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SPECIAL ISSUE:



INDEPENDENT

SCHOLAR

Showcase

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Independent Scholar Showcase Dialogue

ZÉLIE ASAVA, SIMON BACON, MONICA GERAFFO, JASON KAHLER, NICOLE MARGHEIM, SCOTT MANNING, PATRICK CALEB SMITH, AND PENNY WICKSON WITH CARRIELYNN D. REINHARD

Introduction

When we did not receive many submissions for our Independent Scholar Showcase, I worried that we would not have enough material for an issue on this topic. Luckily, we were approached to host the special issue on Black popular culture, which allowed this Showcase to become a supplement for that special issue. Yet even with this fortuitous event, I still thought we needed the opportunity to hear more from independent scholars. Especially now, amid a global pandemic that has laid bare the tenuousness of our current academic system.

Academic labor is rarely properly compensated. For example, all the editors of this journal are volunteers. For the vast majority of full-time academics, any research and scholarship exist outside of their salary, as it is focused on instruction and service to their institution. At my institution, I receive support in the form of travel reimbursement for conference presentations as well as grants I could apply for to support my work. I am immensely fortunate in that regard, as increasingly my colleagues and peers report such financial support being taken away by their administrations. Such support, however, has no direct correlation with the amount of labor I engage in to complete such work.

Writing articles, book chapters, books, reviews, and other means of research communication all fall under more of an affective labor: we do it because we love to do it. For many, it may be the reason we pushed ourselves into and through a PhD program. Aside from the scant royalties a book may provide, however we do not receive financial remuneration. We do the work for our C.V.s and the promise of promotion and possibly tenure provided we work enough.

All that is true only for tenure-track faculty, and tenure is increasingly a tenuous promise, taken away by Boards of Trustees looking for cost-cutting measures. Other full-time faculty do not have the same promises, however tenuous, and contingent faculty such as adjuncts (whose numbers continue to grow) have no such

promises—except that adding to their C.V. may lead to full-time employment. Even then, adjuncts can still claim to be employed in their desired field, if they went to graduate school to be employed in higher education.

Independent scholars may not be employed in their desired field; and, even if they are, it may be in an aspect of higher education or some other field that provides no financial support or promises related to their research and scholarship. While they may have physically and financially left academia and higher education, the desire for participating in scholarly conversations through their original contributions still exists. That fire for exploring, collecting, analyzing, understanding, and explaining still burns, and the only fuel they possess to feed it comes from themselves, from their own financial and energy reserves, with no higher education institution there to replenish even a small part of it.

Their voices matter every bit as much as the voices of researchers at high level research institutions who receive millions in federal grants and corporate partnerships. Academia is not specific to any bricks-and-mortar institution. It cannot, and should not, be contained within ivy-league halls and ivory towers. The “true academic” is not the researcher at the R1 bringing in huge grants; the “true academic” is the person fueled by the desire to explore, discover, understand, and explain.

Though how can we ensure that?

The goal with this dialogue among independent scholars is to start the conversation to answer that question. I structured the dialogue around several questions, each with their own thread on Slack for people to engage with asynchronously. Those questions and their answers are presented here as an interactive document. You can click on the question you are interested in to read how the eight independent scholars reacted to it.

After reading through these discussions, dear PCSJ community, I ask you to consider and discuss this question: what can we do to support these scholarly minds and ensure they are not lost?

To continue this dialogue, please engage us on Twitter @ThePCSJ by using #Academia4All to address how we can better restructure academia to be inclusive of all voices from all backgrounds.

CarrieLynn D. Reinhard, PCSJ Editor

Question List

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“What is your perception of the current state of academia?”

“What advice would you offer to other independent scholars?”

“What do you see as the benefits to being an independent scholar?”

“What do you see as the drawbacks to being an independent scholar?”

“What helps you to complete your research on popular culture?”

“What hinders your research into popular culture studies?”

“If you could wave a magic wand, then what would you change to help your work as an independent scholar?”

Biographies

Caleb: My name is Patrick Caleb Smith. (I go by Caleb). I recently completed my Ph.D. in geography as a part-time student, full-time instructor of adult education, and adjunct instructor. I have recently been hired as an instructor of geography and history at a community college. For the past fifteen years, I have been an adjunct instructor at three different colleges while raising a family. I currently live in southern Mississippi and am married with two wonderful kids.

Scott: Scott Manning is an independent scholar living outside Philadelphia with his wife, Dawn, who is a poet and metal smith. He has worked in tech for 20 years and the last half of that in entertainment technology. He is currently the inventor on 3 related patents. Scott is published in *This Year's Work in Medievalism* and forthcoming in *Studies in Medievalism*, with contributions to *Medieval Warfare* magazine and the *Philadelphia Inquirer*. He serves as the VP of Conference for the Mid-Atlantic Popular & American Culture Association (MAPACA) and as co-chair of the organization's Medieval/Renaissance area. Since 2019, Scott has organized the panels for the International Joan of Arc Society at the International Congresses on Medieval Studies. He is currently under contract with Rowman & Littlefield for his forthcoming book *Joan of Arc: A Reference Guide to Her Life and Works*.

Simon: Simon Bacon is an Independent Researcher living in Poznań, Poland. He has edited books on various subjects including *Gothic: A Reader* (2018), *Horror: A Companion* (2019), *Monsters: A Companion* (2020), *Transmedia Vampires* (2021), and *Nosferatu in the 21st Century* (forthcoming). He has also published a series of books on vampires in popular culture: *Becoming Vampire: Difference and the Vampire in Popular Culture* (2016), *Dracula as Absolute Other* (2019), *Eco-Vampires* (2020), *Vampires from Another World* (2021), and is working on the next *Unhallowed Ground: Emergent Terror and the Specter of the Vampire on Screen*.

Penny: I'm Penny Wickson. I am an Art Historian focusing on the long 19th century in Italian painting. I also focus on fashion and dress as well as collage. I work as a full-time teacher/Head of Department. I also have a major interest in underground dance music and culture and this is now taking an academic direction too. I have published exhibition reviews and a major article in an academic journal.

I am currently working on a book proposal that is based on my PhD and new research. I have chaired the school's Subcommittee of the Association for Art History and presented papers at major academic conferences.

Monica: My name is Monica Geraffo. I have an MA in Fashion and Textile Studies: History, Theory, and Museum Practice from the Fashion Institute of Technology, and a BA in Screen Arts and Cultures from the University of Michigan. I've worked professionally both before and after graduate school in the film industry as a costume designer (*Strive*, *Disfluency*, *Those Who Walk Away*) and costume assistant (*Inventing Anna* [Season 1], *Madam CJ Walker* [Season 1], *TURN: Washington's Spies* [Seasons 3 and 4]), and have held internships in the costume and textile departments of the FIDM Museum in exhibition installation of the Art of Motion Picture and Television Costume Design (2017, 2018, 2019), the Merchant's House Museum in collections management (2017), The Valentine in exhibition installation (2016), and Colonial Williamsburg in historic trades interpretation (2014).

I am an emerging scholar, with two upcoming publications in the *Film Fashion Consumption Journal* with Intellect, an upcoming chapter with Routledge, and an upcoming chapter with University of Mississippi Press. My work recently received an honorable mention with the Comics Studies Society Hillary Chute Award for Best Graduate Student Presentation for my 2019 San Diego Comic Con Presentation with the Comics Arts Conference for "S&M: Sex and Marvel: The Use of Fetish Gear in the Uncanny X-Men." My research focuses on representations of dress within popular culture, especially superhero fashion in comics and its film and television adaptations. I like to think that my professional tactile experiences help to inform my theoretical approaches to dress as pieces we wear rather than simply material artifacts.

Jason: I am Jason Kahler. I have a PhD in Composition and Rhetoric and an MA in Creative Writing. I am currently a freelance writer. My research areas are writing pedagogy, writing technology, and popular culture, primarily film and media studies and comic books. I have a poem forthcoming in *Analog*, a recent essay in *The Journal for Prison Education and Reentry*, and I am working on a number of reviews for scholarly publications. I've written about and made presentations discussing *The Walking Dead*, Daredevil, disability in comic books, and Twitter in

the Composition classroom. I will be discussing Doctor Aphra at this year's NEPCA conference, safely distanced via the computer, of course!

Zélie: I'm Zélie Asava and I'm a Screen Studies academic, focused on representations of race, gender and sexuality. I've been faculty, adjunct, full time and part-time at universities across Dublin, Ireland, and am currently working as a film classifier. I'm the author of *Mixed Race Cinemas: Multiracial Dynamics in America and France* (Bloomsbury, 2017) and *The Black Irish Onscreen: Representing Black and Mixed-Race Identities on Irish Film and Television* (Peter Lang, 2013). My work on Irish, French, Francophone African and US cinema/television has been published in a wide range of journals and books, including: *Masculinity and Irish Popular Culture: Tiger's Tales* (Palgrave MacMillan, 2014); *Oxford Bibliographies Online: Cinema and Media Studies* (Oxford University Press, 2013); *The Universal Vampire* (Farleigh Dickinson University Press, 2013); *France's Colonial Legacies: Memory, Identity and Narrative* (University of Wales Press, 2013).

Nicole: My name is Nicole Margheim, and I'm an academic in fan studies, primarily using gender theory, ethnographic methods, and folklore. I have a BA in English and Anthropology and am currently searching for PhD programs to apply to. I have only recently graduated, and so am a brand new independent scholar. My first conference will be the Midwest Popular Culture Association Conference this fall. I'm looking to publish where I can and continue doing research while I wait for the right program and the right time (COVID being the big factor). The way I am solving the issue of database and library access in this gap is using my younger sister's university login, which will last me a few years. I am very excited to learn from all of you, and to grow from this dialogue!

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“What is your perception of the current state of academia?”

Caleb: In a word: bleak. When I first enrolled in graduate school more than a decade ago, publications were a nice thing to have, but people could still obtain academic jobs without a thick CV. Today "publish or perish" is more present than ever. One or two publications are not going to get one an interview, even for a non-R1 job. Several programs in my field (geography) have seen cuts in recent years, but now with a global pandemic, things are looking desolate.

I would like to have my publications tied to a tenure-track position because I fear that I may run out of quality content before I can begin a tenure-track job (I personally think that Imposter Syndrome is to blame for this sentiment). If I do publish all that I am currently working on to build a portfolio, I may "slice the bologna too thin" further down the road, cannibalizing my work and receiving rejection after rejection from publications and possible employers. I am also not getting any younger. The longer I take to produce publications, the older I get and the less attractive I appear to universities who want to hire a researcher who can produce for the next twenty years.

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“What advice would you offer to other independent scholars?”

Scott: Seek out a mentor! It doesn't have to be an official relationship, but you're going to want someone in your life who will answer field-related questions directly and give you blunt feedback about your work. This is not an easy task and by the time I found someone who I felt fits that role well with me, I had given up looking. Once you've found that person, shower them with appreciation and gifts, and be sure to use their time wisely.

Caleb: Stick to it. Times may seem bleak, especially in the throes of a pandemic, but there is always hope. Write, research, present, and connect. Each academic path is a little different, and there is no panacea to reach the goal.

Simon: People malign FB [Facebook] but I found it really good for keeping in touch with a community of researchers...particularly groups that label themselves as academic in some way...been very helpful and supportive

Nicole: I would recommend getting a group of people together who have access to different libraries. Paywalls are a huge issue, so I've made a couple of group chats for students and other researchers I know give each other the ability to keep researching.

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“What do you see as the benefits to being an independent scholar?”

Caleb: The greatest benefit of being an independent scholar is the freedom to research what interest me and what I am passionate about. Some who are financially supported by grants are limited in their scope as they have to serve their financial master. This freedom also allows a more flexible timeline to produce research. Unforeseen circumstances like a global pandemic can delay work, yet being independent means I do not have to apply for extensions or deal with bureaucratic mess when that happens.

Scott: I’m fortunate to work in video streaming, so the job deals with delivering popular culture to millions of peoples’ homes and devices. I have a front row seat to see how people consume video and what shows and movies are popular throughout the year. In addition, I feel that constant access to non-academics have been very helpful. For example, I’ve watched some big movies at work or in the theaters with hundreds of coworkers. There’s something special about getting peoples’ raw reaction en masse after seeing Star Wars or Avengers for the first time. I’m also able to throw out popular culture topics throughout the day and gauge reactions, enlist thoughts, and even get direction. If I’m researching Wolverine, I know who the comic fans are. If I’m researching *Hellraiser*, I know where the horror freaks hang.

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“What do you see as the drawbacks to being an independent scholar?”

Caleb: The main drawback of being an independent scholar is the lack of access to resources, specifically online journals and online texts. When I was a Ph.D. student at an R1, I had access to a wide variety of online books and journal databases like JSTOR, Project MUSE, and EBSCO. Now that I no longer have access to such library materials, I may not be fully aware of what is out there. I recently submitted a prospective article to a journal for publication. All three reviewers stated that this work had already been performed to a degree by other researchers, but I was unaware of their work because I only had Google Scholar and a smattering of online journals to rely upon.

Scott: My experience is similar to Caleb’s. When I was working on my grad degree, I felt like I had access to the world. Now, even when I know a paper exists in a journal, I can’t always get access to it. I’ve relied heavily on Free Library of Philadelphia, which has a great ILL system. However, they won’t request papers or books that are not least one full year old. So I’m left to seek out academic friends with access or other means. You feel like a leech asking—yet again—for access to a JSTOR article.

Zélie: I absolutely agree, the biggest problem is access. Access to funding, resources, colleagues... I also think there is sometimes resistance in the academy to independent scholars. Thankfully it's only a minority, but when you're not teaching some find it hard to relate to what you do and perhaps see it as a hobby, rather than appreciating what a huge challenge it is.

Nicole: While I certainly echo the issue of access, I have been able to mitigate it by still have many friends at academic institutions who basically send me pdfs of papers. My biggest hurdle so far (I am very new, keep in mind) is my imposter syndrome and fear of rejection. Without the credential of an institution, and without a PhD, I'm worried I won't be taken seriously or let into certain spaces.

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“What helps you to complete your research on popular culture?”

Scott: One thing that has helped me tremendously is discussing my research with non-academics. Often our research will be interesting to those who are consumers of the product we’re analyzing. So if you’re doing a paper on Wolverine, discuss it with comic book lovers. If you’re doing a paper on the circus, discuss it with people who used to go to the circus. Sometimes, you must break the ice with something like, “Can I spend 10 minutes on this whiteboard telling you about my detailed research on depictions of Wolverine covered in arrows?” They’ll laugh, but any fan would be interested and provide you with fresh perspectives.

Also, sometimes the most thorough research on popular culture is not by scholars, but by the fandom who meticulously curates their lore. Running your research by them can open new avenues and prevent you from retreading old paths.

Caleb: The best help for me is journals like this one. The open-access model mitigates barriers of access allowing me to interact with, share with, and learn from other academics like me. It also creates a community of fellow researchers that encourages me to continue.

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“What hinders your research into popular culture studies?”

Caleb: The thing that hinders me most as an independent scholar is the lack of a support from fellow scholars as co-workers. In the independent scholar world, we lack colleagues in a department who are also interested in research and are eager to produce quality work. I have contemporaries I communicate with on Twitter, Facebook, and at conference meetings, but I need face-to-face support. Colleagues who do research encourage me, even if their research is miles away from what I do. I once almost dropped out of my Ph.D. program when I was halfway through it. I attended a conference while I was mulling over the idea of quitting, and the energy of the scholars sharing, interacting, and engaging with one another gave me the charge to finish.

