Culture
An Undergraduate Humanities Journal

VOLUME 2 ISSUE 1

Statement from Professor Elicia Clements
Chair, Department of Humanities, March 2023

I am simply delighted that this publication of the Humanities Student Association's journal, *Culture* Volume 2, Issue 1 Fall 2019/Winter 2023, has come to fruition. After an understandable, perhaps unavoidable, hiatus precipitated by the pandemic, our newly minted and talented HSA Executive team has agreed to take the reins from the capable hands of the journal's past editor-in-Chief, Emily Mastragostino, and Managing Editor, Sam Sanchinel.

I am grateful to the past editors for the work they and the other student editors and writers did to make the current issue such an impressive success. And I am so pleased that Eman Arif, an excellent former student of the second-year core course in the Humanities Program, HUMA 2001 Understanding Culture: Text, Image, Music, has agreed to serve as the Editor-in-Chief going forward. The journal has the full support from the department to carry on the signal path that *Culture* has already begun to forge, bringing to public attention pressing issues for the Humanities today.

With gratitude and admiration,

Elicia Clements
Chair, Department of Humanities

Handing Over *Culture*

In 2017, when we were in our third-year of undergrad, we thought it'd be a fun idea to start the Humanities Student Association. At the time, there hadn't been one for years (or maybe ever)! Looking around Vanier College at Philosophia and the Children's Studies Associations, we thought it would be great to help start build a HUMA student community.

With the support of the former college head Dr. Janice Newton, former HUMA chair Dr. Andrea Davis, and our friends, class acquaintances, and the Vanier Peer Mentors, the idea grew into an actual thing. The Humanities Student Association became the place for us to meet new friends, hang out in between class, create new events, and have an actual voice in the university. It was also where we were able to start our undergraduate journal, *Culture*.

With little (essentially no) experience, we sent out a call for editors, and contributors and *Culture* was born. Each year our editors came from a wide range of disciplines: Humanities, Philosophy, Psychology, History, English and more. The first issue was mostly built by friends we met in our classes, people in Humanities for a Global Age, Intro to Existentialism, Culture, Meaning and Form. The content of our wide-ranging call for papers also stemmed from the diversity of ideas we learned in HUMA courses, and our peers who were doing equally as expansive work.

Culture became an opportunity for undergraduate students to hone their skills in writing, gain editing experience, and to show that their work had more value than just being submitted for a grade. Today, many of our editors and writers are in graduate school programs across the country or working professionally. They are humanities alumni who are working towards new and exciting ideas in Law, English, Clinical Psychology, History, Gender Studies, and the Humanities.

We remember talking to Dr. Tweyman before the publication of our first issue, and him showing us a copy of an undergraduate journal where he published his first paper. Decades after completing his degrees, and now a full professor, he still had his copy sitting on his office shelf.

Five years later we still have our copies of *Culture* on our shelf as well. It may not seem like a lot of time, but we still look back, half in surprise that it was something we actually got done, and the other half, very fondly of the experience.

We're grateful to all the people we've met, who supported, and who helped create what *Culture* was, and will continue to be.

In our first introduction from 2017, Dr. Doug Freake called our articles "edgy and progressive", highlighting how, through culture, we deal with the tension between continuity and newness. In the second introduction Dr. Andrea Davis said how the essays in *Culture* suggest that the future of the humanities is in very good hands. And in our third introduction Dr. Carolyn Steele reminds us that we all play a role in doing the humanities (if not, doing culture, and creating the humanities).
Taking these words from professors that we admire, we're happy to pass on *Culture* to a new group of undergraduate students who will be up for the challenge to do humanities, to write and share their new, edgy, and progressive ideas, to make new relationships, and to create the futures of the humanities as they do it.

Sam Sanchinel & Emily Mastragostino

Sam Sanchinel, BA, MA, PhD Candidate
Humanities: BA 2018, MA 2019
Culture: Editor-in-Chief 2016-2017
Managing Editor 2017-2018, 2018-2019

Emily Mastragostino, BA, MA, PhD Student Clinician
Humanities: BA 2018
Culture: Editor in Chief 2018-2019
Managing Editor 2016-2017

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Introduction: (Re)-Doing Humanities

Carolyn Steele, PhD.

The stereotype of the scholar, sitting alone, hunched over an obsolete manuscript in a (probably old and beautiful) library epitomizes the study of humanities in the popular imagination. In Canada, more than 70% of the population (Statistics Canada, Census of Population, 2016.) have never been to university so have little idea of what it is humanists actually do. To say the humanities is suffering from image problem is putting it mildly. Certainly, there are disturbing ideologies contributing to this state of affairs, but it is equally certain that the traditional academic practices associated with "doing humanities" are also a contributing to the persistence of this stereotype. Case in point - the lifework of humanities scholars is stored almost exclusively in academic libraries and journals to which the public has no access and shared most often with their students and colleagues. There are defensible reasons for this, but it does have a dampening effect on the public understanding of the humanities.

In fact, experience of many humanities students stands in stark contrast with the stereotype and can be more reminiscent of Dorothy entering Oz - at once fascinating and disorienting. Far from the stereotype, this is a highly social journey, involving active reading, thinking, talking, listening, exploring, and creating. In many cases, this process culminates with the writing of essays, where students' emerging ideas are homed in creatively intellectual forms. It is a difficult and wondrous process. Sadly, for most students, the audience for their labors will rarely be larger than one or two people. Professors might write responses in the margins of their papers, but rarely does this exchange expand beyond the

classroom. In effect, just when the student is most invested in their ideas, the dialogue about them ends.

The value of *Culture* is that it enables undergraduate students to share the best of their compelling ideas with a larger audience. The scope of the ideas explored in this, its third issue, exemplify the social relevance of the humanities – gender, sexuality, technology, popular culture, and social justice. These are the concerns of humanity in the contemporary world, and they deserve to be read, discussed, and shared. But how can we extend the reach of these even further? Creative initiatives like pop-up discussions in indie cafes, community exhibits and cultural podcasts, can be course assignments and/or extracurricular activities hosted by student associations would invite the public into the conversation. *Culture* has begun to "do humanities" in a significant form. Let all of us who are invested in the humanities play a part in demonstrating why the humanities matter today.

Rape-Revenge, Representation, and Reclaiming Female Power in "New Hollywood"

Alexandrea Fiorante

Within the parameters of horror, females have historically been subjected to roles of sexualization, degradation, and victimization. Although spawning from exploitative film with highly controversial displays of sexual abuse, the rape-revenge sub-genre has emerged as anything but oppressive. The pro-feminist agenda of *I Spit On Your Grave* (2010) and *Teeth* (2008) exhibits the reflective purposes of the sub-genre in exposing the female liberation movement as met with male anxiety, perpetuating a larger conversation about patriarchal oppression and consent. The emergence of the female-centered victim-turned-vigilante narrative critiques western patriarchal society and works within the context of second and third wave feminism to bring into consciousness the social reality of rape-culture and women's rights, and to situate film as a cultural product crucial for female visibility.

The horror genre is particularly vicious in normalizing misogyny where very few fall short of women-hating movies. Instead, it is the moments of resistance, primarily with the reversal of the male to female gaze, which acknowledges negative treatment and representation of women by stepping beyond the traditional cannon fodder to emerge as role models. Therefore, the focus on revenge and punishment for the transgressions of men can be seen as a logical evolution within horror. Particularly popular in the 1970s, exploitation film attempted to succeed

financially by exploiting current trends and lurid content, appealing to the base nature of thrills and social change (Benshoff 34). The horror genre typically appeals to men sexually; however, it is really for both narratives: angling slasher films towards females offers a competitive edge in the battle for distribution deals and offered distributors a new way of profiting in a crowded marketplace (Mehls 88). Still, its focus on female empowerment within the context of western rape culture is coded as progressive.

For young women in particular, the outward reality they encounter is likely to be of patriarchal tone. As they move from childhood to adolescence, they must come to terms with their changing bodies and emotions, but also with society's changing responses to them. Despite several decades of feminist campaigning, it appears that sexuality still spells potential danger for females. The emergence of new audience types in the 1960s encouraged a new breed of filmmaker to settle new ideas and social issues. The production code and its replacement with the new flexible American rating system in 1968 had the opportunity to deal with issues of sex and violence in an overt and sophisticated manner to reach more viewers (Mehls 100). It employed directors whose personal vision was less hampered by the domineering studio system of censorship which allowed hard-hitting films to discuss and critique social issues otherwise concealed.

Banned in several countries and named "the worst film ever made" by critic Roger Ebert, *I Spit On Your Grave* (1978) was met with extreme controversy and deemed anti-women despite Meir Zarchi wanting to title it "Day Of the Woman" because of its graphic twenty-minute rape

scene. However, it may be looking at the phenomena from the wrong perspective to insist that the film shows a repressive violence against women. The inspiration was derived from his personal experience in aiding a raped woman who was blamed for her assault and left unaided by the police. Loyal to its predecessor, the 2010 film remake by Steven R. Monroe focuses on a female protagonist who is brutally gang-raped and left for dead, only to embark on a merciless path of revenge on her abusers by killing them one by one, representing what it feels like to be female in a patriarchal society. Historically, sexuality is something needing to be punished. *I Spit* clearly reflects the concerns of second and third wave feminism regarding the exposure of male anxiety surrounding female sexuality and freedom. Jennifer embarrasses the gas station clerk, Johnny, when she insists on pumping her own gas. Her interference with the gas cap causes him to fall backwards into a bucket of water. Ridiculed by his friends, Johnny feels emasculated by her independence. For this crime she is physically and mentally destroyed by men who feel threatened by her. While rape is rooted in male sexual psychology, to present it as non-sexual is to deny evolutionary facts. Resorting to torture in revenge corroborates the traditional feminist idea that victims experience rape not as sex but as trauma and as a loss of control. Successfully enacting revenge on her rapists allows Jennifer to redress balance albeit using violence. While the film is responsible for putting images of sex violence towards women on screen, it also conversely provided an opportunity for identification with the fantasy of female empowerment and agency. The movie is equally appropriate to analyze as “feminist wish-fulfillment” and a vehicle of personal expression reacting to violence against women (Miller 108).

Males are accustomed to feeling comfortable. *I Spit*'s film technique exposes patriarchal culture through the passive male role in spectatorship. The rape-revenge format subverts the male gaze with cinematic bait-and-switch, disrupting the "peep-hole" voyeurism horror creates for men. Having audiences identify with her rape is crucial to Zarchi and Monroe's pro-feminist agenda. The fluid point-of-view and victim-turned-vigilante archetype argues that *I Spit* may appear misogynistic but holds feminist value where the images of emasculated female power are not in accordance with a sadomasochistic male gaze, but instead victim identification. Audiences share the leering male onlookers gaze through the camcorders display screen until we find ourselves sharing her point-of-view after the crime. The distorted vignette coveys disorientation and asks viewers to look at her ordeal through her own eyes, replacing the male gaze with the female one. The fluidity of the camera between aggressor and victim brings a sense of spatial temporality relocating the "out there" to the "right here" in the contemporary moment. *I Spit* and *Teeth* show the horrific truth of suffering that results from rape and sexual violence. Introduced as "media rape," the most vile villain is understood here not as the rapist but the one who watches the rape, where the voyeur's eventual punishment could potentially work as a powerful feminist critique of rape-culture that acknowledges the male gaze as sexually assaultive (Mantziari 5). Jennifer steals her rapist's camcorder and uses it to film her assaulting them which demonstrates this gave reversal. Her character exposes the predatory nature of the male gaze and turns it back on itself in self-reflection and acknowledgement of

their non-consensual engagement. She adopts a male-aggressive stance while the dominant male audience passively submits to the shock and discomfort of the viewing position usually intended to favour them. It conforms to the revisionist standards of the new rape-revenge cycle and has a dual role as sadistic entertainment and incriminating evidence.

Violence in horror films is less about exhortation of violence against women but instead representation of female's patriarchal experience. *I Spit* and *Teeth* include disturbing rape scenes as a literal representation of trauma that criticizes ideas of male entitlement and the false ideas that women ask for or enjoy rape. *I Spit*'s Johnny claims that a spied-on Jessica who had her "[breasts] flopping in the window for everyone to see [is a] cock-teasing whore" who was displaying herself for, expressing this as the motive for rape (Monroe). Dawn in *Teeth* is raped solely on her attackers urge from his own abstinence. As third-wave feminism asserted that sex was no longer a domain of male demand and entitlement, rape-revenge allowed females to reclaim their bodies and gain justice against patriarchal oppression by returning to men the obvious state of suffering they cause them, suggesting a good living out of the genre as an emotional release from the pressures of patriarchy (Schatz 456).

