emerging technology sector. BWRX-300s at Darlington is the first of its kind in North America, and has the potential to foster a competitive advantage for Ontario to export this technology across the globe, creating economic gains as well as the potential for new international partnerships (Gevernova-Nuclear, n.d). It has the added geopolitical benefit of being the first SMR of its kind outside of Russia and China, meaning countries historically allied with Canada will likely look to Ontario before others. Additionally, Ontario's nuclear sector makes significant contributions to global medical isotope production, particularly through the production of cobalt-60, which is utilized in cancer treatments and other medical procedures (Bruce Power, 2024). That being said, the reduced governance from Bill's 214 and 5 remains a cause for concern in regards to effective environmental governance. It is vital that both the Federal and Ontario governments work together to strengthen regulatory frameworks, without increasing redundancies, and maintain strong nuclear oversight through organizations such as the CNSC.

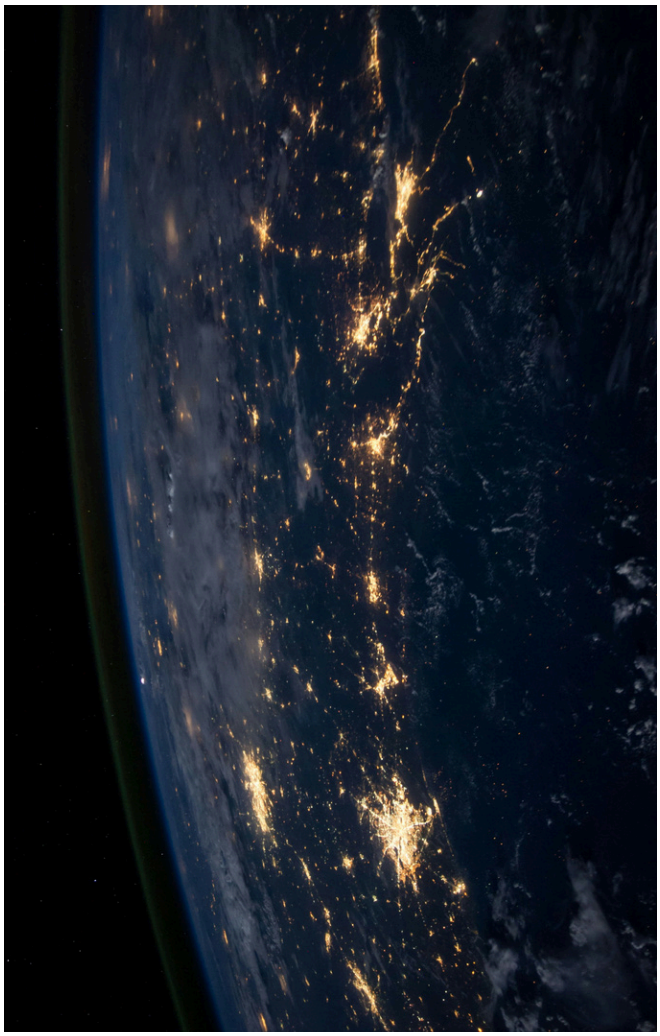
CONCLUSION

The expansion of and investment in Ontario's nuclear energy infrastructure by the Provincial Ford government illustrates a vast reorientation of provincial energy and governance frameworks. This restructuring has been primarily achieved through the passing of Bill 214, Bill 5, and federal-provincial collaboration as represented by Bill C-5, which have each allowed for the expedition of major infrastructure projects. While this approach reflects the Ontario government's commitment to addressing issues such as electricity demand, and the need for clean energy, it has also raised concerns regarding environmental preservation, regulatory transparency, and the role of other renewable energy sources. Despite this, nuclear energy continues to present great advantages to Ontario. It provides large-scale, resilient, and clean power, while creating long term local employment opportunities, and positioning the province as an early adopter of SMR technology, which may have important geopolitical and commercial benefits down the line. The Ford government's use of this approach is primarily motivated by an attempt to foster such benefits, and it is therefore admirable. However, it certainly remains true that a more balanced investment



approach, one that considers renewables in conjunction with nuclear energy, would likely reduce electricity costs, while continuing to shorten development timelines, therefore appeasing a larger proportion of the Ontario voter base. To put all of one's eggs in one basket is never advisable.