Monica: The thing that hinders me most is the time constraint. I know that professors and other academics are also pulled a million different ways, but I work a 60-hour+ work week that has never had any real intersection with my research. I work in costuming and research dress, but my specialty is superheroes and I'm usually hired to work on period pieces, and never actually hired as a researcher.

Penny: I agree. I am a full-time teacher/Head of Department and time is a huge problem although I do get the long holidays... Even then I have schoolwork to do though.

Jason: For independent scholars investigating popular culture, I think the cost of pop culture artifacts is a pretty big roadblock. Researchers at institutions often have access to funds that allow them to purchase/rent/borrow the material items for their research. While it's true that a lot of pieces exist online, that doesn't always give an accurate feel for how an item exists in the space it occupies.

Scott: The cost to gain access to sources and archives can be high. Some archives are better than others, but it's not uncommon to spend a few hundred dollars just on photocopies in hopes that there's material there worth using. Conversely, archives that do not provide digital services can lead to an expensive trip. We all know what it's like to go dumpster diving in some obscure archive in Normal, IL.

A recent hindrance came from both an archive and publisher unwittingly working in tandem. I had a paper accepted for publication by a journal, which was

exciting. I followed the editor's advice to only include images if necessary, as it's costly to print pictures. However, after acceptance by the editor, the publisher read my paper and asked that I include a relevant image. I was pumped, as it is a paper that would benefit from a photo of the topic. I learned that the archive would provide a high-res digitized image for \$60 and 2 copies of the publication. I was prepared to pay the \$60, but I assumed the publisher could spare 2 journals. Nope. Since journals cost \$120/volume, I'm looking at a \$300 cost just to include the image in my paper. Then you add that to week I took off work and travel cost a few years ago to visit various archives, and the cost just adds up.

“If you could wave a magic wand, then what would you change to help your work as an independent scholar?”

Caleb: If I could change one thing about my work as an independent scholar, I would make my brain focus better. I find a topic and run with it. I have difficulty following through the research from original idea to publication. I usually get bogged down in the writing process. I think that is my real issue: I love doing research, but I do not feel like I have time to write it out to the point where it is a scholarly piece in a journal.

Simon: Magic wand...one of the main things would be access to resources. Not be affiliated to a university can make it highly problematic accessing journal articles etc...and I certainly can't afford to pay subscriptions to Jstor and the like. That said there is a good community in the Horror and Vampire areas I work in on FB and that's been hugely helpful.

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“We Couldn’t Do This Without You”: Filmmaker Labor in Collaborating and Co-Creating with Audiences

JODI COOPER

Participatory culture, enabled through various online tools and platforms, has created media audiences that want to engage and connect with their media products on a deep level. Audiences want to communicate with creators and contribute their own elements and creative perspectives to projects (Jenkins *Convergence Culture*, 3; Rose xx). Filmmakers are discovering that through these new technologies their audiences are talking back, and some filmmakers are learning that they can use these new technologies to create participatory films in collaboration with their audiences. Direct communication with audiences might be a way forward for independent filmmakers to overcome declining traditional funding, but this new audience has expectations of contributing. Collaborative filmmakers need to understand these audience expectations, while carefully balancing and negotiating their own needs for creative control and authorship. Building audience relationships and using online platforms that enable collaboration require additional time and new skillsets. Collaborative filmmaking changes the traditional filmmaking process by creating new forms of labor not previously associated with filmmaking.

As a part-time independent filmmaker myself,¹ building an audience and establishing a resilient career are very important to me. My filmmaking partners and I have experienced the barriers of traditional funding gatekeepers. However, we also knew it would be no easy task to crowdfund the required funds for our

¹ The use of first-person voice is a way of identifying the researcher’s own participation and is an important characteristic of autoethnography (Bochner and Ellis 65).

JODI COOPER received her MA in Communications from Mount Saint Vincent University in 2019. Her documentary and narrative films have been screened at festivals internationally. Her research interests span audiences and mass media, artist or author social identity, communication and public relations, and cultural industries. She and her filmmaking partners have experience collaborating with their audience through a successful crowdfunding campaign for their short film *The Woodsmen*, which is available on YouTube. She currently works as the Director of Community Impact at United Way Hastings & Prince Edward. She can be reached at jodi.cooper@msvu.ca.

project *The Woodsmen*. In my own reflections, I discuss my apprehension around attempting to use a crowdfunding platform to finance our project:

Crowdfunding is not a guarantee. In fact, the success rates for first time filmmakers are low. After many discussions, I finally agreed that this might be our shot at making the film, and we'd never know until we tried.

I placed emphasis on my own experience for this research, using it as a framework to understand my other filmmaker participants. Researchers need to accept their own subjectivity and still work to produce scientific data that has meaning. Autoethnographic researchers “place value on being able to analyze self, their innermost thoughts, and personal information, topics that usually lie beyond the reach of other research methods” (Chang et al. 18). I used this type of narrative research, “writing that seeks to describe and systematically analyze (graphy) personal experience (auto) in order to understand cultural experience (ethno)” (Ellis et al.), to interpret my own experiences. As a method, autoethnography recognizes me, the author, as part of the subject group being studied. This is significant because it helps place my motives and potential for subjectivity right up front, as I identify myself as part of the community of practice on which this research focuses.

However, autoethnographic research alone would only have examined my own experience of filmmaker-audience collaboration and would not necessarily have helped me understand the bigger societal impact that collaboration has on filmmakers, audiences, and the films themselves. This research blends autoethnographic and traditional narrative research to better understand the experience of audience collaboration. I interviewed three other collaborative filmmakers. These filmmakers created projects through collaboration and some of the related elements of participation: crowdfunding, crowdsourcing, and open licensing. I captured each participant's narrative through an in-depth interview process, including an interview of myself. Each participant had at least one previous film credit, where their work had been screened by audiences.

The Filmmakers

Narrative research focuses on stories told by the participants to the researcher. This creates the “strong *collaborative* feature of narrative research as the story emerges through the interaction or dialogue of the researcher and the participant(s)” (Creswell 71, emphasis in original). Using a collaborative approach to blend the case studies of each filmmaker provided a more comprehensive perspective of

filmmaker collaboration, using my own experiences as a framework for reference. For this study, each case consisted of one film project for each filmmaker, where a specific level of participation or collaboration could be identified.

Lucas Burnie's collaborative film project *Were-Wool: The Indie Creature Feature* is a feature horror film, successfully funded on Kickstarter. This project was collaborative in its incorporation of many of his audience members into the filmmaking process as cast and extras. Lucas reflected on his own audience engagement, and while he felt he did not set out to create a space for collaboration, he did identify that he wanted his audience to feel directly involved in his process:

I definitely think I would call it collaboration. I didn't set out to create a space for collaboration, but in my preparation before launching the Kickstarter campaign I was aware of the importance of building an audience and engaging them in a way that would make them feel directly involved, rather than just a dollar value and a prize. I think most successful projects have that in common.

Curt Jaimungal's project *Better Left Unsaid* is an open source documentary on political bias, where his audience would have access to his unedited material to create their own films. Curt's project was successfully funded using multiple crowdfunding platforms. Curt felt that he had set out deliberately to collaborate with his audience:

I'd say I'm an artist at heart, and then I'm an entrepreneur by training. The entrepreneur in me knows that you can't just make a film and hope it gets seen. I created the opportunity for collaboration deliberately because I want to innovate on the film form with each film I create.

Trevor Hanley² has run two successful crowdfunding campaigns and has built an audience on social media. He had decided not to use crowdfunding for his third short true history production but continued to collaborate with his audience by crowdsourcing elements for his film (like actors, locations, music, etc.). When discussing how he engages his audience, Trevor identified some of the labor required to capture his audience's attention: "We post BTS [Behind the Scenes] like crazy. Photos and video. Some behind the scenes on set Livestreams had 3-6k viewers." The fourth project studied was a short horror film that I co-wrote and co-directed.

² Participant requested that their name, project titles, and production company name not be used; Trevor Hanley is a pseudonym.

My autoethnographic work started by writing about my experience at each stage of creating *The Woodsmen*. Using autoethnographic journaling methods, I recalled vivid details for each aspect of my experience. I struggled with feeling vulnerable as I recounted my thoughts, actions, and activities:

I was not excited about the idea of crowdfunding at first. What I didn't say out loud to anyone, and why I was reluctant to consider this plan, was that I wasn't sure that I could handle our project not being successful. What would it mean to fail so publicly? I'm really afraid of failure. To the point of inaction. It's stupid, but sometimes I'd rather just not do something altogether so that it doesn't get the opportunity to fail.

It was important to be honest to understand my experience, because autoethnographic research provides tools for exploring and understanding periods of personal transformation (Romo 108), the idea of being in some way changed by a specific experience. The process of collaborating with my audience has changed my idea of how the creative process works. I no longer view filmmaking as a closed process involving specialized practitioners but rather as one where an audience can be associated with the final product because they have helped make the film better.

The Active Audience and Collaborative Filmmaking

For this study, the requirements for what constitutes a participatory project come from Antoni Roig Telo, who defines “participatory creation as opening some decision-making processes to a loose collective of participants who gain recognition as practitioners through their engagement in a creative practice” (2314). This framework for identifying collaborative projects outlines conditions such as the allocation of space for audience decision making, transparency, and mutual recognition (Telo 2329). The traditional Hollywood production model is fairly closed to audience members; they are not typically invited to participate in the process or to decide which films get greenlit. Before the rise of new digital technologies, it was easier and cheaper to cater to the mainstream tastes, rather than trying to create different products to accommodate multiple individual tastes. This creates an imbalance of power, because there are more people with niche tastes than there are people with mainstream tastes (Anderson). According to Henry Jenkins, Mizuko Itō, and danah boyd, when a cultural product “is produced according to a one-size-fits-all model, it imperfectly fits the needs of any given audience” (26). New technologies are disrupting this traditional model of filmmaking and creating

ways for niche audiences to have a say in the films and television shows that they want to see (Jenkins et al. *Spreadable Media*, 246-7).

Crowdfunding is one of the ways that audiences can choose to directly fund a project that they may not have otherwise had the opportunity to see and support. New technologies, like crowdfunding platforms and social media channels, provide the access collaborative filmmakers need to connect with niche audiences to find a place for their content. Participatory audiences want to help create content that they cannot access anywhere else, and they want to be involved in the process.

Much has been said about the rise of active, participatory audiences that have emerged with the connectivity of the online environment. Their transition from passive observers to active contributors and co-creators of media products has led them to being called “producers” (Bruns 276), which acknowledges their combined role of media producer and user. The new participatory audience has many roles, being “a media consumer, perhaps even a media fan [...] also a media producer, distributor, publicist, and critic” (Jenkins “Interactive Audiences?”). Much of their involvement is about the “extending of existing content in pursuit of further improvement” (Bruns 276), completed through remixing, open-source collaboration, and sharing of content. Sharing and distributing existing media within their networks has created the much-coveted and often-abused “audience-as-pusher” (Reinhard 12) and publicity partner role. Collaborative filmmakers need to respect these various audience definitions and roles if they want to engage with their audience.

My participants recognized that audience engagement needed to be about more than securing a financial transaction: “The main thing with that I think especially when we were crowdfunding was to give this sense that now they’re a part of something bigger than just a donation” (Lucas, filmmaker participant). Collaborative filmmakers need to have a “DIWO, or Do It With Others” (Trigonis 99) mentality that expands beyond merely raising funds to making a film together, recognizing the props, locations, and talents that audience members can bring to the production. Collaborative filmmakers acknowledge the value of their audiences and find ways to share a sense of ownership of their films.

Inviting the audience to participate in the filmmaking process creates expectations that the filmmaker will incorporate audience ideas and suggestions. In an interview discussing the *Veronica Mars* crowdfunding campaign, filmmaker Rob Thomas suggested that he felt he owed his donors a specific film: “Let’s not piss people off who all donated. Let’s give them the stuff that I think that they want

in the movie” (Sepinwall). This caused Thomas to make specific artistic decisions based on what he thought the audience wanted. In collaborative film projects like mine and those of my participants, the lines of creative authorship can become blurred as the audience provides feedback and influences the final film. It is important for each filmmaker to answer questions regarding what they owe their audience, in terms of both collaboration and executing the original premise of the film proposed. These questions are especially important when “donations are not investments” (Gehring and Wittkower 65) and will not result in any capital shares. David Gehring and Dylan Wittkower suggest that for audiences, “perhaps the primary appeal in donating to these [crowdfunded] projects lies not in the promise of any particular material return for their donation, but the feeling of participation in the creative process” (65). Collaborative filmmakers need to look at the various stages in the creative process, to decide how and where to allocate areas of audience participation and engagement.

The creation of space for collaboration requires extra time and labor for filmmakers, something many of the filmmakers discussed:

I think the thing that a lot of people don't realize, there's a huge time commitment to developing a well thought out Kickstarter page, you know? There is a lot of time and effort that goes into organizing things, and you want to have graphics, you want to have images, you wanna have your pitch video. I'm not sure I'd be able to do it all by myself again, because that was pretty taxing. (Lucas, filmmaker participant)

Looking at impacts of participatory audiences on my participant filmmakers, this research suggests that collaborative filmmaking requires skills in communication, relationship building, self-promotion, technology, entrepreneurship, and public relations that were not previously required for filmmaking.

Transforming the Filmmaking Skillset

While this research project is limited to the experience of four filmmakers, their narratives were consistent when discussing the new skillsets that they needed to develop for collaborative filmmaking. As Lucas explained, he wore many “hats” on his project as the writer, director, editor, production designer, member of the sound team, and one of the producers. Lucas explained these new skills were not yet something that he felt entirely comfortable with:

I do think there are some extra things that I had to learn how to do for this project. You understand why there's a marketing department for a Hollywood film, you know? They devote half their budget to marketing because it is a lot of work. I think what I've basically become is like a Jack-of-All-Trades, master of none type thing.

It is not unusual for independent filmmakers to keep costs down by using their filmmaking skillsets to their maximum capacity by working on many aspects of a project. However, collaborative filmmakers need to become proficient in wearing some "hats" not usually connected to film production, including marketing and promotion, which are traditionally managed by large teams of people.

For filmmakers who want to collaborate with their audiences, the ability to clearly communicate about their work in all stages of development is important. This kind of open, transparent communication is what will attract audiences to participate and help them feel like they are a part of the process. For these filmmaker participants, the ability to clearly communicate to their audience was especially important, and many did this by talking to their audience directly through personal video. Curt encourages other filmmakers to see themselves as a start-up company and find positives in the fact that they may not have everything that comes with a full Hollywood studio production: "It's interesting because these large companies are trying their best to humanize themselves. And then these independent filmmakers, or these small start-ups, are trying their best to look like they're large." When an organization is very large, it can quickly become impersonal. An independent filmmaker or small filmmaking team has a better chance to develop a relationship with their audiences if they communicate in a personal way. It is easier to adopt a one-on-one communication style when posts are created and read directly by filmmakers and audience members, without any intermediary or corporate hierarchy between them. Collaborative filmmakers should embrace this and create communication that sounds like it is coming from them personally, rather than trying to mimic corporate communication practices.

Equally important is the ability to talk about creative projects while they are in progress. Filmmakers need to be aware of the jargon that may be useful in day-to-day conversations with their crew but does not always translate as easily to their audience. Sometimes using terminology can be a fun way to let audiences feel like they are part of an exclusive club, and other times it can lead to misunderstandings, unmet expectations, and broken relationships. It is important to know which is which and make sure that transparent explanations are provided when needed.