Body horror is a successful genre based on its abilities to raise affective bodily response that mirrors on-screen characters to better understand the voluntary mimicry of emotion using aspects of display that draw on personal and cultural experience as a response to cinematic elements (Creed 60). While affective during the rape scenes, it is the strands of castration and female-inflicted violence that merits the genre's tone from oppressive to progressive through the victim-turned-vigilante character that traces the transformation from passive to

active female lead. Dawn literally "bites back" at the patriarchy: as children, her step-brother gets his finger bitten as he ventures into something he should not have in the same way she responds to Toby's non-consensual sex by castrating him along with her male gynecologists gloveless and forceful fingers as they assault her. Dawn graphically castrates three men throughout the film with the display of the severed penises. The vagina as a "male destructor" creates a crack in the facade of male hegemony permitting violence against women to be brought to consciousness as a mode of resistance. When she is able to have sex with Ryan, it is understood that the act is accepted because it is consensual, however when she realizes it was only a bet, she expresses her sexual domination by straddling him in a sort of power-pose and castrating him. As sex is considered a masculine trait by having power over someone, Dawn reclaims hers by removing the organ that symbolizes oppression. Jennifer castrates Johnny with a pair of hedge clippers reminiscent of *Teeth*'s vagina dentata myth which operates in the same way. Jennifer is abused with a series of phallic objects including simulated oral sex on a gun. The iconography of phallic weapons holding symbolic meaning in light of third-wave feminism allows her to address the monster on her own terms. The sheriff is killed by a loaded gun going off in his anus, blowing off his head. The notion that her methods for their deaths are reversals of their violent sexual acts on her gives her dominance, similarly to Dawn, and allows wish-fulfillment for female audiences to obtain justice. Third-wave feminism embraced individualism and sought to redefine what it meant to be feminist. The movement was credited to

Rebecca Walker who responded to Anita Hill's testimony against Clarence Thomas in 1991 that he sexually harassed her (Kleinhans). While *I Spit* was considered a "hate" movie, the merit of the rape-revenge title is in its suffix: Walker asserted women should "not nurture [men] if they don't prioritize our freedom to control our bodies and lives" (Kleinhans). Perhaps these dramatizations and representations should express hate graphically to expose the facade of male hegemony and female oppression.

Sexual liberation is a process of becoming conscious of the way gender ideas and sexuality have been shaped by society and then intentionally constructing and becoming free to express their authentic identity. Although it is a tenuous notion that a woman viciously gang-raped would go to lengths of sexuality to get her revenge, within the context of sexual liberation and the emergence of the Slutwalk, it is easier to justify. Dawn uses her sexuality to enact revenge on her stepbrother in a similar way the protagonist of Zarchi's film seduces her attacker in the bathtub scene. The fact that they pretend to enjoy the rape, as to lure them to their destruction, is critiquing familiar male arguments about women bringing it on themselves as sexist. Their promise of sexual favours is what makes them strong because that is what her assailants want from her, and in turn they control the engagement to assert their dominance.

As culture grows wiser, generally so do the experiencers. However, this progress can be taken for granted when men in places of authority, as with Weinstein, Cosby, and Spacey, and government officials as "pussy grabbing" Trump, remind us that sexual consent is still in need of a cultural overhaul. Along with Asia Argento or Rose McGowen bravely denouncing men and the long-standing patriarchal system that protects its predators, the rape-revenge genre utilizes

the victim-turned-vigilante character to expose patriarchal oppression and bring into consciousness larger debates around women's rights to make the world more comfortable with honesty.

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Negotiating the Poles of Masculinity; The Male Pole Dancer in International Competition

VM Roberts

Yevhen Kot appears on stage. Or more accurately: Yevhen Kot's *character* does. The dancer himself is caked in layers of prosthetic make-up and shrouded in a voluminous cloak. He approaches the pole, which vibrates at his touch. Off comes the cloak, and we see that the make-up covers the entire top half of his body, an idealized version of his musculature picked out in black on a light grey background. He has spines on his chest, head, and shoulders. Black veins twine across his cheeks. He appears animal, but glares with conscious eyes, and stands with a pride that suggests self-awareness and control. His sinuous movements are crisp and deliberate. He climbs the pole, using only his hands, and drops to the ground from above his standing height, executing a 1.5 rotation flip, and then a series of flags. Flags are a strength maneuver. Most bodybuilders cannot perform them because the weight of their own muscles exceeds their lifting capacity. Flags are the province of strongmen -- lean strongmen -- but Kot is not particularly lean. He is just very strong.

The music changes and we are listening to a creepy music box. Kot's wrists soften, and his face becomes expressive. His entire character shifts beneath the make-up (which miraculously has not rubbed off against the floor or the pole), and he is now a blushing, slightly monstrous, ballerina. Viewers with a strong inner eye might think they almost saw the tutu. Just as suddenly the creature is back.

The scene is the gala show at The Pole Art Championship of 2016. The performances from this event are fully available online, making them a convenient, unified corpus which I have used as the nucleus for this exploration of gender in dance. Films of these performances are not enough to tell us how these dancers identify, or what they would tell us if we asked them directly about gender, but they do make it abundantly clear that competitive pole dancers know exactly what they are doing when they perform gender on the stage. According to Jane Desmond, "Dance provides a privileged arena for the bodily enactment of sexuality's semiotics and should thus be positioned at the center, not the periphery, of sexuality studies" (Desmond, 3). Movement can function as a kinesthetic speech act, she argues (Desmond, 6), and the dancers themselves seem to agree. In their performances, we can recognize that addressing and even transgressing expectations around gender and sexuality is often a markedly conscious choice.

In international competition, sport pole dancers perform a variety of movements designed to demonstrate strength, flexibility, and grace. This kinesthetic discourse, along with the language of empowerment has been used to elevate a dance form once associated with seedy strip clubs to competitive international dancesport (Holland, 144). Routines are evaluated on the basis of fitness factors such as flexibility and strength, as well as artistic elements like musicality and emotional expression. Due to the rotating pole and gymnastic nature of the maneuvers, pole dancing can safely be described as a highly technical form. Especially in duets, the physicality and emotional intensity of most performances also creates a sexually charged effect, as is

common in other dance forms, most notably, Tango.

Costumes can be elaborate, and there are often elements of striptease. Men may or may not be allowed to compete with bare chests, and many wear abbreviated shirts which reveal their abdominal muscles. Men are much more likely than women to wear loose fitting costumes, long pants, or costumes which evoke "casual" dress. Competitions usually include three broad categories, men's, women's, and duet. Duets typically allow "all genders," and while male-female and female-female pairings are both frequent, male-male pairings are much less common. In part, this reflects overall lower participation in the sport by men, however the relatively high frequency of M/F pairs suggests that men gravitate disproportionately to the duet style.

Common in men's pole dance routines, martial, working class, and animalistic imagery appeal to broad-based norms of masculine behavior, while woundedness and youth belong to a discourse on masculinity which seems more specific to pole dance. Certain movements are also gendered. The use of "air walk" movements is particularly fascinating, although they are -- almost by definition -- unique to pole dance, these movements can perhaps be associated with driving imagery, representing active movement across a landscape. Despite their uniqueness to the form, as allusions to freedom of movement, these may be amongst the more generalizable forms of normative masculine performance. Other differences in men's and women's routines seem rooted in habitus; men are more likely to climb the pole with their toes, or without using their legs at all, while women typically use their ankles. Climbing with the toes evokes the silhouette of a person working-at-heights, while the ankle method tends to accentuate the hips. Interestingly, men who perform 'queer' masculinity on

the pole tend to avoid both, climbing in complex ways, or with their bodies inverted. Robotic movements derived from break dance and push-up like movements are also gendered male in ways which suggest ingrained habits.

M/F duets, like most dance styles, typically present the dancers as involved in some kind of romantic situation, however unlike in some styles (e.g., ballroom dance), this is not mandatory. While dance forms with extensive lifting in M/F duets typically reserve lifting for the man, this is almost never the case with pole dance. When women lift men in pole dancing, the focus typically remains on them, with the man's body used as a weight to help maintain the rotation of the pole. Willingness to allow a woman's physical strength to support a man's body could be read as inherently queer in the context of western-international culture, however these moves typically retain the man in a showman role, as if presenting the woman as an aesthetic prize, which weakens this argument.

Oleg Zabelin's competition routine for Pole Art 2016 features a mining hard hat and jeans, dirt make-up and stubble. His physique is likely the result of a calisthenics-based training regimen, and he is so lean as to present the image of hunger. There is no doubt that his intent is to portray a hard-scrabble masculine ideal, not simply a working-class masculinity, but an embattled one, on the verge of lumpenization. His face contorts in suggestions of pain and struggle, and at times he seems to be struggling against his own body, the pole, everything. The music contains an animal-like growl, which he pantomimes. Later, he mouths the words "I'm wrong" along with a voice in the music. This performance implies liminality as a feature of masculinity and seems to tell us that what are often described as "failed

masculinities" remain fundamentally masculine, and in some contexts can be mobilized to indicate something even more emblematic of masculinity than success. This has strong resonances with the martial masculinities, perhaps explaining the seemingly unconnected battle wound embedded in this performance. The theme of working-class masculinity is consistent across Zabelin's work, at Pole Emotion 2018, his background is a black and white film showing machine and military images. At Pole Art 2018, he appears in a button-down shirt and carrying a briefcase, but elements of a queer masculinity begin to emerge as he ties up the corners of his shirt to reveal his midriff for a short time -- during which he uses the ankle climb -- before the shirt becomes a focus for what appears to be a narrative involving identity shame.

Coco Kehong's winning routine at Pole Art 2016 is an example of a deeply queer performance of masculinity. Dancing to a piano and orchestral piece, he begins backlit on his knees, and immediately cartwheels up the pole. His performance makes extensive use of balletic steps, at times approaching pointe work, and incorporates a large variety of the most strength-based maneuvers. His routine is not without animalian imagery, or abrupt drops, and he makes use of push-up-based movements on multiple occasions. While he avoids using the ankle climb in the early part of his performance, it is gradually introduced until it becomes a repeating motif -- a fairly impressive arc for five minutes of stage time, and a literal queering of his movement style. In another performance, at a 2017 competition, Kehong uses a similar contrast, with similarly subtle variation in his use of masculine-coded movement, now keyed to changes in the music rather than forming a progression. By 2018's Pole Art, the alternations are unmarked and seamless. Kehong's non-competitive routines, however, show an almost complete

absence of male coded movements; his performance of gender is not unconsciously queer, it directly addresses specific audiences.

Alexander Baranov, like Yevhen Kot, uses tempo changes to permit multiple masculinities in a single performance at Pole Art 2016. He performs an explicitly normative masculinity, dancing with a superman Ken doll, and removing his pajamas to reveal a superman tank top and red shorts. The transition marks a change from "softer" balletic movements to a flying, energetic style that relies heavily on momentum. Baranov's performance is not interesting purely because of the Ken Doll, it involves two distinct styles of childish masculinity and vulnerability, but unlike the other performances described, there is no play with queer masculinity.

International Pole dance culture is interesting in that it appears to encompass these multiple, defined, masculinities. Dancers performing more 'normative' or more 'queer' masculinity are largely consistent in their presentation across performances but do show evolution and variation. They compete against each other despite quite visible distinctions in performance style, including substantial differences in the actual movements used, costume, music choice, and so on. The use of woundedness and youth imagery by the group of dancers who perform normative masculinity, and its omission by those who perform 'queer' masculinity is striking. The performance of queer masculinity in this context is simple, confident, and unapologetic, while the performance of normative masculinity is complex and is problematized by the dancers themselves.

Regardless of their performance of masculinity, all dancers in these competitions identify explicitly as men, at least in order to compete. It is impossible to know from their performances whether

they find identifying themselves within a binary categorization comfortable or limiting. According to Judith Butler, "Sex is an ideal construct which is forcibly materialized through time" (Butler, 1). Training for pole dance is, in effect, a form of body modification which creates permanent changes in the body which can have direct impact on the way others perceive its gender. In order to develop necessary skill and strength, dancers must train strenuously. Numerous decisions produce a cumulative effect on the composition and appearance of the body, and it is clear that different dancers take different approaches. Dimitry Politov's bulky physique, for example, is the result of many years of nutritional and training choices rooted in calisthenic traditions (Politov), while the sleeker musculature of a dancer like Kehong requires long-term training with more stretching, heavier weights, and more restricted calories, in short, a training regimen more similar to classical dance. In addition, dancers take obvious inspiration from a number of different dance styles, including break dance, modern dance, classical ballet, and ballroom. Each of these styles results in a different habitus, its own set of gendered movement patterns. Daniel Rosen is an interesting case because his body does not conform to any of the dominant aesthetics, yet at Pole Art 2016, he chooses to perform in minimal costume (dance belt and nude shorts). His appearance is a striking reminder that the body types associated with strength in "western" culture are largely the result of aesthetically driven training choices, not directly tied to the development of functional strength. His costume choice further demonstrates that this is not something he feels he needs to hide or downplay. His use of movement is consistently male coded with air walking, push-up movements, and no ankle climbing, yet his dress, music, and non-aggressive style presents an unmistakably

queer masculinity. He is, in fact, openly gay, and one of the few dancers who perform M/M duets (Pole World Festival).

Generally, the dancers who perform the least heteronormative markers are the most likely to depend heavily on the aesthetics of their body itself rather than momentum, abrupt drops, and spectacular tumbles. Given the extreme departures from normative gender performance in some of these queer masculinities, it is tempting to *guess* that some of these men may not identify fully as men, and especially in the case where dancers are wearing gaffs,[1] it is hard not to suspect some level of body dysmorphia. That makes it all the more interesting that as a group, they perform the least body shame. Ballet may, in fact, be a key to the puzzle; "for ballet man, the uphill climb to diverse definitions of masculinity may be a long one, but he may take heart in the potential of making a significant contribution to the cause," writes Jennifer Fisher, and proposes calling strongly male-identified but non-normative dancers "mavericks," "gay or straight," she specifies, these are men who "don't worry about putting a macho reputation at stake" (Fisher, 43).