Overall, the Ford government is attempting to walk the line between numerous contentious policy issues, while appeasing a voter base that supported the cancellation of 750 renewable projects upon this government's ascent to power. They are pursuing nuclear energy investment as a means to foster job creation, industrialization, competitive advantages in SMR's, and to meet future electricity demand, but are doing so through regulatory consolidation and restructuring of the political economy of Ontario's energy that could be harmful if long term planning is not carefully considered. However, it remains clear that they are doing so as a political and economic industrial strategy rather than as a climate strategy. The Ford government has recognized nuclear energy investment as a pragmatic middle ground that appeals to their voter base through job creation, infrastructure development, and the fact that it is not being stylized as a solution to climate change, rather as a national security necessity and economic opportunity. The payoffs of this strategy could be massive, seeing the province become the world's supplier of SMR technology, creating unimaginable domestic benefits. However, it remains to be seen whether this government's approach to the governance of and investment in nuclear energy will pay off.



Epistemic Violence and the Exclusion of Subaltern Voices from the Academy

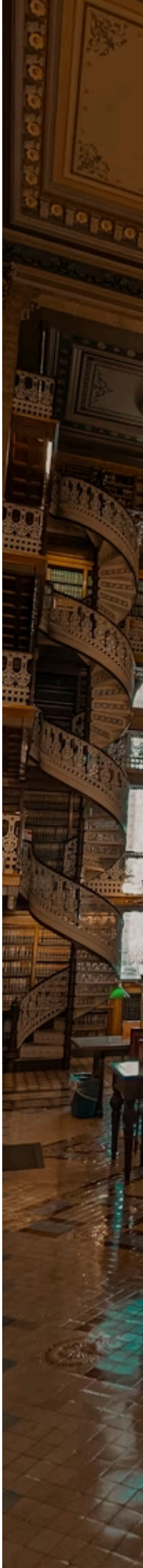
Simran Mukkar & Sukhmani Mukkar

When scholars of colour articulate ideas about knowledge and power, their words are often quoted poetically and celebrated for their experiential wisdom. Yet, these same insights are rarely engaged as rigorous theory in the humanities and social sciences. Instead, white scholars frequently translate these ideas into what is deemed "accessible" academic language, building careers on ideas originally developed by scholars of colour. This process constitutes epistemic theft, a form of structural extraction embedded in academic knowledge production and dissemination (Manuel & Derrickson, 2015).

This pattern reveals a problem that plagues efforts to decolonize the social sciences. The academy systemically devalues knowledge produced by marginalized scholars while simultaneously appropriating their insights. This paper argues that the social sciences have long operated on ontological and epistemological assumptions rooted in a Eurocentric understanding that conflicts with efforts to dismantle extractive practices.

The paper further examines how assumptions within the social sciences perpetuate epistemic violence against marginalized communities, focusing on four key interventions: Donna Haraway's (1988) critique of objectivity, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's (1988) analysis of subaltern silencing, Zoe Todd's (2016) examination of Indigenous knowledge appropriation, and Dipesh Chakrabarty's (1992) challenge to Eurocentric historical narratives.

This body of contemporary sociological scholarship reveals patterns of epistemic exclusion, false universalism, extractive appropriation, and institutional complicity that continue to marginalize subaltern voices while elevating Western epistemologies as the default. Their work demonstrates that the theft and devaluation of subaltern knowledge are structurally embedded in the social sciences. Understanding these dynamics is crucial for decolonizing the academy and recognizing how epistemic theft operates as a contemporary colonial practice that extracts intellectual value

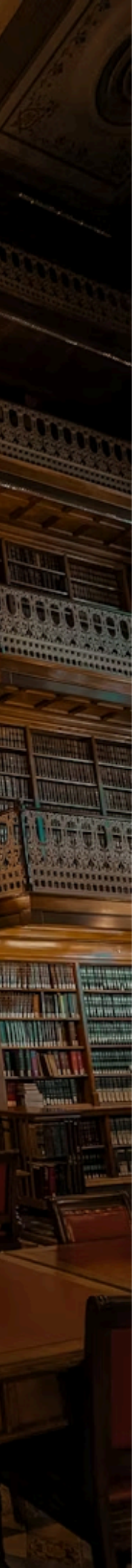


from subaltern communities already dispossessed of material resources and political power.