Communication is a skill that requires practice and some training. Therefore, filmmakers may be tempted to hire professionals to take over the communication with their audience. As tempting as this is, Lucas suggests audiences may expect communication to be coming directly from the lead creative vision for the project: “I just think it comes off weird to not want to directly associate with them [the audience], you know? Like, I feel like that would be off-putting in a way.” Audiences may forgive filmmakers for communication that is a little less professional, provided it is authentic. Communication builds trust and fosters personal relationships that can lead to feelings of loyalty and commitment (Bruning and Galloway 316), therefore it is important for this relationship to be with the filmmaker themselves. This way, loyalty that lasts longer than one project can develop in a way that may enable the filmmaker to sustain their creative career.

Hearing the Audience’s Collective Voice in their Heads

These collaborative filmmakers found it important to always keep the audience in mind, especially when making decisions during the creative process. Participation means that extra time is needed, and processes must be created to allow for the audience to influence a project. Designing collaborative space starts with the ability to imagine an audience, and each participant’s narrative highlighted how they anticipated their audience’s needs: “It is just closing my eyes and thinking “what does my audience want?” (Curt, filmmaker participant). Ongoing communication with the audience allows the filmmaker to appreciate the variety of perspectives and internalize them to an extent.

Mikhail Bakhtin suggests that all media has a dialogic component between author and audience, even media that may be thought of as traditionally passive, like a novel (257). An author imagines and predicts the response from their readers, “every literary work faces outward away from itself, toward the listener-reader, and to a certain extent thus anticipates possible reactions to itself” (Bakhtin 257). Authors are having a conversation with the audience where “the words themselves are, in a sense, ‘half someone else’s” (Jackson et al. 11). If an author writes both sides of these audience conversations, then after a while anticipating the audience’s response is no longer fully separable from the author’s response. This may also be true for collaborative filmmakers, who internalize their audience’s voice: “It was just like they were always in the back of my mind” (Lucas, filmmaker participant).

For my filmmaker participants, imagined and anticipated conversations were intermixed with real audience discourse. For my own project, I experienced this with every decision I made. I reflected on how it would impact the audience and what their response would be, based on how they had responded in the past. Imagining the audience as smiling or laughing at a particular post would encourage me to write about the event in a specific way for them, framing my own memories through their lens. I then experienced their feedback as positive if they reacted the way I had predicted they would. Considering the audience's response became second nature during the process of collaborating.

If every filmmaker, like every author, starts out with an imaginary audience in mind, then for the collaborative filmmaker, this dialogue is enhanced through ongoing feedback from real audience members. Most filmmakers need to wait until their films are completed before they start to receive feedback and determine if their imagined audience responses were correct. However, the process of audience collaboration and ongoing communication means that filmmakers can receive feedback while their projects are still incomplete:

I was watching it, experiencing it, looking at the reactions, and then going back and making fine tuning tweaks to the edit, to the sound, to the presentation, to the way that we open the show, everything. I was hearing from the audience, and seeing what they were experiencing, and finding ways to improve it. (Trevor, filmmaker participant)

These filmmaker participants were able to use their knowledge of their actual audience to bridge the gap between actual and imagined audience and make real-time changes to their films to improve the final reception.

Audiences: The Non-Renewable Resource

The participatory filmmakers in this research did not take their audience for granted. These filmmakers had all tried other avenues for funding and had successfully raised a project budget through crowdfunding. They felt a responsibility towards their audience and wanted to ensure that their audience felt their investment was well spent. Trevor explains how he did not want his audience to feel like their contributions were taken for granted:

I think that it's a bit like the week before Christmas and everywhere you go it seems like somebody's asking for money, right? I just didn't want to take advantage of people or them to feel like we were taking advantage of them.

Collaborative filmmaking gives audiences “symbolic power,” one of Pierre Bourdieu’s concepts of “diverse forms of capital which are not reducible to economic capital” (*Field of Cultural Production* 7). Filmmakers who crowdfund and collaborate with their audiences do not offer shares or economic stake in return, and yet there is an expectation from both the filmmakers and their audiences that there will be a sense of shared “symbolic” ownership.

Participatory audiences, who are willing to contribute on crowdfunding platforms, are valuable for filmmakers. However, collaborative filmmakers need to consider crowdfunding audiences as a scarce and even non-renewable resource. After taking the time to carefully build a personal relationship with their audience, these collaborative filmmakers were concerned with preserving the relationship. Having a solid audience base can sustain a filmmaker and allow them to move away from crowdfunding. This was evident in Trevor’s case. After two successful crowdfunding campaigns, he was able to connect with his audiences in different ways and was able to forgo crowdfunding for his next two projects.

As more filmmakers turn to crowdfunding, collaborative filmmakers will need to set themselves apart by showing their concern for and appreciation of their audience. This will also require staying on top of trends and opportunities to shift away from crowdfunding as an element of collaboration as well as opportunities to grow and refresh an audience base.

The New Labor of Collaborative Filmmakers

Through conversations with my filmmaker participants, I discovered that collaborative filmmakers could be considered both filmmakers and public relations professionals. Each filmmaker created dialogue to foster relationships with their audiences and acted as a kind of public relations manager. For this reason, many public relations theories were useful in understanding their audience communication practices.

Most Hollywood films would never share preliminary creative thoughts with their audience before the final film was completed. This is because at that stage ideas can be very fluid and can change quite drastically from initial conception to the final iteration. Discussing ideas that are not fully formed is only normal practice with crew members, because there is an understanding that preliminary sketches and concepts may not translate directly to the final film. Only after the film’s release might a traditional filmmaker include some of their pre-production concepts in their

special features to increase their audience's sense of connection to the film. My collaborative filmmaker participants shared their raw creative thoughts with both their crew and their audience. Through personal reflection, I learned that managing expectations in these discussions was key to attracting an audience to a project and having them feel satisfied with the final film.

After *The Woodsmen* was released, we frequently had to explain to our audience the discrepancies between our original trailer and the final piece. A proof-of-concept trailer is a well-known tool in the filmmaking industry. It is understood that the actors, scenes, and dialogue in a proof-of-concept trailer are meant to allude to the overall feeling of the final piece without actually being direct excerpts, as would be the case with a normal film trailer. This disconnect between a standard industry tool and audience expectations was not something we had fully considered when we originally posted the trailer. To better manage our audience expectations, we needed to fully describe what a proof-of-concept trailer provides and how it connects to the film.

The ideas of relationship building and relationship management are foundational to public relations theory, which posits that effective public relations strategies will foster positive relationships with an intended audience (Centre and Jackson 2). Relationships can be measured on a scale of communal to exploitive, with key positive relational characteristics being trust and mutual benefit for both sides of the relationship (Ledingham 188). Elements of mutual gain are reflected in both the filmmaker's need for sustained, successful careers and the audience's need for active, meaningful participation.

The strategies that emerged from the filmmakers' narratives demonstrate how the principles of public relations are useful in understanding their practices. Each participant filmmaker needed to learn to engage their audience, incorporate audience opinions, tolerate criticism, and develop personal relationships to foster audience loyalty to the filmmaker and their projects. This required communications, public relations, and relational labor outside of traditional filmmaking labor. These types of labor and how they are specific to collaborative filmmaking will be considered here.

Communication Labor. To engage in collaboration, each filmmaker encouraged their audience to participate in an open dialogue. They discussed how they achieved this through the use of collaborative language to foster a personal connection with the audience:

Whenever I post an update on our Kickstarter page, I'm always sure to remind our backers that this is as much their movie as it is mine. For the simple reason I wouldn't have gotten this far on my own. I think that notion of ownership [for the audience] can foster a greater sense of collaboration and participation. (Lucas, filmmaker participant)

Bourdieu states that “the propensity to speak [...] is strictly proportionate to the sense of having the right to speak” (*Distinction* 412). My filmmaker participants used communication to extend this invitation of participation to their audiences by reminding them that it was their project as well.

Researchers Talia Leibovitz, Antoni Roig Telo, and Jordi Sánchez Navarro describe how the creator's real-life personal networks, such as friends and family, are the main foundations of support in crowdfunding projects. Research also shows that audience members as financial backers are more likely to give to projects where they have a personal connection to the creator (Leibovitz et al. 28; Trigonis 149-52). By fostering intimacy through dialogue and an invitation to participate, these collaborative filmmakers extended a sense of personal connection to people who were outside of their personal networks in order to be successful in funding, and ultimately in creating, their films.

Public Relations Labor. Each filmmaker participant wanted their audience to feel a sense of ownership over the film. They wanted their projects to be mutually beneficial for them as a filmmaker and for their audiences. Even though they were unable to provide ownership in the form of financial capital or profit shares, they hoped that another kind of capital might be attained. Bourdieu defines one of the three forms of cultural capital as a kind of “knowledge, an internalized code or a cognitive acquisition which equips a social agent with empathy towards, appreciation for or competence in deciphering cultural relations and cultural artifacts” (*Field of Cultural Production* 7). Through constant online updates that provided insider information of the production process and behind the scenes of how the film came together, the audience members were able to build empathy with these filmmakers and appreciate the final product on a new level, something I experienced at our community screening:

There was so much excitement for the audience and whole community when we had our screening here locally. You could really feel, like, this collective sense of pride in the final film and how it all came together. There were so many scenes that felt like little inside jokes or something, knowing which scene had the local karate dojo mats or whose car was used for what. Except

everyone was in on the joke and felt like they were in the know because they had seen it all come together. (Jodi, researcher and filmmaker participant)

Another form of capital relevant to cultural production is symbolic capital, “accumulated prestige, celebrity, consecration or honor and is founded on a dialectic of knowledge [...] and recognition” (Bourdieu *Field of Cultural Production*, 7). The insider knowledge of each project led to audience bragging rights and recognition as members of an exclusive group. The participants hoped that these bragging rights would lead to a natural sharing of the final film: “Once the film is done, then it’s sort of like “Ok you guys, this is your movie now, so let’s communicate that to the world. It’s your bragging rights, you know? Let’s show it off” (Lucas, filmmaker participant). Fostering the audience’s sense of ownership and encouraging their bragging rights over the production is unique to collaborative filmmaking. To create cultural capital for their audience, each participant filmmaker needed to leave room for negotiation in both their processes and in their own sense of ownership over the final film.

Telo states that “just making people feel part of the project is not a sufficient condition [to participatory production] in itself” (2316). However, these participant filmmakers put a lot of time and effort into making people “feel” like they were part of a project. When audiences feel that they are part of a production, then there is a participatory element that cannot be disregarded so easily. If, as Bourdieu suggests, the audience interprets themselves as “having the right to speak” (*Distinction* 412), then these feelings can be considered mental and emotional participation. Dialogue is not created by what is being said by the filmmaker alone, but also by how the audience understands it: “Each listener, each reader, each viewer brings a similar sort of complexity to the reception of communication, brings a range of contexts in which the ‘word’ is received and made part of the receiver’s world” (Newcomb 40). If the audience member understands a filmmaker as inviting them to participate in the filmmaking process and, either actively or passively, receives this invitation, then the final context for the film to be viewed in is altered because they will feel more connected. My filmmaker participants worked hard to invite their audiences into a participatory relationship to create value for their audiences. This also created mutual benefit for each filmmaker, as each described how they were making a better film through this process.

Relational Labor. Filmmakers who collaborate with their audiences create art with their audiences. Mark Deuze suggests that all kinds of storytellers need to figure out a way to collaborate with audiences and work towards co-creation:

A radical reworking is necessary. I would like to argue that a future professional identity of media work could only be maintained if it includes a participatory component—such as a notion of storytelling as a collaborative experience. In other words [...] to think about the stories they tell as co-created with those they once identified (and thus effectively excluded) as audiences, users, consumers or citizens. (Deuze)

For my filmmaker participants, part of their desire to collaborate with their audience came from the eagerness to hear and incorporate their audience's feedback into their final films. This co-creation generated a sense of responsibility to the audience, which in some cases may encourage a filmmaker to create the “‘give the people what they want’ version” (Sepinwall). However, collaborative filmmakers need to spark their audience's imagination with their film proposals. The audience wants to be a part of a project based on a filmmaker's ability to share their creative vision. Through collaboration, a filmmaker can enrich their concept. However, it would be a disservice to both the filmmaker and the audience member to stray too far from the heart of their original concept. My filmmaker participants needed to carefully manage their audience relationships and maintain their own creative vision for their projects.

My participants often used their own creative vision as a filter through which to view audience feedback. It is okay to incorporate a variety of perspectives for both artistic and capitalist reasons, as long as the final sieve is the filmmaker's artistic vision. Curt described the various sieves that a collaborative filmmaker needs:

I plan to incorporate audience feedback on my initial interview footage, into the further interviews and how I'm going to edit the film. At the same time that sounds like it's selling out, and it would be if that's all it was. It always has to be filtered. There's what your audience wants, then there's what you want, and then there's what makes money. So, you have to have those three. As long as one of the sieves that you're using is “what do I feel is artistically credible?” then cool. (Curt, filmmaker participant)

The filmmaker's creative vision acts as a way to recognize the worth of an audience suggestion or critique. Bourdieu describes the practices of challenging someone's honor as being like a gift given to the challenged that recognizes he/she is worthy

of challenge (*Outline of a Theory* 10-5). This way of thinking of a challenge as a gift could be applied to the challenges offered by audience members in the form of feedback. A filmmaker cannot accept each challenge; they cannot incorporate every suggestion from every single audience member. This would not bestow honor on any and would instead make all suggestions worthless. The final film would lack the cohesion of the original pitch and would not match the expectations of what audience members had been excited to see in the first place. Often, audience suggestions contradict one another, so each filmmaker needed to “possess the capital of authority necessary to impose a definition of the situation, especially in the moments of crisis when the collective judgement falters” (Bourdieu *Outline of a Theory*, 40). Each filmmaker needed to acknowledge their own authority to make decisions based on the context of their film and their vision. The audience believed in and bought into the filmmaker’s vision, sometimes literally, by spending money on a crowdfunding campaign. Both the audience and the filmmaker needed to respect the filmmaker’s ultimate decision-making power in these collaborative projects.

Conclusions and Broader Cultural Implications

Collaborating with our audience changed the way I think about filmmaking. The experience was no longer a small inner circle of people working on the creative outcomes for a project, but something that we all felt responsible for together with our audience. This shared responsibility changed my perspective on how to involve the audience in the filmmaking process, beyond just inviting them to the final screening. I learned that audience members could and should be involved from the very beginning, with ongoing two-way communication, to create opportunities for collaboration. This new understanding of how films could be made led to a richer creative experience, it produced a better final film, and it left me feeling connected to a community of collaborators with whom I otherwise would not have had an opportunity to interact.

Filmmaking is a time-consuming process. Film data researcher Steven Follows outlines that for the Hollywood model, “the average production was announced 871 days before it was eventually in cinemas” (Follows). In traditional productions there is not a lot of communication during the period between first announcement and the marketing just before the film is released. During the years of silence, “Hollywood” filmmakers are focusing on the practices and processes of

filmmaking itself. Similar to the Hollywood model, with most indie films, communication is sparse prior to the final release marketing as well. For collaborative filmmakers, however, communication is continuous from the moment they decide to make their films. They must learn to balance their communications, public relations, and relational labor practices with their filmmaking practices to create both a final film and a collaborative audience relationship simultaneously.

If films provide social value, by reflecting society and providing a way to look at things from a different perspective, then getting the audience involved in the creative process can be very rewarding due to the addition of multiple perspectives. As these perspectives “challenge” (Bourdieu *Outline of a Theory*, 10-5) the filmmaker and get filtered through their creative vision, they are leaving an imprint that will influence how the filmmaker makes subsequent decisions. The final product is a film that is much richer and more diverse.