Athleticism and allusion to sport has often been used in an attempt to reduce the gender stigma surrounding men who dance by using it as a defense of their heteronormativity. Many writers consider this approach as bolstering homophobia. In practice, it is also of questionable effect; allegations of homosexuality targeting male athletes are not limited to dance. Bodybuilders, wrestlers, and even football players face similar stigma (Curry, 130), in

[1] Gaffs are a type of underwear primarily used by transgender women and drag performers to hide their genitals and produce the appearance of female genitalia in tight fitting clothing, while dance belts are a similarly restrictive garment developed for classical ballet which are instead intended to produce the appearance of a "perfect" -- but still masculine -- package.

addition, many dance forms are extraordinarily athletic raising a question about what is really happening when similarities with less athletic sports are used to 'prove' athleticism in dance. "Although I have little doubt that the physical nature of dance is commensurate with that of football or soccer… I have been concerned about discourses that colonize dance in traditionally masculinist ways" one dance writer admits (Risner, 67), but his concerns are not realized in sport pole dance. The medium takes athleticism to an extreme -- many of its movements are straightforward strength exercises rendered aesthetic through connecting movements, music, and the mechanical rotation of the pole. With the addition of scores and competition, it resembles gymnastics as much as ballet. Yet within the sporting framework, it is these "maverick" dancers, with their secure "queer" masculinity who seem to own the pole, winning competitions year after year.

If masculinity is to be defined as physical strength, competence, and a preference for the driver's seat, then men like Kehong, those who successfully express a queer, resistant masculinity, are hypermasculine. If there is something essential about gender it may be an innate sense of which of two modes one feels a sort of gravitational pull towards. If so, then we can also say that there are a small percentage of individuals for whom the source of this pull does not lie close to either the masculine or the feminine mode. When we add a third category, it can only be "other," which means a trinary division of gender comprises two similar and one different category -- the two similar categories are represented by dense modal groupings while the third category is represented by a wide scatter of distinct possibilities which do not form a mode. A quaternary division of gender would have the same structure, and that this pattern is likely to continue regardless of how many

categories are permitted -- the final category will always represent a wide scatter of possibility that can only be conceived of as "other." If we distinguish within the category of "masculinity" between heteronormative and queer types, we can form categories which are in some ways more comparable, but there is still "scatter" that is still poorly described. It also forces us to construct a binary with rigid boundaries, in this case by relying on competitive classification. In short, any labelling or categorization of gender is likely to carry both advantages and problems.

Dell Hymes suggests that "anthropology may begin in curiosity and savor the specific, but it leads ideally into universality -- ideally a concrete universality that mediates between the particular and the general" (Hymes, 12). In the anthropology of gender, we can never be sure that we are labeling or categorizing our subjects correctly... as we shift our lens who falls into which category changes not because their gender changes or is unclear, but because the category itself is an omnibus. In this paper, I have referred to "heteronormative" and "queer" masculinities, recognizing the distinction based on a series of assumptions that are rooted in both body and performance, and implying ideas about sexual attraction. This approach led to the discovery of deeper patterns, suggesting that the categorization was useful, even though some of the masculinities may be "so queer" they aren't masculine at all. I have problematized the idea of gender as a spectrum which runs from masculinity to femininity, and attempted to replace it, for the moment, with an assortment of categories occupying positions within a non-linear space called "masculinity." The real finding here may be that gender, whether on the stage or street, is too

complex to be addressed in simple terms like masculine and feminine, or even heteronormative and queer, yet for practical purposes, these are useful terms which facilitate clear discussion.

The current discourse on gender per se takes on an exaggerated salience because of the weight of discrimination and violence (both epistemic and physical) it seeks to overthrow, but even those of us who live at the nexus of the debate do not generally wish to participate in ontological gymnastics (pole dances?) with the barista at Starbucks. The gender binary is simple, and can be enjoyed as a locus of play, even if we are aware that it is limited, and that other categorizations and discussions which dispense entirely with categorization are necessary. In fact, allusions can be made within binary discourses to these more fine-grained treatments -- and they are, sometimes in the places we least expect such as competitive pole dance and its fascinating dialogue between secure resistant masculinities and insecure normative ones.

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Black-ish: Too Black or Not Black Enough?

Cheery-Maria Attia

When thinking of black excellence, the media does not fail to remind us that these examples are few and far between. Popular discourses teach us to think of black success and blackness in a typically narrow and rigid lens. When presented with complicated portrayals of blackness that contradict what we are repeatedly fed by the media, we are taught to reconcile what we know with what we are presented as to not contradict the subconsciously naturalized hierarchy of racial superiority (Isaksen, 39). It is in this way that the media outlets have maintained a hegemonic understanding of race and racism—that they do not exist insofar as they threaten state-sanctioned policies and social stratification (Isaksen, 40). Thus, it is increasingly important in today's day and age to include black voices and narratives in popular culture in order to thoughtfully examine how race and racism impact the lived experiences of racialized people in North America and abroad. Kenya Barris' hit TV series, *Black-ish,* is one such example of how film can be used to critically engage with popular perceptions of race and racism. Through comedy, *Black-ish* follows the Johnsons, an upper-class black family, as they navigate a racist, white society (Thomas, 39). Barris demonstrates how blackness and black identities create confusion over how race is supposed to be performed in pre- and post-Obama worlds. It is in this context that the duality of competing racial identities in America is to be understood and analyzed.

In this paper, I will explore the complicated portrayals of blackness, both implicitly and explicitly portrayed, in Kenya Barris' hit TV series, *Black-ish*. Using an intersectional approach, I will explore how the show demonstrates a complicated depiction of African-American families in America, that when measured up against portrayals of white families, is criticized for being either "too white," "too black" or "not black enough." Ultimately, I will argue that the show maintains notions of blackness that both resist and perpetuate stereotypes about African-American family structures and values, gender and sexuality and socio-economic success that not only conjure older racial tropes about African-Americans but newer racial tropes about blackness and whiteness. I will conclude by taking this analysis one step further and exploring the implications this has on black America in a post-Obama world.

In order to deconstruct the show's merit as a communicative discourse on racial relations and stereotypes in America, it is important to define what "black-ish" means. Although the show covers a variety of issues such as police brutality, the history of racism and slavery which are typically seen as "black" issues, the show problematizes how these issues are perceived by those who are biracial in America. As defined by the show,

> black-ish is the new identity of the finically well-off blacks and interracial people in the United States...Blackish is a complex position to take; simultaneously one would be alienated from both the worlds where belongingness based on identity would be denied the more you seek for it...For the Blackish people, they are not black enough for the Blacks and they can never be White enough to fit into that category. This unending identity problem creates belongingness trouble for the members of the family as they come in contact with public. As they are not sure whether to identify or exclude themselves from a particular set of people...Though majority of the situations could be ignored for their fun value, there are circumstances where the issue related to identity becomes a trouble (Thomas, 2017, pp. 39-40).

In other words, being "black-ish" is a subject position that melts the white/black binary (Thomas, 39). While being "black-

ish" involves being black, it also represents a confusion or obstacle to identifying solely as black (Thomas, 40). Having understood "black-ish" identities in this way, it is evident that the divide between being black or being white is not as easily demarcated, implying that those who carry this identity often struggle with reconciling their two conflicting identities (Thomas, 39). This is especially evident in how stereotypes are portrayed in the media surrounding biracial families.

As mentioned before, the show follows Dre Johnson, who is a high-level marketing executive; his wife, Bow Johnson, who is a doctor; their four teenage kids, as they navigate white America; Ruby, Dre's mother and Earl, Dre's father (Isaksen, 39). In the show Bow Johnson is depicted as being biracial and is often ridiculed by her husband and mother-in-law for supposedly whitewashing the kids (Thomas, 41). While the emphasis on Bow's mixed race is the main focus of certain episodes, viewers cannot help but notice the dynamic family structure that is more commonly associated with white families in media and underrepresented in black families in media.

According to Hill and Kelly (2016), common portrayals of African-American families in television often exclude a male father figure, "with a focus on single-mother families and describe black fathers as missing, weak or ineffectual" (188-189). As such, this draws up a racial hierarchy, in which white families are seen as the default or the norm for proper family relations (Dyer, 11). For decades, shows centered on African-American families such as *Julia, What's Happening* and *That's My Mama* have focused on black, single mothers and "normalized the missing black father" (Hill and Kelly, 189). It is in this way that shows, depicting this trope are considered to be "too black." Although the protagonist, Dre Johnson, recalls not having an active father figure in his life, the

show attempts to disrupt the stereotype of the missing black father through its portrayal of Dre's more hands-on parenting style (Hill and Kelly, 199). However, Dre's high-level marketing executive position does take him away from his kids at times, which simultaneously demonstrates the trope of the absentee father in a different way (Thomas, 41). While the same cannot be said for Bow's upbringing, she is ridiculed for her overly hands-on and colour-blind parenting structure by her mother-in-law, Ruby (Thomas, 41). In this way, Bow is criticized for being "too white," for sheltering her children. Additionally, the show highlights the importance of intergenerational ties and knowledge, which is a key component of African-American families that it not as prevalent in white families on television (Hill and Kelly, 204). This is where race and socio-economic class collide: in less affluent families, family relations are "often obligatory and based on financial hardship," whereas in more affluent families, these ties are "voluntary and mutually satisfying" (Hill and Kelly, 205). This is significant, as the Johnsons have the wealth and resources to keep their family within close quarters comfortably (Hill and Kelly, 205). While the show attempts to dispel stereotypes about black families, it also conjures up other stereotypes about white families. Thus, it is also significant to look at how gender and sexuality are performed, as they intersect with race.

As Ferber (2007) argues, race and gender are "mutually constitutive…and intersectional" social constructs that define and compliment how each is to be perceived (p. 15). Theorist Hazel Carby goes one step further and suggests that the visibility of one's race will either hinder or make more visible one's gender (Dyer, 11). This implicates African-American men and

women, as they will be discriminated against for both their gender and their race simultaneously. As Crawford argues, black men are typically represented as dangerous, sexual, violent, aggressive—an idea which is commonly referred to as the trope of the "dark continent" (35). Conversely, this implies that white men and women are asexual, passive victims (Crawford, 35). In describing whiteness and blackness in oppositional terms, black folks are made to seem as inferior and threats to white civilization (Crawford, 40). In a *Black-ish* episode entitled, "Who's Afraid of the Big Black Man?" Dre looks both ways before abandoning a young white girl in the elevator because "black people don't get the luxury of being helpful…they are instantly seen as threats" (Ninja). While this is a more comical depiction of this trope, in another episode entitled, "Hope," the show once again revisits this with the more serious issue of police brutality. In this episode, Dre and Bow clash over how they want their children to understand the issue of police brutality against unarmed black youth (Stinsil). While Bow holds more trust in the court system and optimism in law enforcement/black relations, Dre is not as convinced, which is reflective of their different upbringings and how they raise their bi-racial children (Stinsil). This is echoed by Ruby, who says "if you ever have to talk to the cops, there's only seven words you need to know. Yes, sir. No, sir and thank you, sir" (Stinsil). It is evident that these sentiments display a fear in law enforcement that is stereotypically introduced in black children at a young age. Thus, underlying the issue of police brutality is the "dark continent" trope, which serves as a constant reminder of the Johnson's inherent blackness.

While the issue of police brutality is a current issue that plagues many African-American communities, it also represents that despite the Johnson's wealth,

contemporary society has not been able to move past the issue of race and the trope of the "dark continent." Unlike *The Cosby Show*, *Black-ish* attempts to quash these older racializing tropes collide with the idea that the American dream does not apply to black folks and other marginalized communities (Ferguson, 14). It is in this way that the show upholds stereotypes from the past on black men, while maintaining a more contemporary and failed image of the American dream. In other words, the show demonstrates that the American dream is to be understood as only achievable for white folks, who represent the select few.

As a comedy, however, the representation of police brutality and the trope of the dark continent in *Black-ish* is especially significant. As Stamps argues, the show's light-heartedness plays a crucial role in how important issues such as police brutality are conveyed and how race is represented. Stamps suggests that "labelling African-Americans as funny, non-sexual characters allows mainstream, non-minority viewers to see a race as entertaining and less aggressive" (407). Despite a topic as important as the deaths of unarmed black men, this is consistent with Ferber's argument that suggests that the portrayal of black men and women in popular culture is consumable and "valued as entertainment," in which black people take on "roles that entertain white people" and "that white viewers can relate to" (12; Ferguson, 16). While this implicates black people in their own victimization, the portrayal of such a controversial, serious, and divisive topic on screen is depicted in a comedic way to help defeat stereotypes that suggest that black men are violent, aggressive, and threatening (Ferber, 12). It is in this depiction that the characters are seen as "too black" or having too much of their black identity. However, they are also

seen as less threatening and "too white" when it comes to black performance of sexuality.