Donna Haraway's (1988) essay Situated knowledges: The science question in feminism and the privilege of partial perspective challenges the social sciences' conceptualization of objectivity and knowledge production. She critiques the assumption that researchers can occupy a position of nowhere, an omniscient standpoint producing context-free truths. This disembodied objectivity is deeply political, systematically privileging the perspectives of those who have historically wielded epistemic authority: the white man. Instead, Haraway (1988) maintains that all knowledge is produced from somewhere, by someone, and shaped by particular experiences. She contends that acknowledging this situatedness, or the positionality of a scholar, strengthens knowledge production by making it more accountable and transparent.

Crucially, situated knowledges must prioritize the perspectives of subjugated peoples whose voices have been excluded from knowledge production (Haraway, 1988). This is not about romanticizing marginalized perspectives as automatically more true, but about recognizing that those who experience oppression often have insights into its workings that are invisible from positions of privilege. In the context of decolonizing the social sciences, this means centring the knowledge systems not as alternative viewpoints to be incorporated into Western systems of knowledge, but as legitimate knowledge systems in their own right. Haraway's critique thus exposes a foundational problem in the social sciences in which the voices of marginalized scholars are dismissed as "belief" or "tradition" while Western frameworks are treated as the neutral standard. This form of epistemic violence is not an accident, but built into the assumptions of how objectivity itself is conceived.





Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's (1988) seminal essay Can the subaltern speak? extends Haraway's critique by examining the mechanisms through which the subaltern, or marginalized communities, are rendered voiceless. Spivak (1988) introduces the concept of "epistemic violence" to describe how colonial and patriarchal knowledge systems actively erase subaltern agency by forcing their experiences through frameworks that render them illegible. This violence operates through outright exclusion and through the distortion of marginalized knowledge into forms that strip away its potential.

Spivak's (1988) analysis of sati, or widow immolation, in colonial India reveals how this silencing operates in practice. Colonial authorities condemned the practice as barbaric, positioning themselves as civilized saviours rescuing Indian women from backward tradition. In turn, Indian nationalist discourses defended sati, presenting women's self-immolation as an honourable tradition.

In both cases, the voices of the women were not present in the conversation. The women were spoken about and spoken for, but never given the space to speak for themselves.

This pattern persists in contemporary social science research on non-Western societies, as when Western researchers study "developing" nations or colonized peoples, they rely on models that cannot accommodate alternative understandings of community and progress. These models are overwhelmingly derived from cultures labelled as Western, Educated, Industrialized, Rich, and Democratic (WEIRD; Henrich et al., 2010), yet are treated as universal frameworks for understanding social life.

The resulting scholarship may include words of research subjects, yet still commits epistemic violence by filtering their experiences through epistemological categories that misrepresent them (Spivak, 1988). Even when subaltern scholars produce work, it is treated as raw material that needs to be refined in Western academic writing rather than engaged as theory that might challenge disciplinary assumptions. For Spivak (1988), meaningful decolonization then requires more than including marginalized voices in existing academic conversations. It demands confronting the conditions that make certain voices unhearable as theory in the first place.



This means examining how peer review systems and publication standards all function to delegitimize knowledge that does not conform to Western epistemological norms. Adding subaltern perspectives as case studies within unchanged theoretical frameworks reproduces the very power dynamics that decolonization seeks to dismantle.

Zoe Todd's (2016) essay An Indigenous feminist's take on the ontological turn brings Haraway's and Spivak's concerns into conversation with specific practices of Indigenous knowledge appropriation in contemporary academia. Todd (2016) shows how even seemingly progressive academic trends can reproduce colonial extraction when they commodify Indigenous concepts while excluding Indigenous scholars from conversations about their own knowledge systems. Her intervention makes explicit that the problem is not just exclusion, but an active attempt to extract and appropriate knowledge created by Indigenous scholars. The appropriation of marginalized knowledge for career advancement while denying its originators recognition or compensation is a form of epistemic theft.

Todd (2016) draws on the example given by Inuk author Rachel Qitsualik (1998) of the Inuit concept Sila, which refers to the environmental interconnectedness of all things. When Western environmental studies engage with Sila, it becomes reduced to an abstract theoretical resource, stripped of its embeddedness in Inuit language and intergenerational knowledge transmission. What results then is not respectful engagement with Indigenous knowledge, but appropriation that advances Western scholars' careers while offering nothing to Indigenous communities. Those who conduct this extraction often present themselves as allies translating Indigenous knowledge for broader audiences, yet this "translation" functions as theft when it divorces concepts from their roots and credits Western scholars as the primary inventors of the concept.