My hope is that this research allows for the addition of the collaborative filmmaker’s voice in discussions of participatory culture and crowdfunded filmmaking. I also hope it will provide some direction for filmmakers, allowing them to learn and benefit from the experiences and actions of others. As collaborative filmmakers, we discovered that when we told our audiences “We couldn’t do this without you” (Cooper et al.), we meant it from both a financial and a creative perspective. Every incorporated audience suggestion, character that they played, or location they helped find added to the final experience of the film for both the audience members and the filmmakers.

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Role-Playing Games as Art: An Examination of *Dungeons & Dragons* to Determine If RPGs Qualify as Art

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Culture critic and academic Camille Paglia asserts art is many things and performs many tasks. Paglia argues that art may fix an audience in its seat, place a book in someone's hand, and stop movement so someone may contemplate an image. They argue that art helps define a culture (Paglia). However, not every expressive mode has recognition as art.

Popular culture is a manifestation of a culture's appetites, ethics, and interests according to Lee Harrington and Denise Bielby in *Popular Culture: Production and Consumption*. They further state that a culture generates and consumes pop culture endlessly. Some of this production is art, but not all. According to them, it is worth consideration what production reveals about the larger culture all of these materials and activities. This includes social phenomena (such as soccer hooliganism), social bric-a-brac (such as *Hustler* magazine), and even actual art objects (such as the *Mona Lisa*).

The text considered in this essay is the Fifth Edition of the *Dungeons & Dragons* (D&D) rules set. D&D has remained in publication for more than 40 years. This fantasy game inspired the creation of the entire role-playing game (RPG) hobby, influenced the development of computer games, inspired movies, and triggered political movements according to Aaron Trammel and their history of the hobby. The game is a part of American popular culture, with an impact difficult to measure (Trammell). The question is, can RPGs—as typified by *Dungeons & Dragons Fifth Edition*—be considered an art form unto themselves?

Syncretism is the best term for describing the effect of the overlapping modes involved in D&D. The *Dungeons & Dragons Fifth Edition* books, and RPG books in general, are home to graphic design, visual images, writing, and should

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encourage group performances by the participants; each of these are medias of art. Visual images and written work are well established, and even amateur performance and effective graphic design requires skill and guides the eye across a page are relevant. Therefore, RPGs are understandable as a singular art, through a convergence of graphic design, visual art, and writing designed to encourage improvisational performance.

The goal here is to define the RPG as an artform, to locate its legitimacy – legitimacy as a sanctioning agent. The status of art for any mode of expression means that mode has achieved a level of respectability and social acceptance. For that matter, art helps to define a society (Paglia). Art serves as a means for people to communicate in important ways and prevents us from becoming more savage than we are already (Tolstoy). Morris Weitz argued that art is an open concept. New modes, and new movements, arise constantly and demand decisions on the part of those interested about including the new mode in the larger concept of art (Weitz). RPGs are newer than other modes of art such as painting, literature, theater, cinema, and even comic books (Peterson).

The general public, academics, and consumers each care about art and express that interest with research and purchasing power. Have RPGs achieved the same status? Are RPGs a part of the social phenomena that is art? By comparison, comic books find acceptance as an art form and already have academic journals dedicated to their study (Lopes). RPGs should receive a similar consideration. The possibilities of mainstream critical consideration are more likely with recognition and acceptance of the role-playing game as an art form.

There are hundreds of pen-and-paper RPGs available on the market. *Dungeons & Dragons* was selected because it had the first sustained mainstream success, success that enabled the other RPGs to enter the market, in turn had the greatest cultural impact across the decades and remains the most recognizable to the general public (Peterson). The D&D rules-set involves three primary rulebooks: *The Player's Handbook*, *The Dungeon Master's Guide*, and *The Monster Manual*. *The Player's Handbook* provides rules for the players, a description of the powers available to player characters, and discusses the broad flow of the game (Crawford). *The Dungeon Master's Guide* provides rules for the Dungeon Master, who runs the game and acts as referee, contains information on running a game, and discusses various specific rules and potential concerns (Perkins, Wyatt and Crawford). *The Monster Manual* provides information on a myriad of creatures for the Dungeon Master to utilize and player characters to oppose (Mearls and Crawford). This

examination includes these books, though there are many other books, officially sanctioned and otherwise, that can be utilized within a given game session.

The purpose of this research is to consider *D&D Fifth Edition* by artistic standards. First I present the different theoretical approaches I will use in my analysis: academic definitions of art via symbolic convergence perspective. Then I apply each approach to D&D, using examples from the text and discourse to support the defining of D&D as art. Then I extend my argument from D&D to consider RPGs in general.

Theoretical Approaches for Analysis

Art is an elusive concept. Navigating the concept from a historical perspective will be critical for this examination. Therefore, I will consider multiple sources for their respective definitions. That there is no standardized definition for art accepted in academia or the public sphere complicates this effort (Novitz 154-5). In terms of traditional art, great works of art exist, suffice it to say: the plays of Shakespeare, the paintings of Donatello, and the music of Elvis Presley, etc. They are all examples of the best among their modes of expression (Harrington and Bielby). Although it is a social construct, art exists. The disputes about the definition of art do not change this fact. The argument here will emphasize five approaches: the Dickie institutional theory, the Levinson historical definition, the aesthetic definition Monroe Beardsley provides, Arthur Danto's final and essential formulation, and a Wittgenstein-Paglia cluster. It is the process of debate and discussion over the merits and weaknesses of artistic theories and definitions that are important (Weitz 6). Therefore, a syncretic approach will be developed here, and this research will explore if it is reasonable to consider *D&D Fifth Edition* as art within the definitions developed here.

I draw on symbolic convergence perspective (SCP) as Thomas Endres discusses the approach in *The Rhetorical Power of Popular Culture* to develop this syncretic approach. Deanna Sellnow, the editor of *Rhetorical Power*, states that this rhetorical approach examines the shared reality of those who buy into certain texts and ideas (Sellnow 109). This methodology will consider art and *Dungeons & Dragons* with the terminology of Endres and Ernest Bormann. The essay does this with the four parts of SPC; one, is there a shared group consciousness about the subject; two, is there evidence that provides authentication for the vision; three,

does the subject speak to the rhetorical skill of its creators; four, how well do elements work within the rhetorical vision.

The contentious concept of art is also the product of culturally shared terminology and narrative (Dessoir 468). Art does not exist outside of people who share an understanding of the concept of art: a shared understanding best explored with SPC for the purposes of this research. This raises the question: is there proof of a rhetorical community and audience buy-in (Sellnow 114)? The existence of fine art is primarily for the sake of contemplation, by scholars and consumers. Dozens of academic journals are dedicated to the fine arts and performing arts, including the *Oxford Art Journal*, the *International Journal of Art and Art History*, and more. These journals demonstrate the shared community of scholars. Playwrights and musicians create plays and music for the sake of active performance—the intent is use—and both those categories are performing arts. While performing arts may be of greater interest to consumers, the long history of art demonstrates the audience for such pieces exists and shares overlaps with art scholars. Thus, with fine art and performing arts, a shared rhetorical community exists.

The same could be said for RPGs. The goal for creators of RPGs does not end at contemplation of the product, and RPGs are therefore not a fine art. The term “game” in role-playing game is best understood as a verb and does not allow a straightforward ending (Crawford 4). Further, individual games share a particular narrative fantasy with a collection of participants who co-created the active performance (Crawford 4). Thus, the RPG audience is not completely analogous to fine arts or performing arts audiences.

However, a clear historical and shared group understanding of D&D exists. The game grew out of the war-gaming hobby. Participants reenacted historical battles through use of rules and miniatures of military units and armaments in the war-gaming hobby. Gary Gygax met Dave Arneson through this hobby. Working with Arneson, Gygax later changed the rules to accommodate small groups and material inspired by the writing of H.P. Lovecraft, Robert E. Howard, and J.R.R. Tolkien. This developed into the original version of *Dungeons & Dragons* in the early 1970s. D&D has gone through five rules updates, survived considerable controversy, and has never been out of print in the forty years since (Peterson). The success of the game is why *D&D* and RPG are cultural terms, and that success allowed D&D to inspire computer games, movies, music, and television programming (Trammell).

Gygax himself allegedly dismissed the notion of RPGs as art. And yet, creations may outgrow the creators. Successful game designers Mark Ren-Hagan and Monte Cook both affirm RPGs as art. However, both acknowledge this requires an unconventional understanding of art (Riggs). Lead designer for the company that owns the D&D brand Mike Mearls writes D&D has inspired many artists and writers. They further state that gamers should be “able to create anything” with good play and that it is the people who bring a game to life (Crawford 4). The collective understanding of RPGs—and thus D&D—is mostly a social analogue, with a dose of the pragmatic.

Physical RPG sales grew 40% from 2014 to 2015, with sales moving from \$25 million a year to \$35 million a year. The *D&D* rule set held the top position on the list of bestselling table-top RPGs in 2014, 2015, and 2016 (ICv2). More than 20 million people have played the game since it appeared during the 1970s according to a report by BBC News (Waters). The average group of players conducts games weekly or every other week, and a standard game last between three and four hours (Shea). *D&D* held the top spot of sales involved in that \$35 million worth of transactions. Lastly, players are willing to spend between eight and 16-hours engaged in play a month—that is a considerable time investment. On a related note, art sales in 2016 exceeded \$68 billion (Kinsella).

It is possible to understand a work of art only if human life permeates the art; as such, it is not possible to eliminate living experience from the meaningful content of a true work of art (Dessoir 465). Crawford, Gygax, Mearls and the others involved in the creations of D&D across its iterations expressly designed it to facilitate a group in creating shared aesthetic experiences (Crawford 4). Art is a fantasy theme. It is more than information when shared with others who possess a common understanding of the term (Bormann). The same is true of mercy, justice, duty, and for that matter, the tooth fairy. That does not mean these terms, or symbols, lack social value. It is arguable humans need these symbols to be human (Pratchett). Indeed, Tolstoy wrote that art serves to nourish the human condition (Tolstoy).

Scholars and consumers, then, care about art and express that care with journals and considerable purchasing power. Consumers obviously care about D&D given their support of and continued playing of it. What of authentication of the vision: what evidence can be examined to understand the shared vision of the community? Sellnow demands evidence of the senses that provides authentication for the vision (115). An image is the representation of the form of a person, thing, or object, such

as a painting or photograph. Several hundred images exist in the three core books of *D&D Fifth Edition* (Crawford). Writing is the process of producing words in a form permitting reading and comprehension: writing in *D&D Fifth Edition* is used to convey difficult concepts (such as elf society and the shape of alien dimensions) in the three core books mentioned above. Graphic design uses existing information, such as images and text, to construct messages and convey meaning to the intended audience. It can help shape the creation of ideas and the understanding of material (Laing and Masoodian 1199-200). Graphic design features in the three core books (Mearls and Crawford). Society and academia, as noted at the beginning of this essay, accepts images, writing, and performances as art forms and graphic design is important to organize and convey ideas and meaning.

Thus, an overlap between art and RPG exists in the form of these representations and writings. Do these symbols represent the skill of those who created them? Sellnow offers a framework for how subjects speak to the rhetorical skill of and communication competence of the creators (Sellnow 115). Endres discusses the subset of the comparative standard and the absolute standard (Sellnow 115). The comparative standard would contrast *D&D* against other RPGs, such as *Vampire: The Masquerade* (Achilli, Bailey, McFarland, and Webb) or *The Call of Cthulhu* (Petersen, Willis and Mason). This would not provide any insight into the question of if RPGs can qualify as an art unto themselves. The absolute standard examines *D&D Fifth Edition* on its own merits. A Google search for “*D&D Fifth Edition* review” returns 670,000 results. To look at reviews not entirely inside the RPG hobby scene, *The Players Handbook* received a 4-star review from *The Escapist* magazine. The three books hold 4½-star reviews at Amazon.com. The books have enjoyed a bestselling status in RPG circles for years. Fans of the games are willing to invest considerable time in the games. This speaks to the success of the game’s designers. But regardless of such designs’ financial success, would they be considered as an artistic success?

At this question I start considering more the academic approaches to qualifying a text as art. Sellnow discusses how well individual elements work within the larger rhetorical vision to create the shared framework for the community (Sellnow 115). The research question is how closely *D&D Fifth Edition* can fit into the definition of art. The books are home to images that meet a dictionary definition of paintings and illustration. The writing helps clarify dense concepts. The graphic design helps with ideation. But to understand if these features qualify D&D as art, the larger

shared vision of what constitutes art needs to be applied. The following sections draw on these varying definitions of art from academics to define D&D as such.

Defining D&D as Art

James Carney writes that “the extension of the term 'art' is determined by the theories of art held by the artworld” (Carney 201). The academics and professions that compose the artworlds reject some art theories based upon the perceived unintentional consequences of the theory (Carney). The theory preferred depends on which consequences people choose to tolerate because all theories have consequences. Many contemporary theories about art largely descend from John Stewart Mill and Ludwig Wittgenstein. These ideas come from the philosophical legacy of the men because neither directly proposed a formula for defining art. To be art an object must meet most of the criteria on a proverbial checklist in the Wittgenstein model. To be art an object apparently must meet all of the criteria on a shorter checklist in the Mill model (Carney 192).

George Dickie, writing in *American Philosophical Quarterly*, used the early ideas of Arthur Danto to formulate his institutional theory of art. Dickie writes that only an art world—that is, people involved in producing, commissioning, presenting, promoting, and criticizing art—may define art. Dickie’s definition allows for internal flexibility in the Mill model. So, a mural would qualify as a painting even though it is not on a canvas, and a Jackson Pollock work would be a painting even though it does not depict an image. All this to say, the recognized and established art world has the final say on what is legitimate art (Dickie 254-6). The theory implies multiple artworlds exist for the multiple recognized modes of art, including literature, fine arts, music, and so on.

However, a particular artworld is only equipped to judge its own mode of expression: the art world for the fine arts is not functionally qualified to sit in judgment of music, for example (Davies). There are apparently no contemporary considerations of *D&D Fifth Edition*—or other table-top RPGs—in the scholarly journals on art. The space in those journals is devoted to accepted art modes, such as painting, literature, cinema, etc. (Novitz 153-4). This lack of scholarly analysis arguably undermines the ability of the institutional theory of art to be applied to RPGs.

Jerrold Levinson generally eschews institutional theory for an anti-essentialism position. Writing for the *British Journal of Aesthetics*, Levinson defines art in

relation to the art that has come before it. They argue that in all cases determining if an artifact is actually art depends on weighing the artifact against an archetype or historically and widely recognized example of that mode of expression. Levinson writes that

The historical definition of art also casts a useful light on the fact that in art anything goes, but not everything works... The reason not everything works is that regarding some as a work of art necessarily involves bringing the past of art to bear on what is being offered as part in the present... (247)

D&D has no singular or clear artistic precedent (Trammell). As mentioned above, Gygax was inspired by Tolkien, Howard, Lovecraft, Burroughs and similar writers (Peterson). Thus, D&D draws on different artists, both from literary and visual fields.

Danto provided a definition of art that would shape the institutional definition of art early in his career, yet offered an essentialist definition of art by the end of his career, specifically in his book *What Art Is*. They write, “I then declared that works of art are embodied meanings” (Danto 37). Danto states that art must stand at a remove from reality. This distance requires art to embody an internal meaning. Further, the embodiment might be anything from a dancer pantomiming ironing clothing to a painting to a set of artificial Brillo Boxes (Danto 129-30). *D&D Fifth Edition* helps “You and your friends create epic stories filled with tension and memorable drama. You create silly in-jokes that make you laugh years later... Your collective creativity will build stories that you will tell again and again, ranging from the utterly absurd to the stuff of legend” (Crawford 4). In this way, the text provides a promise of adventure, story making, joke telling, and collaborative fun that creates an alternate reality within the game’s magic circle.