The show often features Dre's sister, Rhonda, who is a lesbian (Isaksen, 42). Having said this, she is one of the only black LGBT characters on the show (Isaksen, 42). In an episode of *Black-ish* entitled, "Please Don't Ask, Please Don't Tell," Dre notes that "black people don't like to talk about the gay people in their family" (Isaksen, 43). This does not imply that supportive black families do not exist but that it goes against black cultural norms that are typically presented to viewers on primetime television (Isaksen, 46). However, the key concept underlying this sentiment relates to the earlier notion that since whiteness and white norms are the standard to be upheld, then the traditional heteronormative and heterosexual structure of white, nuclear families is to be upheld as well (Isaksen, 42-44). In fact, in multiple episodes, the Johnson men aver off into homophobic territory when it comes to non-normative sexual identification. For instance, in an episode entitled, "The Talk," Earl, Dre's father comments on his grandson Junior's gender-fluid outfit, claiming that it "looks a little gay" (Isaksen, 47). Once again, this is not to say that white families are not homophobic towards LGBT members of their families but that in film, black LGBT characters are rarely represented and embraced, as it adds another layer to their already marginalized racial identity (Hill and Kelly, 189). Thus, black LGBT characters are often policed and ridiculed to emphasize appropriate cultural norms (Isaksen, 47). Underlying these attitudes is the idea that heteronormative family structures are the normative model for wealth, marriage stability and success. It is the latter of the three that is often associated with middle-class, white families on television—a trend that *Black-ish* seeks to disrupt.

In television, most affluent families are white families (Stamps, 406). As Stamps argues, "the issues that the African American community faces, with regards to representation, is that the emphasis of the "welfare queen," "dead-beat dad," and misguided youth are constantly reinforced in news reporting and from government administrations" (407) In the case of the Johnsons, they are "too white" to be black when compared to their families and black friends. Like the Huxtable family from *The Cosby Show*, the Johnsons are seen as non-normative black folks for having a nice house, enrolling their children in private school, and wearing designer clothes—all of which the typical, black middle-class family would not have the luxury of purchasing but a white family would (Thomas, 41). Therefore, the Johnsons' and the Huxtables' lavish lifestyle allows viewers to "temporarily put aside the fact that they are black" and believe in the promises of the American dream (Ferguson, 12). Unlike *The Cosby Show*, however, Black-ish attempts to deconstruct the deep-seated racial issues that come with black subjectivity. For instance, the Johnsons feel like they have to constantly reaffirm their status to fit in with their white neighbours and friends, which demonstrates that they are "not white enough" (Thomas, 39). As Thomas argues,

> this near to upper class lifestyle put them in a conflict with the race they represent as well as the race they imitate. To the Black people outside, Andre's family is getting further away from being Black in lifestyle... and to White colleagues and neighbours they are just the lucky few Blacks who got in the flow of American Dream. (p. 39)

For instance, in "Good Dre Hunting," Bow has a meltdown over how a white doctor speaks to her during surgical procedures (Kipod). In this episode, she is constantly having to explain that she is not only a doctor but an educated black woman who went to Brown's University for her post-graduate studies (Kipod). In order to reaffirm her status and defeat her

colleague's sexist and racist assumption that she is a nurse or not as educated, Bow has to demonstrate that she is a member of the upper-class first and foremost; in other words, she has to abandon her blackness and assumed inferiority to indicate she is worthy of being his equal in the operating room. Similarly, Andre feels "constant pressure to maintain status [which] really comes from his insecurity that unless he performs along with his White colleagues in physical presentation, he will fall down in socioeconomic ladder" (Thomas, 40). However, Dre also feels that his wealth is a symbol of his betrayal to his less affluent black friends and as such, he "tries to picture himself as a champion of Black cause[s]" to overcome his "white guilt" (Thomas, 40). This sense of "white guilt" and betrayal is a constant theme throughout the show, which highlights the show's whitewashing of the Johnson family. It also demonstrates how success or affluence attributed with African-American families is seen as "not black enough." However, there is an inherent irony in the alternative.

If Dre works a blue-collar job to support his family, he will be labelled as the absentee father who works too much to make ends meet and thereby, living up to the trope of the "dead-beat dad" (Thomas, 40). Similarly, if he works a white-collar job, he will be blamed for forgetting his roots and thinking he's "better than blue-collar people" (ABC). In an episode entitled, "Blue-Collar Jobs," Dre argues that "blue-collar is going backwards" and that he is "not crazy for wanting [his] son to go to college" (ABC). While the comical focus of this episode is quite literally on the topic of jobs, the underlying focus is on the wealth disparity that separates the Johnsons from middle-class black families. Thus, while Dre's sentiments represent how being "black-ish" represents a cultural shift from racist premonitions about black success, they also appear to represent how their

success is considered "too white." However, it is this semblance of whiteness, that makes this show consumable to the masses. This has racist undertones, as it implies that success and blackness are not compatible, which further perpetuates the overrepresentation of black families of lower socio-economic status in film and television.

In this paper, I explored the complicated portrayals of blackness, both implicitly and explicitly portrayed, in Kenya Barris' hit TV series, *Black-ish*. Using an intersectional approach, I explored how the show demonstrates a complicated depiction of African-American families in America, that when measured up against portrayals of white families, is criticized for being either "too white," "too black" or "not black enough." Ultimately, I argued that the show maintains notions of blackness that both resist and perpetuate stereotypes about African-American family structures/values, gender and sexuality and success that not only conjure older racial tropes about African-Americans but newer racial tropes about blackness and whiteness. It is important to take this analysis one step further and explore the implications this has on black America today.

Although the idea of race is socially constructed, it has been used for centuries as a method of social organization and has become a symbolic reminder of belonging and identity (Dyer, 10). As shows like *Black-ish* demonstrate, adolescence and adults with dual racial identity often struggle to belong or embrace their heterogenous identity. While Black-ish is not the first show to develop this concept of mixed race, it is a contemporary example of how racist stereotypes and environments impact an individual's racial consciousness (Ferguson, 14). Conversely, an awareness of one's racial identity may produce

positive and negative effects. As *Black-ish* demonstrates, misconceptions surrounding dual identity can confine individuals of mixed race to one racial category or sense of belonging. As Thomas argues, those who identify with one race but do not belong may feel a sense of rejection and resentment (39). This can cause members of both racial groups to stigmatize those who are struggling to choose or embrace the racial identity that they choose. This can also function as a divisive tactic to divide and conquer racial minorities and interracial families by creating race and class conflict. As Stuart Hall argues, "race is a collective concept" (Stamps, 407). Thus, we should speak out against the silencing of vulnerable and underrepresented voices in popular culture and promote the narratives of folks who have embraced social positions that do not fit into either/or racial categories.

It is important to note that this poses a conceptual problem about the issue of race and racism in television. As Hill and Kelly argue,

> sitcoms that depict African-American families in a demeaning fashion have always been especially questionable, as they can perpetuate racist attitudes and behaviours. On the other hand, sitcoms that present black families as merely darker versions of white families can also be criticizing for suggesting that race no longer matters in American society (p. 205).

This is because studying what it means to be "black-ish," involves studying whiteness. It would appear that prime-time shows centered on black families like *Black-ish* have helped create more positive representation of African-American and bi-racial families, suggesting that racism is "dead" (Ferber, 14-15). However, this feeds into colour-blind ideology or the new racism, which Patricia Hill-Collins says would covertly "naturalize inequality" (Ferber, 14). In order to dispel the myth of equality implicitly depicted in the show, it is important to actively understand and embrace the idea that "there is no single black family—instead, [they] are evolving, diverse and increasingly shaped by social class" (Hill and Kelly, 2016, p. 205).

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The Cost of Doing Business: Police Culture and Persons with Mental Illness

Thomas Alexander

The killing of a person with mental illness by police is no longer perceived as an aberration. Rather, it is seen as an unfortunate but unavoidable outcome in a zero-sum game between the life of a deviant and the safety of an officer. Two converging phenomena, the culture of the police and the stigmatization of persons with mental illness, intersect during confrontations requiring the use of force. From a critical perspective, this report investigates each phenomenon, problematizes their effects through the examination of case studies, and explores potential solutions.

Police Culture

The crime control and due process models constitute "two separate value systems that compete for priority in the operation of the criminal process" (Packer, 153). Favoured by police, the crime control model is based on the notion that reducing criminal activity and apprehending criminals are the most important functions of the justice system (158). This section examines how police culture influences the activities of administrators and uniformed officers by perpetuating the crime control model.

At the administrative level, police culture is manifested as an aversion to accountability. Police administrators tacitly

support misconduct, deflect allegations, and staunchly resist civilian attempts to impose oversight or limit police powers. In the rank and file, police officers are devoted to the "crime fighting" paradigm, despite mounting evidence that the pursuit of serious offenders' accounts for a small percentage of overall police activity. Additionally, police officers develop cynical attitudes toward the public, the acceptance and internalization of which can lead to disastrous outcomes in the event of suspect confrontations requiring the use of force.

Administration

Important to the preservation of police culture is the presentation of unity. To that end, police administrations will support officers in bending the rules or operating outside of their official mandate if such misconduct is conducive to good police work. In *Excessive Force*, Alok Mukherjee notes several such examples within the Toronto Police Force. Following the death of Sammy Yatim, [then] Chief Bill Blair contended that the officer who tasered an already incapacitated Yatim[1] had "followed correct procedure and training" (Mukherjee & Harper, 76). On the second day of the 2010 G20 summit, in response to acts of mischief and vandalism, Toronto police administrators issued an order to "take back the streets" and expressed approval for officers to pursue mass arrests (59).

In his semi-ethnographic account of a "communications center of a large urban Canadian police department", Shearing makes similar observations (4). He contends that police actively subvert the formal rules of conduct, believing themselves to have the "tacit approval of the brass and their political masters" (10). Mukherjee's observations within the

[1] Yatim had already sustained 8 gunshot wounds (Mukherjee & Harper, 2018, p. 73)

Toronto Police Services Board demonstrate that such approval exists not only in the minds of individual patrolmen but is explicitly disseminated by the administration. He explains: "Both the police association and senior leadership constantly send out a message to officers: 'We've got your back.'" (Mukherjee & Harper, 77). The police administration's support of officer misconduct constitutes an impediment to democratic policing which remains deeply entrenched within police culture.

Despite having their back, the police administration is quick to deflect responsibility for misconduct onto individual officers. Shearing observed that "When the 'chips were down', the brass would sacrifice individual policemen in the name of the 'interests of the force.'" (10). By singling out these bad apples, the police administration attempts to preserve the legitimacy of the dominant police culture at the expense of its loyal votaries. In this light, the impersonal character of police culture is brought to the fore; the police administration is not so much supportive of its officers as it is of the dominant crime-control ideology perpetuated by the rank and file. Ultimately, the administration endorses officers acting outside of the law so long as their misconduct "could be retrospectively reconstructed in accordance with policy and legal procedure" (Shearing, 10).

Mukherjee notes the systematic response to public allegations of officer misconduct: "always, the focus is on the actions of the individual police officer, not on the systems or strategies that guide him or her or the leadership that developed and implemented them" (79). In response to allegations of racial profiling and failure to follow body-camera regulations, police administrators were quick to diffuse responsibility among individual officers

rather than lay blame on the dysfunctional police culture (20, 29, 60). Moreover, the bad apples theory is not a new excuse: in *The Vigilant Eye*, Greg Marquis reports a similar response in the 1970s to criticisms directed against the RCMP's anti-gay hiring practices. According to Marquis, the Solicitor General "blamed the absence of homosexuals in police services on the hostility of the rank and file", explaining that "the government could not prevent individual prejudices" (194). The ongoing recurrence of discrimination and misconduct by supposed lone actors begs the question of a confounding variable; in each instance of wrongdoing, the individual has been subject to the influence of police culture.

A third operation at the administrative level is the staunch resistance to the imposition of measures which increase oversight or limit police powers. As an example, Mukherjee draws on the practice of carding in Toronto. Despite the fact that proposed limitations would improve the constitutionality of carding practices, Chief Bill Blair rejected the changes on the grounds that the "key provisions infringed upon operational matters that were solely its [the police leadership's] preserve" (Mukherjee & Harper, 80). In a contest between the importance of civilian's rights and the powers of police, Blair's position is clear: the police culture exists to perpetuate the crime control model and subvert due process. Since the early 20th century, police forces have considered themselves to be primarily crime fighting forces—an orientation which has historically "interfered with prevailing initiatives to redefine the police role" (Marquis, 84; Loftus, 5-6). With respect to their objective, maintaining their ability to fight crime depends on the extent to which they can exercise control over the population. Accordingly, police culture dictates that administrators firmly oppose any attempt

to limit the investigative or coercive power of the force.

Rank and File

The notion of police as crime fighters is expressed most adamantly by officers themselves. An ethnographic study of British police officers revealed that an "exaggerated sense of mission towards the police role has long been identified as a defining feature of police culture" (Loftus, 4). Officers reporting feeling as though policing was not only an occupational role, but a way of life (4). Those interviewed rejected the postmodern conception of police as service providers in favour of an adversarial model, in which the primary role of police was to apprehend and imprison criminals (5-6). Contributing to this perception is the masculine ethos, a dominant mentality among male officers which subordinates compassionate policing and promotes physical confrontation (7). However, officers have few opportunities to act out their crime fighting fantasies (5). The belief in police work as characterized by action and excitement exists only as a cultural ideal which serves to cultivate support for the crime control model.

The cynical police attitude divides the population into three groups: the criminals, derelict individuals who must be controlled with force; the public, hapless and ignorant civilians who require protection; and the police, experienced professionals burdened with the sole understanding of how to correctly respond to disorder (Shearing, 7). Police deride criminals who "show no respect for authority" and are "intolerant towards those who challenge the status quo" (Shearing, 5; Loftus, 2). Instead of judging suspects on a case-by-case basis, police use class characteristics to identify individuals as belonging to the criminals or to the public. Shearing explains:

> Neither the scum nor the public refer to situated roles of troublemaker and victim/complainant that emerge in the definition of, and reaction to, particular troubles. Rather, they refer to two relatively stable populations of persons ... This theory enables the police to transcend the situated features of encounters by relating them to a broader social context which identifies the 'real troublemakers' and 'real victims.' (6)

This prejudicial method of interaction promotes efficiency, a key tenet of the crime control model (Packer, 158-9). Instead of carefully assessing a situation, officers can rely on stereotypical cues to establish a presumption of guilt, thereby streamlining the street-level investigation and apprehension process.