This appropriation operates through several interconnected mechanisms. First, Indigenous knowledge is translated into Western vocabularies in ways that alter its meaning. For instance, Sila becomes "atmospheric conditions" or "environmental consciousness," losing the relationship it carries in Inuit contexts (Todd, 2016).

Second, the translated knowledge circulates in academic publications that cite white scholars discussing Indigenous concepts rather than Indigenous scholars articulating their own knowledge systems. Third, the institutional structures of academia, including peer review and tenure requirements, remain dominated by non-Indigenous scholars who determine which Indigenous knowledges are sophisticated enough to be legitimized within the academy. Fourth, Indigenous scholars who resist having their knowledge extracted face marginalization within the academic community.

Todd (2016) emphasizes the whiteness of academic departments and the exclusionary practices of peer review as central obstacles to decolonization. Following Sara Ahmed's (2017) call for a citational rebellion, Todd (2016) advocates for intentionally centring Indigenous scholars, women of colour, and other marginalized thinkers who have been systemically erased from intellectual recognition despite producing serious contributions to the humanities and other fields. The question then is not about tokenism, but about restructuring whose knowledge is valued and who gets to define the standards of academic excellence.

It requires recognizing that when Black feminist scholars, Indigenous knowledge keepers, and other subaltern scholars are cited only as case studies while their theoretical contributions are translated and credited to others, the academy participates in ongoing colonial extraction.

Importantly, Todd (2016) argues that respectful engagement with Indigenous knowledge requires more than citation; it demands recognizing Indigenous ontologies as autonomous knowledge systems rather than material for Western theory building. This means working in relationship with Indigenous communities and being accountable for how their knowledge is represented. The decolonization of the social sciences, in this view, requires Western academics to accept limitations on their access to and use of Indigenous knowledge and to recognize that epistemic sovereignty belongs to Indigenous peoples themselves.





Dipesh Chakrabarty's Provincializing Europe examines how Eurocentric historical narratives position non-European societies as backwards and waiting to catch up (Chakrabarty, 1992). Chakrabarty (1992) critiques the assumption that all societies follow a linear path from traditional to modern, with Europe leading the way and others lagging behind at various stages of development. This narrative frames non-European histories as defined by absence.

For instance, they lack capitalism, lack bureaucracy, lack secular institutions, and lack industrial development. In this way, their histories become comprehensible only in terms of what they are not yet rather than what they are. This understanding also functions as epistemic theft by appropriating non-European historical experiences only to the extent they can be made to conform to European developmental models while dismissing alternative possibilities.

By examining Indian historiography, Chakrabarty (1992) shows how even anti-colonial historians have internalized this by organizing Indian pasts into a colonial schema of "medieval" transitioning to "modern" that homogenized diversity into a binary that made sense only in European terms. The wide variety of Indian political formations and social organizations became illegible except as incomplete versions of European modernity. Indian subjects appeared in this history as always striving towards European ideals of progress and civilization that remained out of reach.

When Indian scholars developed alternative historiographies grounded in Indian epistemologies, their work was frequently marginalized as insufficiently theoretical. This reinforces the binary of the progressive West and traditional East, ensuring that European frameworks remain the universal standard while non-European intellectual traditions are dismissed as locally particular.

Chakrabarty's (1992) alternative, which he proposes as "provincializing Europe," means decentring Europe as the universal subject of history and recognizing the plural nature of modernity itself. This requires repositioning European histories as one set of experiences among many, rather than the universal template for human development, and creating space for non-European societies to articulate their histories in their own

categories rather than translating them to the European standard. Chakrabarty (1992), however, acknowledges the limitations of this approach, as the discipline of history itself emerged from European modernity, embedding European assumptions in its basic methodologies and categories of analysis.
Scholars who attempt to work outside this understanding are often told their work is not academic enough, while those who master European methods often find their work appropriated as evidence for European universalism rather than recognized as a challenge to it.

This paper has argued that the social sciences have long operated on ontological and epistemological assumptions rooted in a Eurocentric understanding that conflicts with efforts to dismantle extractive practices. Through the interventions of Haraway (1988), Spivak (1988), Todd (2016), and Chakrabarty (1992), four interconnected themes have emerged that expose conflicts between social science epistemologies and decolonial projects, including epistemic exclusion, false universalism, extractive appropriation, and institutional complicity. These themes demonstrate that marginalized knowledge is simultaneously deemed theoretically insufficient and extracted for the professional advancement of Western scholars. Meaningful decolonization of the humanities and social sciences requires transformation on multiple levels. This involves recognizing diverse knowledge systems as legitimate on their own terms; developing research practices that are accountable to the communities studied and prioritize their epistemological frameworks; and adopting citation practices that recognize subaltern scholarship as theory, not as raw material requiring academic translation.