Monroe Beardsley avoided the term art, and having to define it, in the first edition of his book *Aesthetics: Problems in the Philosophy of Criticism*. They provided a definition only in the second edition of the book. Beardsley then defined art as “an arrangement of conditions intended to be capable of affording an experience with marked aesthetic character” (Beardsley 299). Beardsley avoided the use of the term experience and substituted the term gratification elsewhere in the book. They write aesthetic gratification primarily involves attention to a unity and the qualities of a complex whole. Beardsley also writes that the aesthetic value of a particular piece of art depends on the degree of aesthetic gratification it provides. They expressly link artworks and aesthetics (Beardsley).

An aesthetic experience is the process of achieving gratification for the purposes of this research. The simple reason for the pop culture success of D&D is how it facilitates collaborative storytelling, experiences of joy and sorrow, bonding experiences, and the creation of stories among participants and establishing friendships. “The friendships you make around the table will be unique to you. The adventures you embark on, the characters you create, the memories you make—these will be yours. D&D is your personal corner of the universe” (Crawford 4). This description of the emotional resonance of a successful D&D game also serves as a description of the aesthetic experience and gratification generated by the game.

The Wittgenstein model for art is a disjunction of features. A particular artifact such as a painting, performance, or an RPG game is denoted a work of art if it possesses most of the features. Unfortunately for this project, the Wittgenstein model is favorable for this research because it permits conditions for new art categories. The features, or what constitutes a criterion, which satisfy a Wittgenstein model are not specifically established (Carney 191). None of the individual features are essential for an artifact to qualify as art but the artifact must possess a combination of a majority of the criteria to qualify as art. This research will employ the features Paglia discusses in *Sexual Personae*.

The most salient art features as defined by Paglia are presented here for how they apply to D&D. First, “Art is spellbinding. Art fixes the audience in its seat, stops the feet before a painting, fixes a book in the hand” (Paglia 29). The participants of a D&D game usually remained seated for the duration of an hours-long session. Some games progress for days, weeks, months, and even years as players repeatedly return to their collaborative storytelling. Further, the participants read and reread the involved books (Miller).

Second, “Art is order” (Paglia 29). *D&D Fifth Edition* is home to a dense rule system that imposes order on the game. The *Players Handbook* and the *Dungeon Master’s Guide* each possess 320 pages, while the *Monster Manual* possesses 352 pages, for a total of 992 pages. Rules are provided for character creation, the difference between humans, elves and orc, the function of the dice, the use of multiple forms of magic, combat, and 300 different monsters (Crawford, Mearls, Perkins, and Wyatt). Crawford writes that the books provide rules for how the game plays and “Exceptions to the rules are often minor” (Crawford 7). D&D provides an ordered structure in which to experience the collaborative storytelling.

Third, “Art is sacrificial” (Paglia 29). D&D demands sacrifice of money and time on part of the participants. Each of the three core books carries a cover price of \$49.95 in 2020 (Crawford, Mearls, Perkins, and Wyatt). Amazon lists the price of a set of polyhedron gaming dice as \$9.99. This puts the material price for starting around \$160. As noted above, the average group of players conducts games weekly or every other week, and a standard game last between three and four hours (Shea). Participants are willing to sacrifice \$160 or more and between eight and 16-hours

a week on the form. Their collaborative work requires an investment of time, money, and emotions.

Fourth, “Art has nothing to do with morality. Moral themes may be present, but they are incidental, simply grounding an art work in a particular time and place” (Paglia 29). The rules are amoral and the settings usually require the players to be the moralizing force in the fictional world. “Humans, dwarves, elves, and other humanoid races can choose whether to follow the paths of good or evil, law or chaos. According to myth, the good-aligned gods who created these races gave them free will to choose their moral paths” (Crawford 122). Each player brings something of themselves and their own morality into the collaborative storytelling.

Along with this inherent amorality: fifth, art is aggressive and compulsive (Paglia 29). Quests full of combat with monsters lie at the heart of any D&D campaign. Players can compete with each other for loot, and they can work together or alone in combat as they describe the violence of combat. The *Player’s Guide* is home to an entire chapter on the subject (Crawford 188-98). Sixth, “Art, I said, is full of crimes” (Paglia 34). Game participants sometimes refer to player characters as murder hobos because of their tendency towards vagrancy and homicide. The term first appeared in Usenet discussions where participants observed that D&D primarily supports a play style in which all of the characters are transients unattached to communities, and solve problems primarily by killing, theft, and sometimes property crimes (Wiktionary).

Seventh, “Art is scandalous” (Paglia 35). D&D would not entirely emerge from the various 1980s scandals for 15 years (Trammell). Some of these scandals involved the unfortunate cases of Irving Pulling and James Dallas Egbert. Both cases involved young men dealing with emotional issues leading to their suicides, but the idea that D&D had a motivating role in the deaths gained media traction and shaped public perception of the game for years (BBC News).

Perhaps more obviously: eighth, “Art makes things” (Paglia 30). For purposes of this research things includes the three core books and the specialized dice required to play the game (Crawford, Mearls, Perkins, and Wyatt). Participants are also expressly encouraged “to aspire to create, to have the courage of someone who is willing to build something and share it with others” (Crawford 4). D&D at its heart is about making things, both virtual and physical, from the collaborative storytelling to characters, from dungeon maps to miniatures. Also, ninth, “Art involves contemplation and conceptualization” (Paglia 29). *D&D* play involves conceptualizing impossible situations, such as battling dragons with magic, and contemplation about character actions and the results of those actions.

Tenth, “Art, no matter how minimalist, is never simply design. It is always a ritualistic reordering of reality” (29). The fictional construct of a *D&D* game session, in terms of both the world and its people, represents a stark reordering of reality to permit the impossible. The players and game runner participate in this

joint, fictional, reordering of reality. Which leads to: eleventh, “Art requires space and creates a transformative place” (29). Playing the game requires a physical space for the participants. And helps to shape experience: twelfth, “Art involves an attempt to tame aspects of reality, life and nature” (29). The success of *D&D* involves its ability to combat the natural and anaesthetic experiences, to borrow Danto’s terminology, of boredom and tedium (Danto 144).

Thirteenth, “Western art involves sexuality” (Paglia 39). Paglia would demand this be included among the disjunction of art features. However, *D&D* as a game possesses a deliberately naive asexuality. An artifact must only fulfill most of the disjunctions in the Wittgenstein model. *D&D Fifth Edition* fulfills twelve of the thirteen art criteria discussed by Paglia.

Are RPGs Art?

Overall, drawing on these frameworks, are RPGs, as typified by *D&D Fifth Edition*, a legitimate art form unto themselves? Dickie’s institutional definition would never concede any place or consideration for RPGs because that definition cannot concede any consideration or place for anything produced by popular culture. The point is that the institutional definition of art is an understanding of art limited to the traditional arts as understood by the people of a closed system. Levinson’s historical definition also cannot agree to extend the definition of art to *D&D*, and thus to RPGs. The game involves many modes and it does not resemble or possess a historical precedent to any particular mode because it involves many modes. Levinson writes that “in art anything goes, but not everything works” (Levinson 247). In this case, *D&D* becomes one of the latter.

Beardsley’s aesthetic definition, however, would permit the extension of art as a concept to *D&D* and thus to RPGs in general. Seeing art as “an arrangement of conditions intended to be capable of affording an experience with marked aesthetic character” (Beardsley 299) aligns with *D&D* and RPGs in both form and function. Both as a game and a potential art object, *D&D* relies on the interrelation of its components, including rules text, illustrations, graphic design and the use to which it is put. Danto’s essentialist definition would extend the concept of art to RPGs and *D&D*. They defined art as embodied meaning (Danto 149). Again, as noted above, *D&D Fifth Edition* embodies the promise of adventure, story making, joke-telling, and collaborative fun (Crawford). The Wittgenstein-Paglia anti-essential cluster would also extend the concept of art to *D&D* and thus to RPGs. As noted above, an artifact must only fulfill most of the disjunctions in the Wittgenstein model. *D&D Fifth Edition* fulfills 12 of the 13 art criteria discussed by Paglia.

With these five academic approaches, a majority favor extending the definition of art. However, the definition of art, and the academy, does not function as a democracy. It is not a matter of votes. The institutional, and to a lesser degree the

historical, definitions of art hold the most power in the academy (Matcham 277). Neither of those may extend the definition of art, leaving D&D out of the artworld's rhetorically shared vision. However, it can be reasonably argued that aesthetic, essentialist, and anti-essentialist definitions of art should include D&D.

Conclusion: A Final Session

In *Artistic Judgment*, Graham McFee asserts that a recognized status as art creates ways of explaining an artifact's value. This means that "action with respect to some particular works not merely confers art-status on those works but also creates categories of art, bringing with them a 'universe' of discourse" (159). Academic legitimacy would open, and encourage, avenues of research and exploration in terms of the games' composition, intent, and consumption by exploring a new universe of discourse (Matcham 276-8). All of this to say that extending the definition of art to include *Dungeons & Dragons*, and role-playing games in general, will likely be contentious where it is not simply dismissed out of hand for traditionally legitimate reasons.

The same was once true of the modes of cinema and comic books. The appeal of D&D is the vicarious freedom, agency and power the game offers. This is arguably best expressed as what Friedrich Nietzsche referred to as "the will to power" or *wille zur macht* (Gilsdorf). *D&D*, and by extension other RPGs, may be judged by how effectively it compels the creation of open-ended stories among the participants. As a material thing, it does this through a syncretism of images, writing, graphic design, and encouraging performance (Crawford). Art compels contemplation, and contemplation is magic. No matter how minimalist, art is never simply just design. It is an attempt at imposing order and meaning on reality, and even drawing a line on a page is an attempt to tame some part of reality (Paglia 29). The intent behind D&D is to, at least in part, tame boredom (Robson).

One central aspect of *Dungeons & Dragons* that sets it apart from other modes is the call to action. An RPG never stops at contemplation. The purpose of D&D is use: to be a played game. Yet, other forms of art intended for action and performance, such as music and theater, are closed systems. For example, Hamlet will always die at the end of Act V no matter what the audience wants. However, what happens to the player's character is never as fixed. RPGs place agency and the responsibility for the fates of the characters in the hands of the participants more than in most other forms of expression. As noted above, the appeal of the game is Nietzsche's will to power. RPG books inspire opened ended stories of fire and blood, and that is worth consideration for whether they qualify as art that helps impose order unto reality.

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“No Tears Left to Cry”: Analyzing Space and Place of the Rock Concert Memorial

MICHELLE PAUKEN CROMER

In the fall of 2017, my husband and I traveled to London to see the European leg of the Metallica tour at the O2 Arena. We have always enjoyed participating in the collective experience that concerts bring—connecting with other music fans, singing along, wearing the right t-shirt, and waiting in anticipation of an encore. Though we were excited about seeing an American band overseas, what differed about this free-wheeling experience was that it was exactly five months after the bombing at the Ariana Grande concert in nearby Manchester, that killed twenty-two concert-goers. To add to this unease, the cue through security wrapped halfway around the O2; everyone slightly on edge, but no one complaining. Collectivity now had a different meaning.

As this was not my first time seeing this band perform, I could not overlook a few differences. First, the engineers significantly reduced the pyrotechnics. Additionally, Metallica regularly plays a song called “One” in which a screen projects videos of World War II soldiers. Part of this song includes an audio of a round of gunfire and a bomb detonating. When the sound of the bomb exploded, an audible silence occurred, about as long as it takes to inhale. In that brief second, the possibility of what could occur crossed my mind, and likely in the minds of other attendees. These small decisions by both the performers and the spectators led to larger questions on how space, performance, and audience can create an epideictic rhetorical experience. If these anxious emotions could be felt five months after an attack and 200 miles away, how is a space altered in the direct aftermath of a tragic event at a concert venue?

This study analyzes the performed memorial events in response to the bombing at the Ariana Grande concert in Manchester that occurred on May 22, 2017. This bombing is one of three major concert tragedies that have occurred in the last five

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years; the other two being the shooting at the Eagles for Death Metal concert at the Bataclan in Paris in 2015 and the shooting at the Jason Aldean concert in Vegas Village in 2017. Because these tragedies may unfortunately continue, understanding how these post-concert memorials can promote healing by focusing specifically on the Grande concert will provide some insight on the performers' roles in re-inventing the space and place of tragedy.

Performers enacted two memorial concerts after the attack: the first one at the Old Trafford Cricket ground 3.1 miles away called *One Love Manchester*, and the second *We Are Manchester* at Manchester Arena (the location of the bombing). Both memorials call into question larger ideas about the manipulation of space and place. By analyzing these performances, I argue that a carefully orchestrated performance impacts the relationship between performer and audience to create a new identity construction via collective memory. Through this collective memory a place is either redeemed (as in the case of *We Are Manchester*) or a new space is embodied (via *One Love Manchester*). My research methodology draws on recordings of performances, published interviews, setlists, and music criticism, all of which is informed by theories on memorials, space, trauma, and performance such as work by Sara Ahmed, Carolyn Blair, Vanessa Matajic, and Roger Aden.

In a gesture that would seem unusual in any other circumstances, commemoration of the victims occurred through the type of event that resulted in their deaths. Despite this seeming irony, this paper explores the relevance of concert memorials as attendees collectively seek healing in the aftermath of the attack. As both performances demonstrate, proximity of time and/or proximity to place in the creation of these memorials had three functions for both the artist and audience: 1) to honor the deceased in the “next-best” place; 2) to allow both victims and survivors to embody the space or place; and, 3) to utilize this embodiment to reclaim public memory in a new context for the purpose of healing and agency. This study focuses on how both shows reclaim a new collective memory.

To begin, I provide some background on the attack and a brief description of the two subsequent memorial concerts. Then, I analyze artist's interviews, the setlist, and speeches given by performers to understand how the manipulation of space and place in both shows is supported by theories on trauma and collective memory. Even though these two shows memorialize the same event, their enactment substantially differed. I argue that the organizers catered to the emotional needs of the respective attendees. As both shows sought healing and unity, they had two very different aims of achieving it.

Grande Bombing Remembered

On May 22, 2017, Grande had just completed her set at the Manchester Arena when a suicide bomber, Salman Abedi, detonated a bomb outside the arena, killing 22 people, primarily teens and children. Though initial reports suggested that the bombing was tied to ISIS, a clear connection was not proven; and published accounts indicate an individual act. This was the deadliest attack to occur in Manchester in the last twelve years prior to this event (Smith-Spark). Grande did not witness the mass casualties as she was quickly whisked off the stage once the bombing was heard; however, she continues to struggle from PTSD and anxiety to this day as a result (Miller). That evening she tweeted “broken. from the bottom of my heart, i am so sorry. i don’t have words. [sic]” (McKirdy)

After the Grande bombing, two key memorials transpired. The first, *One Love Manchester*, was performed two weeks later on June 5, 2017, with performers from the U.K and U.S. Grande initiated this memorial to raise money for the victims of the bombing. More than 50,000 fans attended the concert, which sold out in six minutes and raised thirteen million dollars for the We Love Manchester memorial fund (“Ariana Grande Manchester”). BBC broadcasted the full concert. British performers first opened the show before American performers were brought to the stage. Grande performed seven songs either sung solo or with other artists and ended the concert.