However, in exigent circumstances requiring the use of force, such cynicism can create shooter bias. Race, gender, and circumstantial factors such as clothing and neighbourhood have been demonstrated to contribute to shooter bias. (Correll et al., 1314; Kahn & Davies, 723; Plant et al., 1274, Payne, 181). These characteristics were isolated as independent variables to demonstrate their effect on two key dependent variables: participants' reaction times and error rates of shoot/do not shoot decisions. For example, results consistently showed that characteristics which are culturally and stereotypically associated with danger caused respondents to make more errors, such as misidentifying a held object as a weapon, after being primed with a Black face than they did after being primed with a White face (Payne, 181).

Review

The contemporary function of police culture is to perpetuate the crime control model of judicial process. Police administrators nurture solidarity by purporting to stand behind officers during public inquiries into officer misconduct. Yet, the same administrators will, without hesitation, sacrifice the lives and careers of individual officers to protect the image of the police organization. Administrators openly oppose the implementation of additional oversight or limitation of police investigative powers. In the rank and file,

officers are devoted believers in crime fighting as the ideal form of police work. However, cultural pressures cause officers to develop cynical attitudes regarding the public, which can lead to severe consequences when deploying force.

Persons with Mental Illness

Influenced by Durkheim's understanding of collective sentiments as demarcating accepted behaviour, Becker extends the analysis of deviance as a consequence of societal reaction. He argues that "social groups create deviance by making the rules whose infraction constitutes deviance, and by applying those rules to particular people and labeling them as outsiders" (Becker, 9). Outsiders, therefore, are "people who are judged by others to be deviant and thus to stand outside the circle of "normal" members of the group" (15). In order to understand the effect of police culture on police interactions with persons with mental illness (PMI), it must be made clear the extent to which PMI are labelled as outsiders.

In *Madness and Civilization,* Michel Foucault recounts the modern relationship between society and PMI. The widespread confinement of vagrants beginning in the 17th century marked a watershed moment in the history of societal reaction to madness. It was then that madness came to be "perceived on the social horizon of poverty, of incapacity for work, of inability to integrate with the group" (Foucault, 64). Foucault reports that during the age of confinement a perception of brutishness was applied to PMI (72). He explains:

> Madness borrowed its face from the mask of the beast. Those chained to the cell walls were no longer men whose minds had wandered, but beasts preyed upon by a natural frenzy [...] The animality that rages in madness dispossesses man of what is specifically human in him; not in order to deliver him over to other powers, but simply to establish him at the zero degree of his own nature. (72, 74)

Foucault's description suggests a deterministic view of PMI, wherein their condition is caused by an innate

characteristic beyond their control. Historically, PMI were seen as intrinsically different from and inferior to non-PMI.

Use of Force

At issue is the use of coercive force when responding to people experiencing mental health crises. In circumstances which result in the death of the suspect, police use of lethal force is often retrospectively characterized as unnecessary. A prejudicial police response is one in which the overt symptoms of a mental health crises or other factors signaling a mental illness are interpreted by police as increasing the dangerousness of the situation. In *Justice Without Trial,* Skolnick describes how police use "perceptual shorthand to identify certain kinds of people as symbolic assailants" (45). Police culture at the officer-level encourages the use of class characteristics and prejudices to inform decisions officers make in responding to persons in crisis. As Mukherjee notes, police "use words like *crazy* to refer to those with mental illnesses" (92). The subjectivity of this terminology reflects the entrenched belief that PMI are inherently different from and more dangerous than non-PMI in the same circumstances.

The cases of Michael Eligon and Michael MacIsaac both represent issues of prejudicial police response. After spending two days in an emergency ward, Elison left Toronto East General Hospital (Pritchard, 2014). He then armed himself with two pairs of scissors, stolen from a convenience store (Pritchard). Upon confrontation with police, Elison was only wearing a hospital gown and socks (Pritchard). What impression did his appearance have on police? Although one might argue that scissors could be considered an edged weapon, it is not unreasonable to assume that scissors pose a considerably lower threat to officer safety than traditional edged weapons. If not the

scissors, then one must conclude that Elison's attire affected the police officers' perception of danger. Because Elison was wearing a hospital gown instead of regular clothing, police implicitly classified him as belonging to a deviant class. MacIsaac, on the other hand, was wearing no clothing at all when confronted by police; he was running naked through his neighbourhood (McLaughlin, 2017). Similar to Elison's case, the police perceived MacIsaac as a greater threat because he presented an image congruent with police conceptions of deviance. Both Elison and MacIsaac were shot and killed by police; one must consider the effect of officer-level police culture.

Glorifying the crime-fighting ideal leads police to adopt a naturally combative attitude toward their work. Participating in crime fighting action and experiencing excitement become officers' primary goals, and public service takes a backseat. The masculine ethos dictates that police cannot back down from a confrontation, even when doing so would be in the best interest of the suspect. These cultural beliefs converge with anachronistic perceptions of PMI to create prejudicial police responses to persons in crises and cause officers to use lethal force before it is required by the situation, resulting in unnecessary deaths.

Solutions

Due to the fragmentation of cultural groups and varying needs among individuals, police services are trending toward a consumerist model. Considering the beliefs of the current model identified by Loftus, in which police see themselves as the only thing standing between order and chaos, a consumerist model would require "changing police culture to incorporate quality of service values" (Loftus 2010, 5; Reiner 1992, 778). The crucial issue is creating changes at the cultural level; meaningful reform would

require a paradigm shift in the core police crime control ideology.

One way in which contemporary police organizations can implement the consumerist model is through use-of-force training. Current de-escalation training in Ontario is woefully insufficient: during 12 weeks of basic officer training, recruits only receive five 90-minute sessions which explicitly mention de-escalation (Dubé 2016, 7). Increasing the scope of use-of-force training to include greater emphasis on de-escalation would provide officers with appropriate modes of response to PMI and begin to shift the goal of police-suspect encounters toward a service-based resolution. As police practices expert James Fyfe observed, "the forceful police approaches that work so well with rational offenders—threats, intimidation, closing in on personal space—are liable to force unnecessary confrontations and to put officers into perilous circumstances from which they can extricate themselves only by resorting to the most extreme types of force, that is, by shooting" (2000, 346). Not only do traditional police responses increase the likelihood of injury to the suspect, but they are ultimately ineffective in negotiating a peaceable outcome.

The challenge of implementing these solutions lies in the fact that they are fundamentally at odds with the objectives of police culture: reproduction of police authority through perpetuation of the crime control model. And while containing a situation until a person in crisis is prepared to cooperate with police may not be as efficient as simply shooting the suspect, it is required if officers intend to police by consent rather than control. More important than any tactic is inculcating in police officers the notion that a police officer's merit will be judged not on the basis of how many battles he has won, but on how many conflicts he has resolved.

Conclusion

Although the deaths of Michael Eligon, Michael MacIsaac, and so many others are tragic, they are not unforeseeable. Police agencies work to present their activities as contributing to public welfare, but below the surface there exists a police culture that tells a different story. Instead of protecting the safety of the public, it protects the authority of the police; instead of serving the interests of the public, it serves to inflate the egos of its officers. When police respond to a situation involving a person experiencing a mental health crises, they do not think of it as an opportunity to help somebody up from his or her lowest point; they see it as an opportunity to enter the fray, to use coercive force, and to inhabit the officer's ideal role as a crime fighter. In the police culture, the unnecessary death of a person with mental illness is just the cost of doing business. But it does not have to be this way. By embracing the consumerist model of policing, police agencies will gradually shift toward acceptance of their role as service providers. By implementing increased de-escalation training, officers will be provided with appropriate tools to respond to PMI and will view de-escalation as a legitimate and compassionate response to dangerous situations rather than as backing down from a fight.

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Tearing Down Heteronormative Tropes with Cherie Dimaline's *The Marrow Thieves*

Jesse Gauthier

Cherie Dimaline's *The Marrow Thieves* is characterized as a dystopian novel, but not only because of its historically informed fictionalized image of a dark and dehumanizing future. *The Marrow Thieves* is a harrowing and hopeful story that imagines a future where Indigenous Peoples are hunted and harvested for their dream-infused bone marrow in "schools." However, as gay men, Miig and Isaac are more encumbered in contemporary Canada than they are in and around 2049—the year Frenchie's mother is processed in the schools (Dimaline 176). For this reason, I believe a queer reading of the novel will provide fruitful insight into the representation of gay men in Dimaline's story. Issues beyond gay representation not considered, Dimaline's constructed future falls significantly short of a dystopia for gay men. If utopian features become too prominent, they undermine the novel's claim to a dystopic future; however, the utopian representation of gay men displaces dystopia rather than degrades it. To understand how Dimaline is reimagining dystopia one needs to look at how she portrays the characters of Miig and Isaac: Dimaline takes contemporary Canadian narrative tropes about gay bodies, identities, and relationships and inverts them. These tropes are the representation of diseased blood, the vulnerable queer body, biologically restrictive social roles, the equation of gayness and whiteness, the abnormal queer relationship, and the

sexualized queer relationship. Miig's and Isaac's nonconformance to these tropes reveals a hopeful future for gay men while simultaneously exposing their dystopic present.

First, an explanation of what "Canadian narrative tropes about gay men" means is required. The academic working on issues of population health, David Buetti, in his essay "Social Representations of Male Homosexuality and their Consequences for Gay Men: An Explorative Inquiry within the Canadian Context," lays out five different ways in which homosexuality is represented in Canada: "(1) normality; (2) flamboyance; (3) deviance; (4) vulnerability; (5) sexualized" (abstract). Equally important is Buetti's claim that "tolerance of gays is mainly limited to those who conform to heteronormative expectations" (abstract). When talking about tropes, I am referring to stereotypes and/or narratives that construct gay men as being abnormal, deviant, vulnerable, or sexual, often because of how they deviate from heteronormativity.

By inverting contemporary tropes that reject gay bodies, Dimaline is showing modern Canada as the dystopian locale for gay men. OmiSoore Dryden's dissertation, "Unrepresentable Blood: Canadian Blood Donation, 'Gay Blood' and the Queerness of Blackness," explores a Canadian narrative trope that represents gay blood/bodies as diseased and, by extension, undesirable. In discussing The Canadian Blood Services' survey that attempts to screen potential donors, Dryden claims that "[i]dentifying [question nineteen] as the primary and only question that frames homosexual sexual identity facilitates the construction of gay blood that perpetuates an 'epidemic of meaning,' in which bisexual and gay male bodies are already understood as diseased HIV/AIDS bodies" (x). The Canadian Blood

Service screens for men who have sex with men with the goal of identifying and rejecting "HIV/AIDS bodies." This rationale for screening perpetuates the dystopic contemporary Canadian narrative that insists gay bodies are sources of contagion and therefore invalid (in both meanings of the word). This dystopic trope is derived from a larger trope called, "blood narratives." Dryden expands on the term, writing "Narratives of blood sketch expressions of national, political, and social relationships onto the body. [...] Blood narratives frame how bodies, identities, community, and nation are imagined, producing abject being and dystopic identities" (40). According to Dryden, gay male bodies, among others, are defined by blood narratives that impose dystopic identities on them. In creating characters and a society that exist in opposition to the gay blood trope, Dimaline is drawing attention to a dystopic contemporary Canada in which dystopic identities are imposed onto gay men.

The attempted harvesting of Miig and Isaac's bone marrow is a plot point that rejects the contemporary Canadian trope of gay blood/bodies being inherently more vulnerable to disease. Both gay men are shown to be desired corporeal commodities: while explaining why Isaac cannot reason with their soon-to-be captors, Miig says, "they sent strangers into the woods to find us. Now they're surrounding our home in the middle of the night" (Dimaline, 1070). Miig's understanding is that "they" have exerted a lot of effort to take him and Isaac. It is in this exertion that readers can see the existence of the desirable gay body. This desirability is in contrast with blood narratives that have insisted upon a vulnerability of gay bodies due to sexual "deviance." Miig and Isaac also contend with additional tropes that use their

corporeality to define and delegate their identities out of existence.

In forming a society that does not uphold gender roles, Dimaline undermines the narrative tropes of biological determinism on which contemporary Canadian tropes about queer identities have relied. By acquiring Minerva's role, Isaac becomes a critically important community member who reveals gender roles as inessential by way of transcending them. Just before Frenchie finds Isaac, the following conversation takes place between Tree and Zheegwon:

> "I hope we find an Elder," Tree said just ahead
> "Someone who can help against the schools," Zheegwon finished.
> No one could replace Minerva, but we'd be lying if we said finding someone *like* [my emphasis] her wasn't on everybody's mind's these days. (Dimaline, 222)

Shortly thereafter, Isaac is marked as being "like" Minerva because he says: "I dream in Cree" (228). To fully supplant Minerva, Isaac must act as the caretaker of the community and the language, just as she did. The term "caretaker" is feminized due to heteronormative perceptions of women as performing childcare; hence, Isaac's community is accepting of his subversion of constructed gender roles. We know that the community is accepting and not unaware of Isaac's subversion of gender roles because it actively uses gender roles in other ways—like with Clarence's group of all male hunters (192). This degendering of Isaac's social role undermines biological determinism by presenting it as inessential; additionally, Isaac's role renounces a dystopic gendered hierarchy that excludes gay bodies with gender-nonconforming identities. Isaac's role as a caretaker of language builds on this gendered critique by including a cultural component.