The social sciences must choose whether to remain complicit in colonial knowledge production or embrace the difficult work of epistemic decolonization, opening possibilities for knowledge production that is more accountable and adequate to the diversity of human experience.



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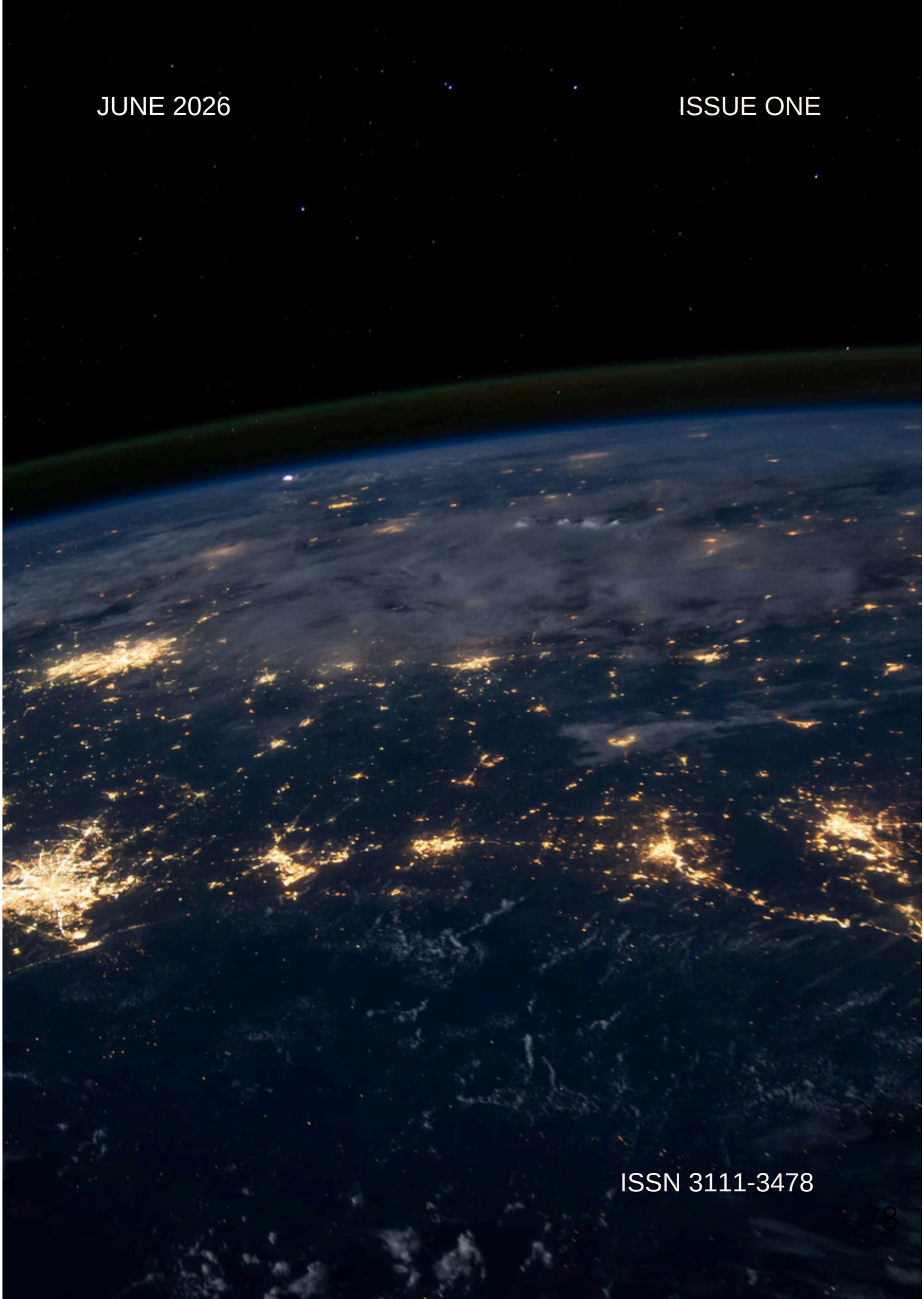
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