On September 9, 2017, “Mr. Manchester, Himself,” Noel Gallagher, headlined the second memorial concert called *We Are Manchester* with the support of fellow British performers (primarily from Manchester). Noel Gallagher achieved international fame in the band Oasis with his brother, Liam, but has since split from the duo to pursue a solo career. This performance, attended by 14,000 people, was the first concert to re-open the Manchester Arena (Thomas). In addition to musicians, the memorial included a poet, comedian, rapper, grime artist, and Manchester mayor, Andy Burnham, thus creating more a variety-show feel rather than a full-fledged concert (McCormick). As mentioned previously, these two were constructed quite differently from each other, and each will be analyzed in their own sections.

One Love Manchester

Proximity is an important element of *One Love Manchester* performance. Although Grande was not able to return to the actual site of the attack, this concert was organized only 3.1 miles away from Manchester Arena. While most victims of a tragic event would seek to avoid the activity or location of the event, Grande did the opposite, despite her initial feelings. In her first interview over a year after Manchester, Grande recounted her emotions immediately following the attack, which included struggles with anxiety. Despite dealing with her own PTSD she chose to return to Manchester only two weeks after the attack.

I went right home I went to Florida and I was like I can't. I'm not putting those costumes on again I can't sing those songs again I was like I can't. I was like I love yall I can't do it. I was like there's no way. And then I was trying to go to sleep that night and it didn't feel right it didn't feel like the right decision. I think we should set a better example and kind of like celebrate their lives you know what I mean and try to like not to let hate or like violence or any kind of darkness of that magnitude win in the scenario.”[sic] (ABC News)

Not only did she return, despite her significant reservations, but so did survivors and family members of survivors, who were given front row tickets. To re-embodiment this space, Grande and her producers converted this moment of tragedy and darkness into a celebration of the victims.

Raymie McKerrow argues that “space is a symbolic practice fully implicated in engaging, constraining, producing, and maintaining discursive practices” (272). Consequently, the symbols are worth exploring as Grande and her co-producers made very specific choices in this reconstruction of space. While a concert performance may be considered an unusual act for a memorial, the act of ignoring their deaths is far more egregious (Wright). Silence gives more momentum to the political motives of the bombing and also denies the strength of the Manchester people, who refused to remain in victimhood. According to Grande:

Their love, strength, and unity showed me...not to be defeated. To continue during the scariest and saddest of times. To not let hate win. But instead, love as loudly as possible, and to appreciate every moment. The people of Manchester were able to change an event that portrayed the worst of humanity into one that portrayed the most beautiful of humanity. (Mela)

This need to take action quickly allowed the people of Manchester to establish agency over this horrific event. As mentioned in the opening, trauma has a way of transforming a space and creating anxiety in the air. Veena Das argues this point in

her book, *Life and Words: Violence and the Descent into the Ordinary*, in which she states “the everyday can be ‘eventful’: precarious, violent, filled with unspoken echoes of previous events, and always subject to doubt” (218). Grande’s attempt to return to the ‘everyday’ would become a source of tremendous anxiety and unease not only for herself, but also some of her audience. Even though Grande could not return to the physical place to give it new meaning, she was tasked with filtering out the trauma that the visitors carried with them with the same activity that led to the trauma in the first place. Additionally, she had to overcome her own fears of performing again. This collective memory of both performer and audience had to be redesigned to create a new space.

Through the example of nineteenth-century European nationalism, Vanesa Matajic discusses the “cultural mapping of space” (4), which is what happens here. Rather than thinking geo-political boundaries, a new nation is created via a shared cultural identity. This cultural nationalism is formed by “individuality of the native language, in the collective memory of the historical experience, and above all in different kinds of cultural production—from the arts to the sciences” (Juvan 328, as quoted in Matjac 5). Performers and audience have a shared cultural experience that is expressed through the language of music and the symbiotic relationship between performer and audience. The artist performs despite fatigue, illness, or the fact that it has been the same show day after day for months at a time. The audience rewards this performance with cheers and pleas for an encore. They have collected and memorized her music, watched her videos and interviews, and paid to participate in the collective experience. For some of those fans who travel to multiple shows, follow her twitter feed, and keep abreast of her published and recorded interviews, they take on a new role as “followers.” Each concert, in a sense, is its own subculture, or as Benedict Anderson would dub: an “imagined community.” As Grande had to think about how to re-build this post-trauma space, it was not based on world politics, but instead a preservation and healing of the community that she created.

In this (re)construction of this particular space as performed memorial, it was essential to maintain proximity of the location where the 22 concert-goers lost their lives to create a new collective memory in place of a brick and mortar memorial. “This need for such rhetorical memory space explains why so many groups mobilize to ensure that their memories gain legitimacy” (Wright 55). The young casualties were commemorated and celebrated in an activity that they themselves enjoyed and in the city from which they were from. Despite its unusual location

and type of performance, the *One Love Manchester* show became an apt memorial. Grande, as well as the co-producers, explored these boundaries by visiting victims of the bombing and family members of the deceased before the concert (Bloom). In visit after visit, families and victims warmly welcomed Grande further solidifying the decision to enact this memorial at the Old Trafford Cricket Yard. Grande received the “blessing” and approval of whom would be her harshest critics. In addition, the organization of the concert and the symbols employed were key to operating within these boundaries.

Once the concert location was determined and accepted, how the attendees, performers and even the victims embody the space and dwell within it become exceedingly important to (re)construct this new space. The name *One Love Manchester* attempted to create a space that promoted peace and love. Performers frequently made “heart hands” (in which fingertips are brought together to make a shape of a heart). The colors pink and purple dominated the set creating a warm “feminine” space where feelings could be expressed and validated. “I ♥ MCR” was projected on the screen. Love conquers fear dominated as a theme. The setlist included songs such as: “Happy” by Pharrell Williams and Miley Cyrus; Grande’s “Be Alright;” Cold Play’s “Viva la Vida;” “Where Is the Love?,” a duet with Grande and the Black Eyed Peas; “Don’t Look Back in Anger,” a duet with Chris Martin; and, Grande and “The Way” (a duet with then love interest, Mac Miller). This reconstructed space countered terrorism with feelings of healing and positivity.

Sara Ahmed has analyzed how love is used to create a collective identity: “Love becomes a way of bonding with others in relation to an ideal, which takes shape as an effect of such bonding. (124)” Grande tells her audience “I love you so much” and proclaims “love as medicine for the world.” In a sense, this space has been transformed into a love group. Thinking again of these fans as a subculture, the bonding which previously occurred through music now needs an added layer of love and security to create new collective memory and identity. This re-creation of space has gendered implications and Grande’s approach towards her primarily female fans, seeks to manipulate this space to allow the free expressions of feelings ranging from grief to joy.

The show started and ended with a strong sense of emotionalism, indicating its function to give free reign to such feelings. Marcus Mumford, an American-born English singer, led a moment of silence to commemorate both Manchester and the London Bridge attack, that occurred just the day before on June 3rd. I could only

imagine the level of the anxiety of the crowd. He started his song by saying, “let’s not be afraid” before breaking out into an acoustic slow-tempo song “Timshel” that was reminiscent of a funeral dirge. The refrain is:

But you are not alone in this
 And you are not alone in this
 As brothers we will stand and we’ll hold your hand
 Hold your hand (Mumford and Sons 2009)

At the inception of the show, it is made clear that they are grieving together as a collective entity. This song also acknowledges the purpose of this gathering as a healing space to separate it from a traditional concert. Starting the show with pop songs, bright lights, and vivid costumes would have disrupted this careful reconstruction of space. Additionally, because the bombing was the result of an American performance on British soil, the selection of a British-American artist to begin the show was apt.

It must be noted that the performers could not maintain this morose tone throughout the show because it would have counteracted the purpose of overcoming the feeling of victimhood. Very careful song placement and ordering of performers existed to bring the audience up and to take them back down as a reminder of the event. To take the crowd back up to a more celebratory tone, the Manchester band *Take That* performed three songs in which the crowd sang along with the performers. Following their set, British native, Robbie Williams led the crowd in “Manchester We’re Strong.” Even though Grande and her producers coordinated the concert, the British presence was key to the show’s success.

It was not until an hour into the concert that co-producer Scooter Braun introduced Grande. In true “the show must go on” format she immediately started singing and dancing with the song “Be Alright” with her back-up dancers, using choreography from the *Dangerous Woman* tour. Grande mechanically follows her routine as if on auto-pilot and does not speak to the crowd until several songs into her set. Grande’s selective mutism was not a disconnect from the audience, but instead appears as a form of self-preservation. It became obvious from her mechanical movements, devoid of her typical performance energy and enthusiasm, that the act of performing required all of her mental energy. Grande’s reaction is supported by trauma scholars such as Edward Casey who writes “if words are coming only haltingly, this is due to the weight of the trauma, which acts to immobilize those suffering from it” (36). Silence as a rhetorical argument now had a different meaning.

In her first verbal engagement with the audience, Grande recounted a visit with the mother of a deceased girl named Olivia and began to cry: “I had the pleasure of meeting Olivia’s mommy a few days ago. As soon as I met her I started crying and I gave her a big hug. And she said ‘stop crying’, Olivia wouldn’t want you to cry and she told me Olivia would’ve wanted to hear the hits” (Broadcasting America). And so, with that statement, Grande performs the most un-ceremonious of songs: her number 1 hit “Side to Side” (a song about a woman having so much sex she cannot walk straight).

Despite the buoyant songs throughout the show, several decisions reiterated the solemnity and overall purpose of the concert as a form of honoring the deceased. The performers aided in controlling the embodiment of this space in how they presented themselves. In a type of contemporary mourning attire, many of the performers dressed more casually wearing hoodies, warm-up jackets, t-shirts, baseball caps downplaying elaborate costuming or expensive designer clothing, that would be typical during most full-scale concerts. Grande, who wears revealing costumes during her shows, wore an oversized sweatshirt with words “One Love Manchester,” jeans with a hole at the thigh, heeled boots, and a high ponytail. Aside from confetti released into the crowd during Cold Play’s set and pink streamers during Grande’s set, little theatrical production occurred. For the most part, this concert was very pared down and focused on the music.

Songs to quiet down the crowd were intermixed within the setlist to evoke more overt emotionalism of the audience. This oscillation of upbeat songs followed by slower tempo ballads reminded the audience that they were there to have a good time even if it was a memorial. This up and down of emotions became a way for the performers to control how the audience was embodying the space. The audience held signs “For Our Angels” and “We Stand Together” that surfaced during the more solemn songs. An emotional Ariana Grande struggled to end the concert with “Somewhere over the Rainbow” and burst into tears mid-performance. Her feelings were echoed throughout the tears of the crowd and everyone left the event acutely aware of the honorary purpose.

In addition to the message of love, professing unity between the U.S. and U.K. was equally important. Even though Grande organized the concert, the U.K. singers first started the show. A reversal in order would suggest a form of colonization in which the Americans were coming to the aid of their British brothers; therefore, nullifying the strength and independence of the Manchester citizens. American singers wore I ♥ MCR shirts and professed their love for the Manchester people.

Chris Martin of Cold Play and Grande sang a duet further demonstrating unity. In addition, Grande sang with a Manchester high school choir, singers the same age as many of the victims. Towards the end of the concert, all the performers came together to sing “One Last Time.” All of these songs conveying that they were working together.

The performers of *One Love Manchester* carefully choreographed the crowds’ emotions and ideals and built from Grande’s designation of this concert as a loving and unified space. The psychology of the love exchanged between a crowd and its’ leader reverts all the way back to Freud who argues “that a bond of a group relies on love to the leader” (Ahmed 130). And even though Grande does not appear until one hour into the concert, she is the clear leader. Though *One Love Manchester* could have easily taken on more overt political overtones, especially because of the London terrorist stabbing, no mention of “terrorist” or “bombing” exists. While silence is used to honor the deceased, silence was also used to take away the perpetrator’s power by ignoring his existence.

As this (re)constructed space was clarified, it is necessary to return again to the most basic function of this concert: to honor the deceased. Their embodiment occurs with markers throughout the concert. Mumford’s minute of silence broke through the din of 50,000 people who were asked to stand. The silence mixed with the physical act of standing forced the audience to actively acknowledge those who were missing. The pink signs “For Our Angels” became a tangible artifact also maintaining the deceased’s presence in the crowd. Braun’s introduction brought forth his visit to the children’s hospital and reminded the audience that the kids were watching. The kids, to which Braun referred, could not physically be in the space due to the level of their injuries. Instead, Braun facilitated their embodiment by passing on their messages to the crowd, such as that by Adam, a 15-year-old casualty, who said: “don’t go forward in anger, love spreads.” Grande brought Olivia Campbell Harding’s presence to the show by quoting her mother “her daughter and all the others lost will never be victims” (Broadcasting America). This embodiment of the bombing casualties from acknowledged their presence, as Ahmed argues “forgetting would be a repetition of the violence or injury” (33). The performance that was broadcast worldwide through the BBC becomes a new type of memorial.

This show demonstrates reclamation of collective memory and agency. The emphasis on love, the color palette chosen, and a primarily female audience suggests a more “feminized approach” to combat terror in what Greg Dickinson

calls an “experiential landscape,” which means that this space was being created through a shared experience (“Spaces of Remembering” 30). The artists attempt to envelope the audience in a proverbial embrace. By emphasizing love, Grande is developing what Bertrand Robert and Chris Lajtha call a “positive polarity to crisis management” (Robert 185, as quoted in Wombacher 135). The situation in Sandy Hook is a comparable example. Grande’s primary audience is middle school to high school girls. Sandy Hook was an elementary school. Rather than speak out against terrorism—or, in the case of Sandy Hook, gun control—the emphasis of the producers/administrators was on meeting the social and emotional needs of the young victims. Positivity, rather than anger, was necessary to heal this audience.

In many instances throughout the show, this positivity occurs through sing-alongs which supports the interaction between performer and audience. Giving the audience “unofficial” permission to sing, Gary Barlow, the second performer from Take That said “Our thoughts are with everyone that has been affected by this, but right now we want to stand strong, look at the sky, and sing loud and proud.” And with cue, they did. What is interesting about these sing-alongs were the different collective memories that they evoked. For example, Robbie Williams’ “Manchester We’re Strong” encouraged the audience to dig deep into their inner strength and to identify themselves as Manchester citizens. Pharrell William’s “Happy,” which was the number one downloaded song in Manchester, suggested finding joy and returning to everyday activities. The sing-alongs with Ariana Grande encouraged and supported the artist as she struggled to return to stage. Niall Horan’s song “This Town,” which he dedicated to Manchester, drew emotion from the audience as they tearfully sang along. Manchester native, Liam Gallagher and British band Cold Play’s version of “Live Forever” encouraged the audience’s active participation as they waved the lights of their cellphones, again bringing forth the embodiment of the deceased. Finally, the sing along of “One Last Time” involving all the performers, left the collective memory of unity with the audience.

Grande’s encore song “Somewhere Over the Rainbow” demonstrated a binary between audience and performer that is not always one-sided. As mentioned, the sing-alongs with Grande gave the artist encouragement and motivation to continue with the performance despite debilitating anxiety. As she tearfully performed in front of an equally teary audience, she stops the song before the end and bursts into tears. It is the cheers of the audience who urge her on to continue. After which, she completes the song, even hitting the high note. Then, she burst into tears again before walking off stage.