Acknowledging the racial and cultural aspect of Isaac's positionality undermines contemporary Canadian dystopian tropes that equate gayness with

whiteness. By representing Isaac as a caretaker of language, Dimaline undermines contemporary Canadian dystopian tropes about gay men's identities. Adam Stewart's article, "A Logico-Indigenous Critique of Atalia Omer's Critical Caretaker Binary," reports that people who study religions [or, because it may be a more correct term for Indigenous communities, "culture and language"] unavoidably end up being either critics or caretakers; however, Stewart claims that both critics and caretakers can and have been harmful to Indigenous cultures. Isaac's Cree identity allows him to be a caretaker of language without risking damage to his Indigenous community. Isaac's role as caretaker of language is, therefore, a subversive act that dismantles heteronormative and racial hierarchies. Understanding the gay bodies and queer identities of Miig and Isaac is important, but it is equally important that they are in a romantic relationship.

Dimaline inverts tropes that invalidate gay male relationships to present a reality in which gay couples exist just like their straight counterparts do; resultantly, she gives readers—in this hyper-specific context—a hopeful future as an alternative to a dystopic present. In describing Miig and Isaac's relationship, Dimaline never uses qualifying language to differentiate their relationship from any other. Phrases like, "my husband" (99) "[y]ou and your man" (104), and "his love" (231) are used. Their relationship is never described as gay, queer, two-spirited, bisexual, or any other label (nor are they for that matter); instead, their relationship is defined by the legal term "marriage" that acknowledges its validity, implies a sense of ownership or belonging to one another, and represents the emotional connection between Miig and Isaac. Dimaline presents an alternative a tendency in contemporary Canada to qualify marriages as "gay-marriages". This qualification of "gay-

marriage" implies that these marriages are categorically a different from heteronormative marriages, and, moreover, signals to a larger societal need to "other" gay relationships. Dimaline expands her attack on dystopian heteronormative hegemonies by moving from normalization through language to normalization of behaviour.

In contrast with the trope of the sexualized gay man, Miig and Isaac's relationship is not sexualized, thereby theorizing a future for gay men that is not steeped in sexuality. There are limited references to physicality as they relate to Miig and Isaac: "placing a hand on my shoulder" (102), "the weight of his calf over my ankle" (103), "I grabbed Isaac by the hand" (105), "I pushed him away from the window" (106), "Isaac slid a hand across my shoulders" (106), "I pushed Isaac behind me" (107), and "[t]he love who'd carried him against the rib and breath and hurt of his chest" (231). Excluding the last, each of these quotations describes a mundane behaviour that is not expressly sexual. The last quotation is from the emotional reunion of the novel's climax and is also not overtly sexual. Dimaline has entirely excluded tropes that sexualize gay relationships; consequently, she has constructed a future for gay men that sees them as "normal," meaning not out of the mainstream, and not eroticized and othered. As it stands, Dimaline's novel has rejected the demonization of gay bodies, given queer identities a place to exist unhindered, and presented a hopeful future in which gay men can pursue relationships without being othered. However, all of this is for naught if it is not an effective way of undermining the contemporary Canadian narratives which have been revealed to be part of dystopian heteronormative hegemonies.

Dimaline uses "the future" as a narrative tool to successfully reach out to gay young adults, to present a future wherein gay men can exist outside of harmful tropes that relegate gay men and their relationships to the margins. Dan Savage founded a campaign called "It Gets Better" which aims to empower queer youth with notions of hope for the future: in one of the two portions of their mission statement entitled "storytelling," it says that "The It Gets Better Project connects young LGBTQ+ people with the global LGBTQ+ community by providing access to an arsenal of uplifting and inspiring stories of hope, resilience, and determination, as told by members of the LGBTQ+ community and their allies" ("Our Vision / Mission / People"). The project is a viral media sensation and has had over 60,000 people share their stories ("Our Vision / Mission / People"). Dimaline's storyline about Miig and Isaac is a fictive but nevertheless inspiring "It Gets Better" story: The conclusion of the novel is the happy reunion of Miig and Isaac, in which Dimaline rejects the "kill your gays" trope and embraces a future which gay youth can look forward to.

Miig and Isaac's Indigeneity and gayness are inseparable. Dimaline's representation of gay men in *The Marrow Thieves* does locate and undermine a heteronormative hegemony that exists in contemporary Canadian narratives; however, Miig and Isaac cannot represent all gay men because there is no universal experience of what it is to be gay. Perhaps Miig's representation can help highlight issues gay men of colour face, and maybe Isaac, as someone who Miig describes as a "pale, green-eyed half-breed" (101), can do the same for people who are white or can "pass" as white. Still, how can they represent gay men who are rich and/or poor, urban-dwelling and/or the rural-dwelling, black and/or Asian? They cannot.

Thus, readers must acknowledge the limitations of Miig and Isaac as counterweights to dystopian narrative tropes about gay men. Even so, *The Marrow Thieves* is a methodical dismantling of heteronormative structures by way of giving voice to those that are so rarely heard: It is a euphonic voice in an otherwise cacophonous orchestra.

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"The Ecchoing Green" and "The Garden of Love": Essential Spaces of Nature

Lucas Silver

Reading William Blake's "The Garden of Love" alone yields a statement on the tragedy of losing natural spaces, a statement which is seconded by its counterpart poem from *Songs of Innocence*, "The Ecchoing Green." While also critically reading the artworks that accompany each poem, another significant interpretation emerges; namely, that when read as a poem of mourning, "The Garden of Love" speaks to the speaker's own feelings of loss when confronted with the fact that a place he or she knew and loved in childhood had been replaced. "The Ecchoing Green" speaks to the way these natural spaces are beneficial to children, which provides context for why the speaker is in mourning. It also speaks to the way that natural spaces are beneficial to those who are not children, namely adults and the elderly, which provides insight to the speaker's present and future. Additionally, that "The Ecchoing Green" praises the natural spaces that "The Garden of Love" mourns make it appear likely that they ought to be considered companion poems. I argue that when reading each poem with their relationship to each other and their respective artworks in mind, the poems explore the *necessity* of having natural spaces where the preservation of interpersonal relationships between the old and the young can happen.

"The Garden of Love" is a poem of mourning that articulates the speaker's feelings about losing a space of nature. The

accompanying artwork to "The Garden of Love" is drawn above the poem's text and features two children and an adult who appear to be kneeling down in prayer, as if over a grave. This mirrors the content in the poem, which describes and depicts a scenario in which the Garden of Love has been turned into a graveyard by the Church—especially if the dark clothing that is worn by the adult in the image is interpreted as a priest's robes. This adds to the general sense that the speaker mourns the loss of the Garden of Love, as the figures in the image appear to also be in mourning—also signified by the adult's black robes and the children's dark clothing. This sorrowful tone of "The Garden of Love" and its accompanying artwork sets up the rest of the poem as an expression of the speaker's mourning over the loss of a space of nature, and subsequently the loss of a continuity between children and the elderly.

The presence of children in the accompanying artwork is significant when contrasting "The Garden of Love," found in Blake's *Songs of Experience*, to its likely *Songs of Innocence* counterpart "The Ecchoing Green." That poem begins by describing a happy, beautiful, and green landscape:

> The Sun does arise,
> And make happy the skies.
> The merry bells ring,
> To welcome the Spring.
> .....
> On the Ecchoing Green. (Blake, 1-10)

On this green, everybody—young and old—can come together and forget their trouble in a carefree and relaxed environment; even "Old John with white hair / Does laugh away [his] care" (Blake, 11-12). Also, the poem's first accompanying image shows people of all ages playing and dancing together "under the oak" (Blake, 13). "The Ecchoing Green" suggests a continuity between the young and the old; the shared space of nature is a place where people old and young can come together, and, as is

suggested by the poem's accompanying artwork—which shows children listening at the feet of adults—learn and teach each other. The image and the text together show that the children are playing happily, that the adults under the tree are caring for the children surrounding them, and that "Old John with white hair" (Blake, 11) is laughing. The people on the Ecchoing Green are not worried about being young or old, but are instead content with being who they are, where they are. By contrast, "The Garden of Love" contains no textual mention of elderly people at all. Instead, there is only reference to the presence of graves, which leads to the implication that the elderly people from "The Ecchoing Green" are now dead and are lying in the graves found in the Garden of Love.

The speaker in "The Garden of Love" does not seem to be either young or elderly, but rather seems to be presented as middle-aged. If the elderly are dead and buried in the Garden, one might be led to believe that the speaker of that poem must be a child. Therefore perhaps "The Garden of Love" features the same speaker from "The Ecchoing Green." We can safely assume that the speaker in "The Ecchoing Green" is a child because of the following line: "They [the adults] laugh at *our* play" (Blake, 15)—the speaker is signaling that he or she is a child at play on the Green by using claiming that it is "our play" that the adults are laughing at. This line, however, shows that the theory that each poem features the same speaker is only partly plausible, specifically when comparing it to the following line from "The Garden of Love": "A Chapel was built in the midst, / Where *I used to play* on the green" (Blake, 3-4, emphasis added). In other words, the speaker, back in the time of "The Ecchoing Green" was one of the children at whose play the adults were laughing but is no longer that child at the time of "The Garden of Love." So, while the speaker of "The Garden of Love" might very well be the

same speaker from "The Ecchoing Green," the suggestion of a time passed implies that the events told in "The Garden of Love" take place *after* the events told in "The Ecchoing Green." If this is the case, the speaker in "The Garden of Love" exists in a state of ambivalence, where he or she no longer has the innocence of child that can "play on the green" (Blake, 4), but that has not yet fully matured in terms of experience, for he or she is not yet dead and buried—assuming of course that one's experiential maturity can only be considered as "fully matured" if one's life has come to an end. Without the presence of the Ecchoing Green, the continuity between young and old has disappeared—the speaker is stuck in indefinite adulthood—and the world is out-of-balance. This loss of balance in the world further exhibits itself in that within "The Garden of Love," there is a distinct lack of definitive space, at least in terms of the speaker's physical and geographical location.

The speaker in "The Garden of Love" does not fully recognize his or her surroundings, and it is by the very nature of the priests' presence that the speaker is disoriented. At the start of the poem, the speaker claims that:

> [her or she] went to the Garden of Love.
> And saw what [her or she] had never seen:
> A Chapel was built in the midst,
> Where [her or she] used to play on the green.
> (Blake, 1-4)

The speaker has come to a place that, as the final line of this selection implies, he or she has been before, yet nothing about this place is familiar. Indeed, the line explicitly states that the speaker "used to play *on the green*" (4), heavily recalling the setting of "The Ecchoing Green." Moreover, the place where the speaker played as a child has been replaced with a Chapel. Here we begin to see how the speaker's disorientation might be connected to the presence of the priests, since the construction of their place of vocation is

what replaced a place that held some kind of importance in the speaker's childhood memories. Furthermore, the use of circuitous language that suggests that the speaker is lost initially comes from the speaker, who later states that after examining the Chapel, her, or she "turn'd to the Garden of Love" (Blake, 7). The word "turn'd", first of all, makes reference to the rotation of a body, namely the speaker's, implying a potential for dizziness and disorientation. Secondly, the speaker turns to the Garden of Love after seeing that a location that once had strong associations with childhood innocence and play no longer exists and was replaced by something that he or she had, before this moment, "never seen" (Blake, 2). However, turning away from what used to be the green and towards the Garden of Love does not ultimately help the speaker gain his/her bearings: "And I saw … / tomb-stones where flowers should be" (Blake, 9-10). The speaker sees nothing familiar. In fact, all that the speaker sees are instances of beautiful things being replaced, and things that are not where they should be.

After turning from the Chapel and to the Garden of Love, the speaker is not met with any comforting sights with which he or she could ground his- or herself. Although the speaker seems to finally recognize a location, her or she is only met with the reality that that which once "so many sweet flowers bore" (Blake, 8) now bears only tombstones. It is significant that the flowers, which can be taken as a symbol for life, love, beauty, and springtime (*Cf.,* "The Ecchoing Green" 4), have been replaced by the quintessential symbol for death. Moreover, "Priests in black gowns, [were] walking their rounds, / And binding with briars, [the speaker's] joys and desires" (Blake, 11-12). The priests are literally restricting the speaker's "joys and desires" (Blake, 12) by binding them *with* the act of walking their rounds. Again, we see how the language suggests a loss of orientation, as

the word “rounds” suggests that the priests are walking around in circles, and the word “binding” suggests wrapping something around and round. The speaker’s disorientation directly relates to the priests’ and the Chapel’s presence, and also consequently relates to the loss of balance that is present in the absence of the Ecchoing Green from the Garden.

The loss of balance resulting from the loss of the Ecchoing Green is also a direct result of its replacement with a Chapel, and the replacement of the Garden and its flowers with a graveyard. This point is reinforced by the artwork that accompanies “The Garden of Love,” since the last line of the poem, where it is stated that the speaker’s “joys and desires” are inhibited by the actions of the priests, is physically separated from the rest of the poem by what appears to be a long earthworm. Since earthworms tend to reside underground, this interpretation of “The Garden of Love’s” accompanying artwork adds to my reading of the poem being, like the Garden itself, buried. The earthworm could also be a symbol for decay, which would also support the reading of the Garden as not only buried but also dead. While the sense of a loss of balance could be derived from the text of “The Garden of Love” alone, reading its artwork in tandem shows that the priests’ actions and the presence of the Chapel and its graveyard are linked: both the Chapel and the priests play a part in destroying and burying the Garden of Love.