Performers, audience, and even casualties embodied the concert space. Their participation reclaimed their public memory and created a new context for the purpose of healing and agency (Conrad 78). Attending a concert, an everyday activity, became an event which took the lives of 22 young people. Even after all the arrangements were made to organize *One Love Manchester*, the stabbing at the London bridge increased the fear of being in these public spaces. But performers and audience members deliberately attended, and in doing so they demonstrated a concrete choice to combat fear by embracing the everyday. As Das argues, “Recovery from trauma takes place through the ‘descent into the everyday’ [...] recovery is always uncertain and involves ongoing engagement in humble ordinary routines and pragmatic activities” (Das, as quoted in Conrad, 74). The larger purpose of this memorial was for the participants to heal by triumphing over victimhood and terrorism through resuming life. (Re)constructing this space away from, but close to the original site of trauma, forced a confrontation with fear as Danielle Endres and Samantha Senda-Cook argue: “rhetorically challenge dominant meanings and practices in a place” (258). Concert participants were challenging fear and terrorism and using concerts to initiate a new collective memory through joy and healing rather than pain and death. While *We Are Manchester* similarly sought to challenge fear and terrorism, their aims were more confrontational and defiant.

We Are Manchester was perceptibly different from *One Love Manchester* in its rhetorical argument primarily because it had to reclaim the physical space of the Manchester Arena. The subculture shifts from Ariana Grande fans to Mancunians, changing the scope of the performance. I begin by describing the most obvious differences such as the scope and setlist, and then provide a deeper analysis of the emphasis on place versus space. Similar to *One Love Manchester*, focusing on place creates an alternate collective memory to promote healing, despite memorializing the same event.

We Are Manchester

While many YouTube videos of *One Love Manchester* exist, a full released video of *We Are Manchester* is more elusive. The show was not televised but instead broadcasted by Radio X, a British radio station, limiting the audience to those in the geographic area. Already a clear separation in audience from worldwide to only those from the United Kingdom exists. The objective shifts from love and

unity to an emphasis on independence and strength. Because of the outpouring of the funds during *One Love Manchester*, the victims were financially well-compensated; therefore, the proceeds from *We Are Manchester* were instead directed towards the Manchester Memorial Fund, which would build a brick and mortar memorial honoring the victims. A televised concert easily available on social media may have been the appropriate memorial for the teenage fans, in contrast, something more permanent near the place of their death would honor their surviving families. Patrizia Violi, as well as several other scholars of trauma site memorials, suggest the importance of place because of the direct link to the trauma itself (41). In the case of *We Are Manchester*, the place is defined as much more concrete, the physical environment where the bombs detonated. Holding this concert at the Manchester Arena required a different approach to promote healing.

Re-constructing the Manchester Arena as a place for entertainment rather than a place where a massacre occurred was an important gesture to re-claim agency and therefore, had to be carefully curated in the same way that *One Love Manchester* was. The difference, however, was the audience: the people who lived and worked in this city composed the majority of the *We Are Manchester* audience. Even though the show was held nine months after the attack, the producers created a suite for emotional first aid with licensed health professionals and, additionally, hired extra security to likely counter the increased anxiety (We Are Manchester Arena). These decisions acknowledge the possible post-traumatic stress that the attendees feel.

This concert is decidedly all things Manchester, made clear with the title of the show. While *One Love Manchester* suggested a unification between U.S. and Great Britain, *We Are Manchester* immediately creates the rhetorical argument of self-reliance. First off, looking at the set list, it must be noted that *We Are Manchester* was headlined by Noel Gallagher, the brother of Liam Gallagher who performed at *One Love Manchester*. The feud between the two brothers stemming from their time in the band Oasis is well-known in the music world. Ranging from physical assaults to public Twitter attacks, the two brothers after years of conflict have since pursued separate solo careers (Plitt). Noel played nine songs as part of the *We Are Manchester* concert. Noel's direct involvement, alone, establishes a distinct separation between the two concerts. Ariana Grande nor any other American performers are included in the show. Manchester mayor, Andy Bernham opened the show by reading the first names of the twenty-two victims, therefore, proclaiming the focus of the show. While the names of the victims would mean

very little to an American watching the *One Love Manchester* concert, to the attendees of the *We Are Manchester*, the names represent a neighbor or relative.

Poet, Tony Walsh follows with his poem, “This is the Place” which highlights the production, history, and strength of the Mancunians. The poem was first read at the vigil immediately following the Manchester attacks. The refrain states:

And there’s hard times again in these streets of our city
But we won’t take defeat and we don’t want your pity
Because this is a place where we stand strong together
With a smile on our face, Mancunians forever. (2012)

The phrase “we don’t want your pity” reiterates the Manchester attitude of self-reliance. This show, separate from *One Love Manchester* and void of American intervention, becomes a symbol of that need to take care of one’s own.

Although less publicized and less financially successful than *One Love*, *We Are Manchester* needed to be produced, performed, and attended by the citizens for them to establish their own agency over the healing process. At the conclusion of his poem, Walsh unexpectedly encourages the audience to erupt in a minute of defiant cheers rather than a minute of silence. Defiance would be a key theme of the *We Are Manchester*. The title of Walsh’s poem, “*This is the Place*,” aligns with the physical confrontation of the place where the attacks occurred in this decision to enact the memorial on the site. By cheering rather than remaining in silence, Walsh and the audience are reclaiming this place and setting the tone for the direction of the show.

Only two female artists performed: Pixie Lott and Nadine Coyle. Manchester artist, Pixie Lott, gave a soulful performance of “Cry Me Out” with the audience swaying along waving their cellphones in a darkened room. She slowed down the tempo from her traditional released version. To contrast this more solemn mood, she ended her set with the dance hit “All About Tonight” flanked by choreographed male dancers with bright flashing lights changing the energy level of the room. Nadine Coyle, who followed, performed her buoyant song “Go to Work,” which maintains a pop/dance club feel to the concert. Her repetitive chorus “Why don’t you go to work, do your nine to five” celebrates the Mancunian worker bee attitude further acknowledging their collective identity. Occupying the least desirable place of a group performance, both female acts served as openers. In contrast to the female-led, *One Love Manchester*, in *We Are Manchester* it is the male voices who dominate this show.

Rick Astley from Lancashire continued to rev up the crowd with a cover of Foo Fighters' 1997 song "Everlong." The lyrics "If everything could feel this real forever. If anything could ever be this good again" reiterate the use of music as a form of escape, key to the healing goals of this concert.

The energy continued to rise with Manchester grime artist, Bugzy Malone, music by Blossoms (also from Manchester), the Courteneers from Middleton, and then stand-up comedian Peter Kay from Lancashire. While a comedian may seem like an odd inclusion in a music festival, he becomes yet another reminder of the reclamation of this place as an entertainment venue, not a scene of a massacre. While *One Love Manchester* sought an up and down of emotions, the energy of the crowd only continued to rise throughout the performance in *We Are Manchester* as the audience even began crowd surfing and body slamming.

While *One Love Manchester* sought healing through love and expression of feelings, *We Are Manchester* followed Veena Das's view to recovery which is "addressing the situation directly, voicing the trauma, bringing it out to the open, and trying to do something about it once and for all, as if time moved in a linear fashion" (Das and Kleiman as quoted in Conrad 83). Because this was nine months after the attack and required a reclamation of the place, the tactics had to involve a more direct confrontation. Noel Gallagher said in response to the attack in May: "having played that arena and all that and stood in that foyer, and being from Manchester, as it's dawning on you that it's aimed at young music fans...I say there are no words, there are words. Unfortunately, you can't broadcast those words" (Legaspi). Returning to the mayor's list of names and Tony Walsh's request for the audience to cheer, they both set the tone for how this audience was going to approach the trauma head on.

Noel Gallagher performed nine songs as part of *We Are Manchester*. The energy remained high with the crowd singing along, particularly with his former Oasis hits "Champagne Supernova," "Wonderwall" and "Don't Look Back in Anger." "Don't Look Back in Anger" was particularly significant as it was sung during the vigil after the bombing and has been considered by many, a Manchester anthem. Like *One Love Manchester*, the second to the last song of the show was a sing-along. Before beginning, Gallagher stated "every time you sing, we win, so sing like you've never sang before" (A Godlike Genius). Fifteen thousand spectators began to sing along. The refrain was emphasized by both singer and audience:

"So Sally can wait, she knows it's too late as she's walking on by

Her soul slides away, but don't look back in anger I heard you say
At least not today” (1996)

Like *One Love Manchester*, the setlist carefully planned the emotions of the audience. The feelings of defiance and confrontation are tempered with the Beatle-like melody of “Don't Look Back in Anger” and the lyrics which encourage the audience to move on from the pain.

In contrast to Grande's teary-eyed “Somewhere Over the Rainbow” to end the show, Gallagher performs an experimental and upbeat song “AKA...What a Life!” with lyrics that ironically include references to a rainbow again suggesting a dialogue between the two memorials:

Keep on chasing down that rainbow
You'll never know what you might find
Over the sunset on the horizon
It may be a dream but it tastes like poison
I'm going to take that tiger outside for a ride
What a life.

The difference is that these lyrics suggest a more active rather than passive approach further solidifying self-reliance and strength.

The announcer for K103 wrapped up his opinion of the concert quite succinctly, expressing that Gallagher successfully achieved the show's aims to reclaim the place of the attack. “One of the most incredible performances I have ever witnessed in my life. I have just witnessed 15,000 people scream the anthem of Manchester solidarity along with Noel Gallagher “Don't Look Back in Anger”: That felt like the ultimate end, like the most important moments in the history of this city. And I'll be frank with you I don't want to sound dramatic but one of the most important moments of my life as a proud Northern as a proud Mancunian...15,000 people chanting, singing, living, and loving, and doing exactly what they are supposed to be doing at the Manchester Arena tonight. (Noel Gallagher's High Flying Birds”)

Evidently, the show represented something deeper than simple entertainment; it reflected the larger idea of picking oneself up after a tragedy and continuing to live life. The challenge, of course, was to achieve this, at the site of the attack.

While both shows sought to manipulate space for the creation of a memorial, *We Are Manchester* had to reclaim the actual physical place of the attack to promote healing. Though place can be conceived as a “bordered, specified, and

locatable” use of physical environment (Dickinson, Blair and Ott, 23), the organizers of *We Are Manchester* had to combat the role that public memory played in changing the borders of that physical environment, re-drawn by police tape and investigators. This place as a “location of experience” resulted in powerful emotions and sentiments (Walter 21). Performers had to lead this reclamation of place, converting it from a site of a terrorist attack, or “place-bound crisis” to an entertainment venue with a new collective memory.

This act of reclaiming a space despite public memory has been attempted with other events. This same situation occurred with Sandy Hook Elementary, which also underwent a place-bound crisis as the site of the massacre of 20 children. (Wombacher, 164). The solution, however, was to raze the site and rebuild a new school on top removing the pain from confronting the memories associated with the previous building, while still claiming some agency over the site. While Sandy Hook was razed and rebuilt in true “rise from the ashes” rhetoric, Manchester Arena was not. Instead, the rebuilding had to happen internally through the embodiment of space suggesting an interdependence of place and space (Wombacher 166).

Based on theories of crisis renewal, two main factors contributed to reconstituting Manchester Arena as a site of performance. These conditions included: taking “action to reduce the likelihood of a crisis happening again” and the “strength of organizational relationships with stakeholders prior to the crisis (Wombacher 166). Manchester Arena increased security to prevent this type of attack happening again at this site. The arena’s general manager, James Allen, said ““May’s events will never be forgotten, but they will not stop us—or the Mancunian music fans – from coming together to enjoy live music.”” and added ““Public safety is always our priority, and we are doing all we can to keep people safe at our venue”” (Coscarelli).

Rebuilding materialized through the re-collection of public memory. “Re-collection is an ongoing process of what we call discursive fragments of memory into coherent bodies of meaning” (Aden 314). Each individual performance, carefully choreographed by Noel Gallagher and His High Flying Birds, pieced together these fragments to maintain a feeling of communal strength. Aden views re-collection as “a reciprocal and interrelated interaction among the people who remember” (316). In the case of performance, this occurs in the symbiotic relationship between performer and audience and how the audience comes together in their shared love of the music. Singers that encouraged singing along,

dancing, and moshing; and vocal performers who elicited communal emotions resulted in a collective involvement of the entire space, therefore generating an embodied performance. As Gallagher began his song “Don’t Look Back in Anger,” he tells the audience “it’s become some kind of anthem of defiance, and every time you sing, we win, so keep on singing” (A Godlike Genius). The singer and audience embody the space loudly in song intentionally creating a new collective memory. Again, like the Grande concert, by singing together they create a new embodiment of the space, consequently changing the energy and memory of the physical environment.

In contrast to *One Love Manchester*, this embodiment becomes more territorial because the Mancunians are left with the remains of the physical space. Councilor Sue Murphy, the deputy leader of the Manchester City Council, called the concert “a powerful symbol of this defiant and resilient spirit” (Coscarelli). This territoriality challenges *One Love Manchester*. The decision to fundraise for a physical monument, rather than simply hold a three-hour performance that would be forgotten in months but would guarantee that the collective memory would not forget the attack. Secondly, the Mancunian performers and audience asserted themselves as not needing any outside help eschewing any connection to the U.S. Again, the title of the concert was *We Are Manchester*. Broadcasting the concert locally creates an inclusiveness and a more private memorial excluding a world-wide superficial mourning. Finally, by holding the memorial at the actual site of attack redefined the territory in an act of defiance.

Conclusion

Both *One Love Manchester* and *We Are Manchester* differ from brick and mortar memorials due to the immediacy of the event and their manipulation of place and space. The (re)constructed space is more transcendent rather than tangible, yet, their roles as commemorative and cathartic experiences can be as equally impactful despite their varying approaches (Das 6). In their attempts to memorialize the victims of a tragic event, both shows sought to create a new communal identity and memory cognizant of their respective audiences (or sub-cultures). These events not only legitimize the concert as a memorial event, but also created a significant place and space for its victims to heal.

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#PutYourSticksOut: Public Expressions of Grief on Twitter about the Humboldt Broncos Accident

TERILEE EDWARDS-HEWITT

On April 6, 2018, after a playoff game in the amateur Saskatchewan Junior Hockey League, a bus carrying members of the Humboldt Broncos hockey team collided with a semi-truck when the driver of the truck failed to yield at a flashing stop sign. Fourteen people on the bus died, two others critically injured died later in hospital, and thirteen were injured. While tributes occurred locally, individual performances of public grief were shared by over 30,000 Twitter users in the week after the accident, many by people who had no direct connection to the team or that region of Canada.

Social media offers powerful ways to document, share, and mobilize social movements such as Black Lives Matter, Occupy, and Me Too. In addition to large, powerful movements and events, much of social media's content is concerned with commerce or the minutiae of everyday life. A significant aspect of social media is sharing, which includes the positive and negative aspects of life (Christensen and Gotved 3). Social media allows people from around the world to associate with others who share the same interests, creating new virtual social networks of people (Sanderson and Cheong 328). This new network of online communities enables social media users to share grief with others and create new mourning rituals (Christensen and Gotved 4; Pantti and Sumiala 120).

Death is an inherently social phenomenon (Christensen and Gotved 1). The increased prominence of speaking to physical death online is growing interest in online memorial culture (Christensen and Gotved 2). Because so much of everyday life is shared online, this may be a reason why discussion of death and grieving seems more prevalent in social media platforms than in our daily lives offline (Christensen and Gotved 4). Some of the literature about performance of grief

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online has focused on mourning for an individual with whom the person had a direct, interpersonal relationship (Sanderson and Cheong 328). Researchers are also paying increasing attention to the mourning of celebrities online (see Klastrup 1; Radford and Block 137; Sanderson and Cheong 328) and the practice of mourning parasocial relationships on social media for individuals (or groups of people) who are not celebrities (Burroughs et al. 4; Hjorth and Kim 554; Klastrup 2; Pantti and Sumiala 119).