The Garden of Love is dead, and is replaced with the graves of the elderly, who, as we saw in “The Ecchoing Green,” should be teaching and playing with the children in nature. If the Garden of *Love* is dead, the question of what has taken its place might still remain. In Blake’s poem, that question is answered: what remains is only more death. The Garden of Love has

been replaced with a Garden of Death—for what is a tombstone to a graveyard but a flower to a garden? Furthermore, the Ecchoing Green is gone; replaced with a Chapel that cannot even serve as a place of learning or comfort, since "the gates of this Chapel [are] shut" (Blake, 5). Without anywhere for the children to learn, and without anywhere for the speaker to feel comforted and grounded, we see that the world that was, at one time, home to the Ecchoing Green—but that now is home only to the bones of the Garden of Love—is severely lacking. It is out of balance; there is no continuity between the young and the old. Instead, there is only the apparently eternal existence of middle-age that is plaguing the speaker of "The Garden of Love." Blake is arguing against more than just the loss of natural spaces to the construction of inaccessible religious ones. By drawing attention to the binary between nature and civilization, and by asserting the superiority of the former, Blake is arguing for the *absolute necessity* of having natural spaces available for the purpose of ensuring that there is a flow of knowledge, experience, and mutual teaching between all people, young and old.

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Digital Civilization and its (Dis)Contents: The Video Game as a Forum of the Unconscious

Vi Vo

In the early twentieth century, Sigmund Freud wrote on the workings of the Unconscious, an area of the mind which he describes as the site where repressions of primitive instincts as well as deep and dark desires take place. These repressions remain hidden from waking mental life except under certain circumstances that bring them to the fore, manifesting as neurotic symptoms and/or affecting human behaviours in deviant ways. Freud expands on this theory in *Civilization and its Discontents* [1930], claiming that the progression of society—its advancements in technology, medicine, law—has compensated human nature and, along with it, individual happiness for the sake of civilization's betterment, as a whole, as it forced natural instincts of aggression and sexual desires to withdraw from the external world and into the Unconscious. For Freud, the result was (and perhaps still is today) a general discontentment among individuals due to the inability to be our true selves. It is as if he foresaw the digital revolution of the twenty-first century when he wrote that "we cannot, it is true, easily foresee what new paths the development of civilization could take, but one thing we can expect . . . is that this indestructible feature of human nature will follow it there" (751). The past few years have seen a worldwide dominance of a certain mode of subjectivity and entertainment, and the Unconscious followed it, or perhaps more appropriately, *unleashed* itself there: that

is, the platform of the video game. In this paper, I will explore Freud's notion of discontent in society, applying his psychoanalytic theories to the contemporary phenomenon and rise of the video game medium, and argue that through its manifestations of instinctual aggressions and narcissisms, the video game has become the dominant social forum of the Unconscious.

The Freudian Unconscious could be understood as a reservoir of thoughts and impulses that are seemingly forgotten—as they are not encountered in the waking mental state—but are nonetheless always there, never completely perished from the mind: "The nucleus of the Ucs. consists of instinctual representatives which seek to discharge their cathexis; that is to say, it consists of wishful impulses" (582). One of these repressed instincts that seeks to be discharged is that of aggression, and this is one repression of many that has inflicted upon humankind a discontentment in civilized society as Freud argues that in establishing societal laws, "members of the community restrict themselves in their possibilities of satisfaction . . . [having] contributed by a sacrifice of their instincts" (740). Not only is aggression a natural instinct that is difficult to part from, it will eventually and inevitably return and arise out of repression, manifesting itself in human behaviour: "this cruel aggressiveness waits for some provocation or puts itself at the service of some other purpose, whose goal might also have been reached by milder measures" (749). Freud also believes that discontentment is further caused by three primary factors: firstly, the factor of our bodies due to their fragility and proneness to disease and sickness; then, the external world due to its chaotic nature which imposes destruction upon us; and, lastly, other humans, which causes a suffering that is "more painful to us than any other" (729). One of the methods of coping or defense to such discontentments

is *substitution*, where one may satisfy themselves—and perhaps to a degree by means of distraction—through "illusions in contrast with reality, but . . . none the less psychically effective" (728). A prime example of substitution that Freud offers is the mode of art in which the subject is distracted by the freedom of its practice. But this is an outdated view.

In this digital era, engaging in the cyber world of the video game is indeed becoming the more widely dominant form of substitution in which the individual may, "Against the dreaded external world . . . defend oneself by some kind of turning away from it" (730). In a discussion on video games, Slavoj Žižek admits that while the twentieth century was dominated by cinema, and then followed by the dominant age of television, the "next decade's [era] will be [the era of] video games," claiming the entertainment medium is a "new form of subjectivity."[1] I believe the meaning of "new form" is twofold here: the video game's newness as an unprecedented platform of engaging in play; and, its newness as a mode of being beyond physical reality, in the new territory of an alternate technological universe. What the video game allows is a sort of active engagement that art does not, a new agency for the player/subject as they navigate through an interactive world. The rise of the video game industry in the past few years bears proof of its goliath grasp upon society as a whole, placing other forms of entertainment—or other forms of substitution—in its shadow. Market analysts at Newzoo, a company that specializes in console, PC, eSports and mobile gaming data, and the Global Games Market found in the most recent quarterly report a year-over-year increase of 7.8% at $108.9 billion USD in revenue from the

[1] "Slavoj Žižek on Videogames." *YouTube.* https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=W1gVIFUVebU&t=20s

industry (Figures 1 and 2). These numbers demonstrate the largest growth in the entertainment sector, with auditing firm PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC) confirming that the game industry grows at a faster rate than other industries in the sector with a forecast predicting video games to rise annually (Figure 3).[2] In fact, the video game industry made more revenue than both the film and music industries combined in 2017, which raked in $41.2 billion[3] and $15.7 billion respectively (International Federation for the Phonographic Industry, 2017 Global Music Report). These figures do not showcase an argument of market authority as much as they testify the rapid growth of a medium of psychoanalytic substitution, and as such depict society at large in how its members deal with the external world since "Reality is too strong for [them]" (732). To exemplify even further: about four in six Canadian households will own a dedicated gaming console, mobile gaming is growing at a rapid pace, PC gaming is steadily growing with bigger audiences and eSports competitions, and players are diversifying, covering a spectrum of backgrounds with an average profile of 35 years of age and an estimated 4:6 female to male ratio, deconstructing the stereotype stemming from technological and progress resistant attitudes that the average gamer is a troubled teenage male.[4] Such statistics may come as a surprise as the entertainment industry seldom explicitly discusses or even evokes thoughts of the video game in public consciousness; it is a sector of non-celebrity, phantom-like, as if an entity of the Unconscious itself. Indeed,

[2] *PricewaterhouseCoopers*, "Videogames findings segment". Web. 12 Dec. 2017. https://www.pwc.com/gx/en/industries/entertainment-media/outlook/segment-insights/video-games.html

[3] Sales figure is an estimate provided by market researchers and analysts from Statista; the Motion Picture Academy of Arts have not yet revealed a figure for 2017 at the time of this writing, though did declare a global box office revenue of $38.6 billion USD for the 2016 year, released in March 2017, still substantially lower than what video games made last year at $91.4 billion according to Global Games Market.

[4] Refer to Figure 4.

if "the readiest safeguard is voluntary isolation" (730), then the withdrawal of the gamer into the game world is the contemporary method of that isolation, where the gamer *does* enter the Unconscious. The individual is alienated from the game world and at the same time exists within it, a fragmented digital spectre. What is it exactly, then, that persists in the Unconscious forum of the video game?

Freud writes that "Unconscious processes only become cognizable by us under the conditions of dreaming and of neurosis" (582). Entering the world of the game could be compared to entering a dream state—and at the extreme can even be compared to a neurotic state—where the user suspends the reality principle (the ability to assess reality) to engage with phantasy. This suspension allows for the overriding of the pleasure principle (the instinct that seeks pleasure and avoids pain), and it is at this precise moment that the dam of repressions is released, and instinctual drives take over. A glance at 2017's best-selling video game titles to date (Figure 5), which are filled with combat, weaponry and war showcase a common thread: aggression and violence. The classic *Super Mario* franchise, with its bright colours and cartoon-like visuals, is seemingly innocent and childlike, but at a basic premise is also of an aggressive nature: the user controls a character who runs around hitting (killing) turtles. Even sports titles, which are the only non-violent games that make these top charts, are nonetheless competitive and aggressive in nature. Regardless of genre, the user more often than not is pitted against an opponent, both computerized and human. The advent of the internet and its incorporation of networking into gameplay particularly allows players to directly message or verbally speak via microphones to other players online, with trash talk not an uncommon feature

amongst both friends and strangers. This is perhaps a problematic though accepted occurrence in the gaming community as one that is simply part of the culture. The phenomenon in the gaming world known as "rage quitting," when a user faces defeat in a game and, as the term implies, throws a fit of anger and leaves the game, is yet another instance of aggression manifesting via the game. Freud writes that "It is clearly not easy for men to give up the satisfaction of this inclination to aggression" (751). Even if one does not believe, as Freud theorizes, that humans are inherently aggressive creatures, that the top game charts is abundant with violence is indicative that the species is, at least, attracted to aggression and violence on a wide scale. Non-combatant, non-aggressive games are available, but they just simply are not as attractive to the masses.

In a way, the video game experience is sexual—even masturbatory—and narcissistic in nature. Not only does it fulfill a desire for violence through pleasurable play, but the act of defeating an opponent becomes a source of climactic pleasure. The act of winning itself is undeniably a satisfying experience. It would be difficult to believe otherwise. The Thanatos or *death drive,* the drive that encompasses an urge to repeat and drive towards self-destruction, is apparent in this game-winning experience. Players do not simply play one game match and cease game play upon completion, some continue for hours on end, and the amount of time dedicated to gaming is rising according to Nielsen Gaming Report (Figure 6). Inside the game world, the option to restart a game after a loss, or in-game death is virtually available at all times (some games use the rather fitting, cryptic term, "respawn"). Not only is there, then, the urge to repeat aggressive acts, but there is always a drive towards a digital death, only to be resurrected and placed back into the same cycle of

violence. The player also finds satisfaction through obtaining in-game materials, such as “rare” or “extra rare” items for their digital avatars, ranging from specialized skill sets, weaponry, jewelry, and clothing garments. For some, accumulating in-game cryptocurrencies can be a source of gratification. Obtaining such rare items and skills were once a purely digital characteristic of the game, but now microtransactions allowing players to purchase these digital materials with real world money has furthered a sense of interactivity in the cyber forum. Games data and market research firm SuperData estimates $22 billion revenue (Figure 7) from microtransactions, and that is coming from PC free-to-play games alone. Freud does write that the neurotic or hysteric patient has

> by no means broken off his erotic relations to people and things. He still retains them in phantasy; i.e., he has, on the one hand, substituted for real objects imaginary ones from his memory, or has mixed the latter with the former . . . [The libido of the narcissist, on the other hand] has been withdrawn from the external world ... [and instead] directed to the ego [or self-] (546)

In this regard, the video game experience manifests neurotic tendencies and narcissistic attitudes in that the player brings together the real and digital worlds, in a sense conflating and collapsing them, in wanting to acquire in-game objects through means of real-world earnings. It is at this moment that the game ceases to become mere play as the Freudian notion of discontent with waking life is reinforced by the extent to which individuals invest time and capital into the digital realm.

As easy as it is to see the effects of a game upon a player’s real world, such relationships must be carefully analyzed. In the aftermath of the Columbine massacre in 1999, games were partly blamed as an influencing factor over the shooters who happened to be players of the shooting game, *Doom*. The coincidence caused video games to become targets of media scrutiny, and such scrutiny resurfaced with the 2012 Sandy Hook Elementary School

shooting when it was discovered that the perpetrator was also a fan of violent video games. But this linking of committing violent acts with violent video games is a flawed view, one of skepticism and resistance towards technological change, and showcasing ignorance of the medium as a whole; the sentiment is mere speculation, or a placing of theory before data, *petitio principii*. Clinical psychologist Christopher Ferguson in his 2015 case study publication, "Does Movie or Video Game Violence Predict Societal Violence," looks at the high rate of video game consumption versus violence among youth, looking at statistics from governmental databases and national surveys pertaining to youth behaviour, medical health, and victim reports, finding that

> Video game violence consumption in society is inversely related to societal youth violence . . . [resulting] data conflict with the view that the introduction of video game violence in society should have precipitated greater or at least a sustained high level of youth violence. Instead, youth violence dropped precipitously, despite maintaining very high levels of media violence in society with the introduction of video games (204)

He admits that this does not make any inclination that violence is decreased by video games, for there is no causal link, but rather that the notion of video games resulting in violent behaviour is an incorrect accusation. He also explains his findings are one of many, not just amongst his own studies on the topic but amongst the academic community. On the particular problem with the game-violence debate, he writes:

> some professional advocacy groups such as the American Psychological Association [APA, 2005] have released policy statements unequivocally linking media violence to societal aggression. Recently, however, a group of approximately 230 media scholars, criminologists, and psychologists wrote an open letter to the APA asking them to retire their policy statements and refrain from making such causal attributions [Consortium of Scholars, 2013] (193)

In another study by Ulrika Bennerstedt, Jonas Ivarsson and Jonas Linderoth, looking at how players collaboratively deal with in-game aggression (i.e., boss fights, team challenges) reveals a high degree of technicality and sense of responsibilities are required for gameplay. So, gameplay is not driven merely by barbaric instincts, by

aggression and pleasure; rather, characteristic of the Eros drive, or the "life instinct," it requires a sense of rationality; Bennerstedt et al. even claim that moral obligations are necessary in that the subject considers the other player and their skills in order to create a fulfilling experience for both parties. The study further argues against the accusation of games influencing violent behaviours:

> portrayed aggression is most relevantly conceived of as being transformed into *aggro management*, a practice that surely contains an element of arousal, but which bears little semblance to any real-life acts of violence (61)

It can, or ought to be assumed that players do understand that even through a subjective active role in the game world, it is still play, and are able to differentiate that forum from the real-life world, as one can differentiate between waking and dreaming.

In the digital forum of gaming, users are agents of violence—through combat, through competition, and even through language—repeating the experience until aggressive and sexual desires are satisfied. In speaking of the tempting but dangerous cravings of being our natural, human selves, Freud writes that in modern civilization, there is an "unrestricted satisfaction of every need . . . the most enticing method of conducting one's life, but it means putting enjoyment before caution, and soon brings its own punishment" (730). And yet, in the world of the game, no such caution is necessary. The video game, where the dams of repressions are broken and instinct unchained, is not merely an appropriate form of substitution in the times, but perhaps a necessary one. It allows for the temptation for chaos and death to take over, and the player, finally, is free from reality, from civilization. Free to restart, to resurrect, to act out again and again in the forum of the Unconscious.

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Figures

Figure 1

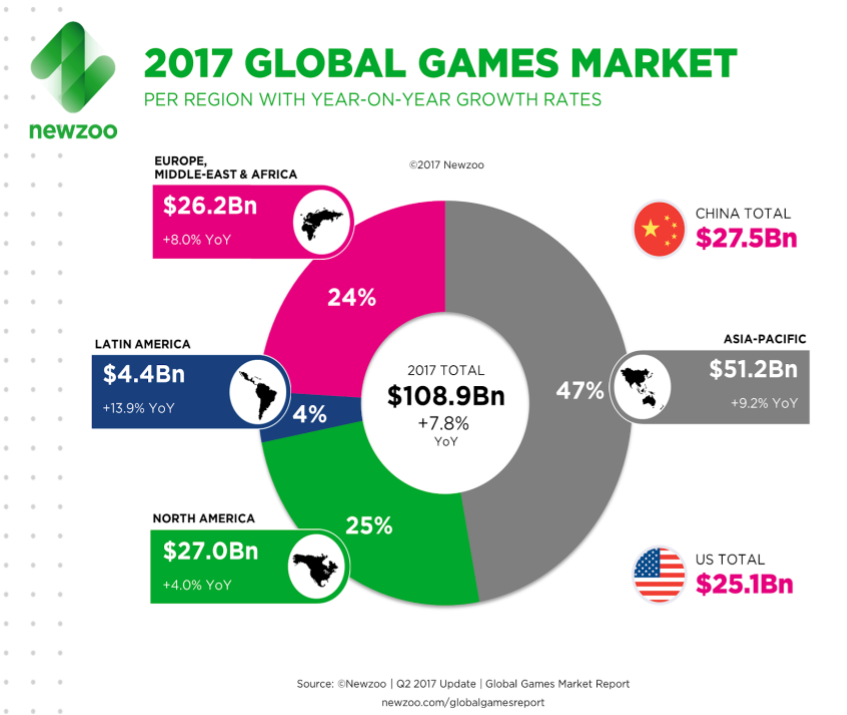
In 2017, mobile games will generate

$46.1Bn

or **42%** of the global market.

newzoo

Figure 2



In 2017,

47%

of all consumer spend on games will come from the APAC region

newzoo

Figure 3

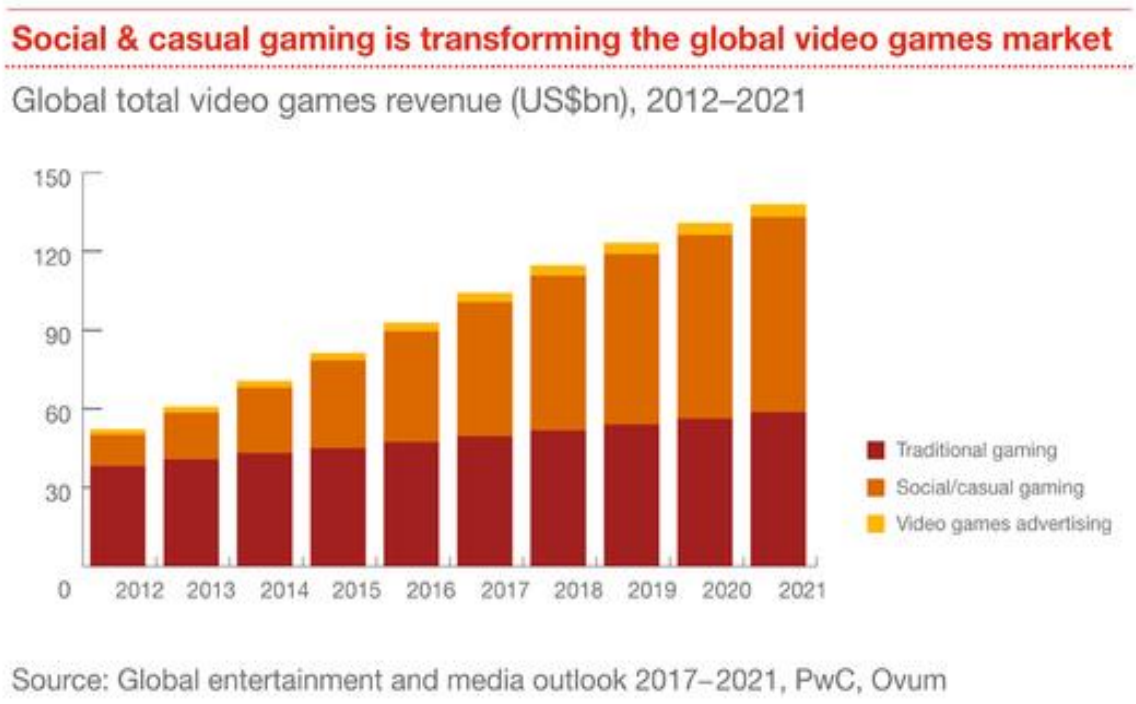


Figure 4

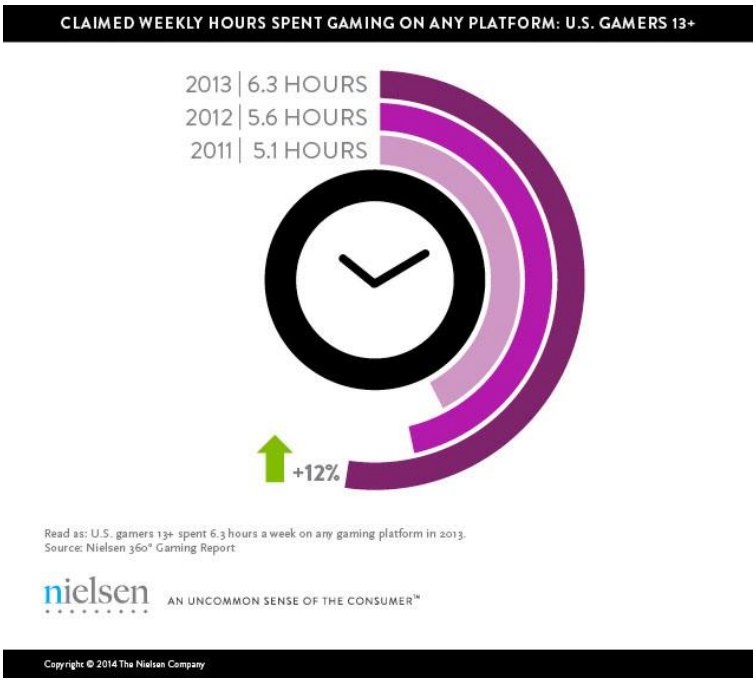


Figure 5

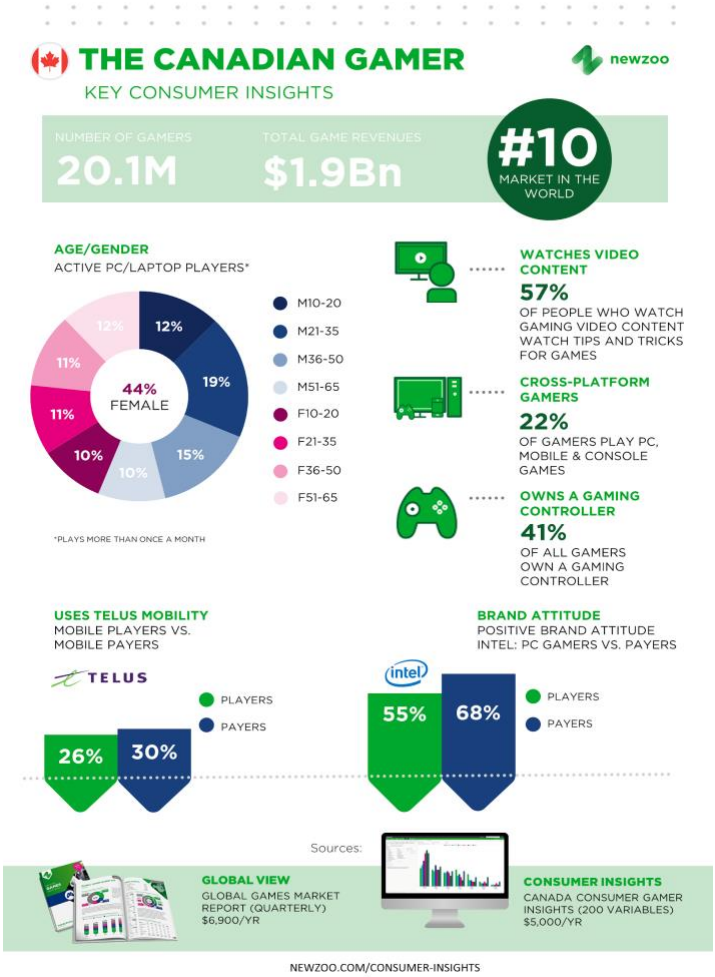


Figure 6

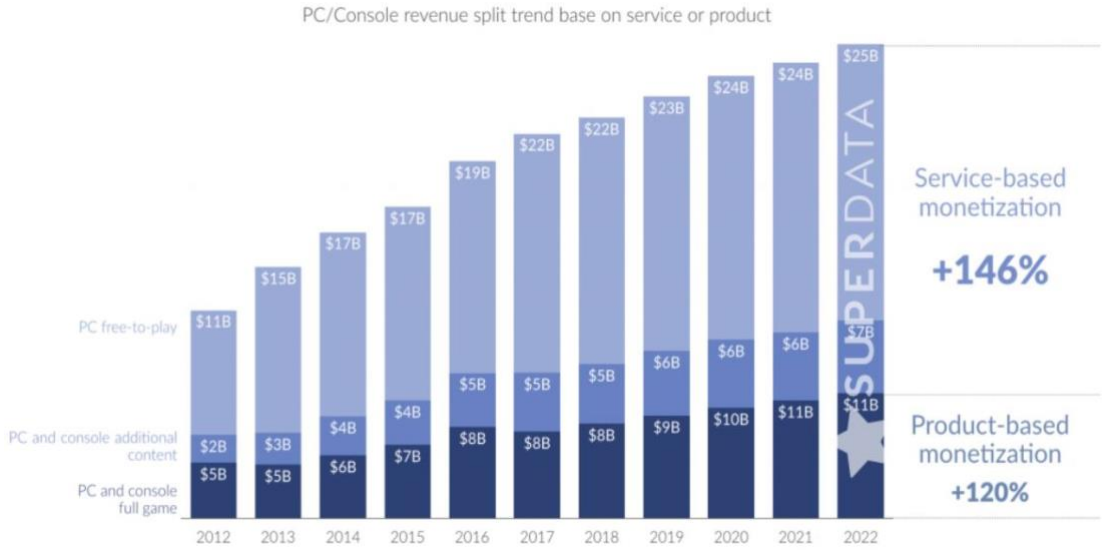


Figure 7

Top selling games of 2017 (units sold not disclosed by game publishers)

Destiny 2
NBA 2K18
Madden NFL 18
FIFA 18
Mario & Rabbids: Kingdom Battle
Marvel vs. Capcom: Infinite
Grand Theft Auto V
NHL 18
The Legend of Zelda: Breath of the Wild
Tom Clancy's Rainbow Six: Siege
Tom Clancy's Ghost Recon: Wildlands
For Honor
Horizon Zero Dawn
Injustice 2
Mass Effect: Andromeda
Call of Duty: Infinite Warfare
Battlefield 1

Source:
https://www.forbes.com/sites/erikkain/2018/01/19/the-best-selling-video-games-of-2017/

https://www.forbes.com/sites/erikkain/2017/12/16/the-best-selling-video-games-of-2017-so-far/

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