How was grief about the Humboldt Broncos accident performed on the social media platform of Twitter? What types of performance of grief were done? Where were these Twitter users located? What may be some of the factors that prompted people to participate in this sharing of grief? The author assessed tweets to identify the attributes of the Twitter users who participated in this activity and examined the content of their posts for patterns in the performance of grief. While analyzing hashtags and mentions does not give a complete picture of any event or movement, in this case it offers a look at the ways people are creating new rituals connected to the performance of grief online. It is important to note that the phrase “performance of grief” that does not imply the person’s emotions were not sincere. Sharing grief on social media allows individual expression and at the same time uses boundary markers to reinforce social connections to the imagined community.

The Cultural Importance of Sport

Sports are culturally important because they are interconnected with many parts of everyday life, including entertainment, personal expression, family, work, and social relationships (Gruneau and Whitson 28), as well as technology (Andrews 5). Sports are big business (Andrews 6). Part of the commercialization of sport includes mass media (Andrews 8). Sports influence society through interconnected media systems, including social media (Billings and Wenner 9). Sports are then reflected by fans, teams, and leagues in social media. In the twenty-first century, sport as a culture industry is as influential economically and socially as the Hollywood film industry was at its height in the 1930s and 1940s (Andrews 42). Sports’ symbolic meaning is important as it provides a structure for reflecting, explaining, and interpreting social life (Real and Mechikoff 337). This symbolic meaning includes how to react to and perform grief.

Identifying as a fan of a specific sport or team helps mark a person’s place within society and is incorporated into a person’s values and self-identity (Billings

and Wanner 4). Fans consider themselves a unique social group with group identities which can be performed in social media (Radford and Block 139). While fans experience these identities as individuals, they express them communally (Real 35). Sport is seen as having the ability to foster community, either through participation or viewing (Butterworth 203-4). Sports events are part of society's common culture. Sports can also help create and nurture communal identities (Butterworth 204). Games and related events help define a person's fan membership and become part of the cultural memory for many, not just the most rabid fans (Billings and Wenner 3).

Sports fans are not passive vessels who only receive entertainment. Some participate as players at different skill levels, others as advocates for sports recreation, as volunteers for teams, as collectors of memorabilia or sports related literature (Gruneau and Whitson 22-23). In the past, sports fans were able to participate as callers on radio shows (Gruneau and Whitson 22); sports fans now can also participate in online blogs, social media (Andrews 42), and webcasts. Audiences of sporting events are both objects and subjects of sports production through the commodification of audience participation in social media (Gruneau and Compton 44). Hockey today is a globalized sport, with connections to international commerce and entertainment (Gruneau and Whitson 32). At the same time, sports can be a national cultural signifier which is tied to a country's sense of identity (Andrews 113).

Sports and Performances of Grief and Memorialization

Sports' role in large- and small-scale community memorializing in the U.S. expanded after the September 11, 2001 attacks (Burroughs et al. 4). It increased because sports began to carry more weight in popular culture and were thought of as being part of shared social experiences (Burroughs et al. 3). While issues such as commercialization and displays of shallow emotional healing are part of sports memorialization events, sports can also provide a sense of renewal after a crisis (Burroughs et al. 15). Sports and ceremonies associated with them can offer some communal healing (Butterworth 203). The professional sporting events that resumed one week after the attacks on 9/11 were seen at the time as healing and unifying events in the United States (Butterworth 209).

Sports teams at the major (professional) levels, as well as minor league and junior teams, are considered expressions of regional identity (Burroughs et al. 3).

Because of these associations, sports teams and leagues can be leaders in healing a community, and the public sphere of the arenas and stadiums are places recognized as being part of the community. In addition to the purpose of promoting a sense of community and honoring others, sports teams and leagues consider expressions of memorializations part of team branding and positive public relations (Burroughs et al. 4-5). The public memorializations by sports teams help foster connections between the team and local fans. But teams also must juggle the issues related to their being part of a larger corporate structure which has a reach outside their region (Burroughs et al. 10). Sports teams have used hashtags in their social media responses to tragedies (Burroughs et al. 6).

After the mass shooting in Las Vegas in October 2017, the recently formed Las Vegas Knights hockey team connected itself to the hashtags of #VegasStrong and #VegasBorn throughout their inaugural season in 2017-2018 (Burroughs et al. 11). The use of the two hashtags became a way for people to have a sense of helping and recovering from the shootings, despite the limited number of ways that people could contribute to community healing (Burroughs et al. 13), aside from financial donations. When it became difficult to find public rituals and spaces for public memorialization elsewhere in Las Vegas, the Las Vegas Golden Knights hockey team performed public memorializations and gave the community space to perform mourning rituals within the commercial space of the hockey arena throughout their season (Burroughs et al. 1, 12). The arena became a space for mourning the October 2017 shooting. At the same time, the team did not encourage activism or discussion of the many underlying issues which enabled the shooting to occur, nor of the difficulties of recovering. But this generalized mourning message appealed to a wide range of their fans (Burroughs et al. 12). One negative aspect of the Las Vegas Golden Knights', or any team's, public memorializing is while it creates a sense of belonging, it is often within a context of limited membership (Burroughs et al. 14). A negative perspective of sports' ability to create community can be viewed in Butterworth's (2014) analysis of the tenth anniversary commemoration of 9/11 in professional sporting events, which emphasized nationalism and militarism (204).

The Cultural Importance of Hockey within Canada

Modern hockey's development is traced to nineteenth-century Canada; however, the sport has roots in several sport activities found in North America, including games played by Indigenous (First Nations) cultures, as well as a number of

different games played with sticks and balls on ice by immigrants to North America from England, Ireland, and the Netherlands (Gruneau and Whitson 32). Games which influenced hockey include field hockey, hurley, lacrosse, rugby, and shinny (Gruneau and Whitson 32, 39). Formal rules were established for hockey games in the 1870s in Montreal, with standard rules spreading to Quebec and Ottawa in the 1880s (Gruneau and Whitson 38-9). Larger towns in Canada started their own teams and leagues by the mid-1890s (Gruneau and Whitson 45). Hockey and other amateur sports were thought to encourage people from different economic and ethnic backgrounds to interact in a way that promoted health and good behaviors. In reality, in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, access to these sports opportunities was determined by members of the higher economic status groups (Gruneau and Whitson 46).

Within Canada, hockey is often idealized and romanticized, as well as being thought of in terms of a past which no longer exists (Gruneau and Whitson 25). In Canada, hockey can mean different things to individuals: an amateur sport which helps educate; community identity; informal play; or an opportunity to socialize, drink, or gamble. It can inhabit more than one of these meanings at the same time (Gruneau and Whitson 27). Radio broadcasts of Canadian hockey games began in 1923. In the twenty-first century, television viewership of NHL games in Canada is considered family entertainment (Shoalts 48) and continues to have high ratings even as other types of television shows have lost viewers (Shoalts 44).

For many people in Canada, participating in or watching hockey games is a nostalgic part of their childhood (Gruneau and Whitson 1). For some, watching the nationally televised games on Saturday nights give a sense of being part of a national hockey community and a Canadian identity (Gruneau and Whitson 2-3). Because hockey occurs at different levels of play (from childhood to professional) in Canada and receives significant media coverage across the country, even people who are not hockey fans are aware of the sport (Gruneau and Whitson 3). At the same time, it is also important to acknowledge that while hockey is idealized and romanticized as part of Canadian identity in the past and present, it is a sport which has not been available to everyone (Gruneau and Whitson 7).

In the imagination of many in Canada, hockey players start as young men who learn to play hockey on frozen ponds in rural areas. In reality, for most players hockey is an indoor, suburban game (Gruneau and Whitson 158). In Canada there are childhood hockey leagues and organizations, which provide space and equipment as well as training for hockey players of different ages and genders

(Gruneau and Whitson 155), although the number of male players exceeds women (Gruneau and Whitson 154).

Hockey Canada organizes minor and junior league hockey organizations. These minor and junior teams are a focus of community spirit (Gruneau and Whitson 154). Minor and junior team games are more affordable and accessible than NHL games (Gruneau and Whitson 164). Canadians demonstrate an interest in the community owned amateur teams at the junior level, as a push back against the U.S. business model of the NHL and the increasing influence of U.S.-created popular entertainment (Gruneau and Whitson 24). While media can amplify mega-sporting events and increase awareness of them in the general public, the wide range of different media (tv, radio, social media) means that smaller regional events, such as the junior league hockey championships, also receive much more media attention than in the past (Gruneau and Compton 43).

The Humboldt Broncos are part of the Saskatchewan Junior Hockey League, which consists of thirteen teams, with players between the ages of sixteen to twenty. The league does not pay players, so they can be considered amateurs. Participation in the league may help players become athletes at the college level and to possibly play in the minor or major leagues or gain job opportunities in or outside of sports (SJHL Education).

Twitter and Hashtags

The author used hashtags to locate postings about the Humboldt team accident on Twitter. Twitter is a microblogging social media site which started in 2006. It allows users to post messages consisting of 280 characters, called “tweets.” While Twitter started with “tweets” of 140 characters, including spaces, punctuation, and emojis, the platform expanded the size of messages in 2017 (Larson). Individuals and organizations, including businesses, can create accounts. Similar to Facebook, users can view Twitter chronologically in a linear timeline or in order via “top tweets” as determined by an algorithm from the company that operates the platform, which is also called Twitter. A person with an account can reply to or repost (referred to as retweeting or RT) what is posted on open, publicly available accounts (Zomguamg et al. 1399). Users can also create a closed account where the Twitter user must approve everyone who follows them; closed accounts do not allow reposting. This analysis did not use any closed accounts. Twitter and most other social media sites earn money from ads (Cann 113), which appear alongside

Twitter timelines or as promoted tweets in the timeline.

Twitter users choose to follow other accounts based on perceived associations or interests (Feelon et al.). Hashtags on Twitter are labeled with the # (pound sign) to call attention to a word or phrase. Twitter user Chris Messina first suggested use of hashtags in 2007, to find tweets related to wildfires in California (Filadelfo; “Twitter Hashtags”). In addition to locating information on Twitter, hashtags enable tweets to be grouped by user assigned words. Hashtags can be used to network and create community connections, with users purposefully following and interacting with others who have the same interests. It is possible to see through time how participants use and interact with a hashtag (Burroughs et al. 6). One or a limited number of users might create a hashtag that is not shared widely (Cooper), whereas other hashtags such as #TBT for Throwback Thursday or #BlackLivesMatter have become widely popular (Filadelfo; “Twitter Hashtags”). In the U.S., the hashtag #BlackLivesMatter was started in July 2013, but it was not widely used until August 2014 during the Ferguson protests (Feelon et al.).

Within Twitter, people often identify as members of informal groups. Anyone can claim membership in a group through tweets, although a person may get negative responses by others who also self-identify if the user’s content seems not to fit the group or if the posts are abusive. This is a form of self-policing of online social groups, similar to the self-policing described by Jenkins (472) in the discussion of *Star Trek* fan fiction writers. Only the user's connections and interests limit a person’s knowledge of other Twitter communities.

Within many, but not all, Twitter groups, people often refer to the group membership as a whole as “family” or “friends.” A tweet may be addressed to: My Reylo family or My hockey friends. When tweets of this type occur, they show the user considers their informal social media group to be part of their community and sometimes a support network of people. Fans can create as well as consume their fandom online (Radford and Block 151). While social media are capitalist media, they are located in the public sphere. Rather than being only passive consumers, users create unique messages and meanings. Users can break through and create meaningful socio-cultural roles as members of a group (Fuchs 77) and give their world meaning by using social media (Fuchs 66).

The Use of Hashtags as a Signal of Support

How did Twitter users react to the death of sixteen people on a highway in Canada?

On the day of the accident, April 7, 2018, the team's official Twitter account www.twitter.com/HumboldtBroncos posted three tweets, each providing additional information. That account posted several tweets in the following days with information about press conferences and crisis services for people in the Humboldt area. On April 11, 2018, the team first used the #HumboldtStrong hashtag. However, people not officially part of the hockey team began using #HumboldtStrong one day after the accident on April 8, 2018.

The use of the hashtag #PlaceNameStrong first reached national prominence after Hurricane Sandy in October 2012. Users frequently used the hashtags #NewJerseyStrong and #NJStrong (Zimmer), and the webpage called NewJerseyStrong.com materialized to circulate news about man-made and natural disaster preparedness, and, starting in the summer of 2013, to promote New Jersey for vacations and residence.

The use of #PlaceNameStrong may have come from two different slogans: from Livestrong, yellow bracelets marketed since 2003 by the Livestrong Foundation, a nonprofit organization whose focus is on supporting people affected by cancer, and from the U.S. Army recruitment slogan of Army Strong, which was created in 2006 and has been used since then in variety of print and video advertisements (Zimmer). Tweets use #PlaceNameStrong in response to natural disasters and human created tragedies, such as #BostonStrong after the Boston Marathon bombings in April 2013 (Dubois; Zimmer). Users tweeted with #BostonStrong over 500,000 times on Twitter in the week after the Boston Marathon Bombing (Dublois). Other uses of #PlaceNameStrong include #OrlandoStrong after the Pulse Nightclub shooting in June 2016 and #PuertoRicoStrong after Hurricane Maria in September 2017.

Methodology

The author collected tweets using Twitter's Premium Search API (Application Programming Interface) and stored them in a MongoDB document database, using a custom Python program based on the publicly available Twitter API (Geduldig). This study used only public tweets and did not retain personally identifiable information as part of the analysis. The author performed searches for the hashtags #PutYourSticksOut and #HumboldtStrong to retrieve tweet data, including the name and description for the sender and information on their location. Since Twitter is an anonymous platform with no verification of identity except for a small number of public figures, the identifying and location information used to categorize tweets

is all self-reported, and the categories studied represent the way users present on Twitter, not necessarily their actual identity. While Twitter accounts that misrepresent the user's identity exist, no evidence exists that they are widespread enough to skew these results.

The study examines #PutYourSticksOut tweets for the period a week after the date of the bus crash, from April 7-13, 2018, resulting in a total of 46,317 tweets from 32,826 distinct users. The author examined user account descriptions with a semi-manual process to divide them into accounts of individuals and accounts of groups or organizations (e.g., teams, schools, media outlets, governmental organizations, nonprofits, online news aggregators, etc.), and then the author processed the individual accounts to identify gender and whether the user identified as a parent or a hockey player.

To identify organizational users, the author examined a sampling of tweets to find words common in organization account descriptions. Then the author compiled a list of accounts containing those words and examined the results manually to remove any individual accounts the search included. The author included accounts for individuals associated with organizations (e.g., reporters, teachers, etc.) in the individual account category as long as the account represented one individual, even if the account was identified as their "official" account.

The author identified gender first by filtering on gender-identifying words in the account description: Female by mother, mom, momma, mama, wife, sister, daughter, aunt, female, girl, chick; Male by father, dad, papa, husband, brother, son, male, uncle, boy, dude. The author further manually filtered results to remove common cases where the matched word did not refer to the user (such as "mother of a son and a daughter" matching "son".) For accounts that could not be identified from their longer description, the author extracted the first name (if any) from the user name and compared against name/gender identifications in the Data.World "Gender by Name" dataset (Howard), compiled from the U.S. Social Security Administration's 1930-2015 database of baby names.

The author also determined parent identity first by filtering on parent-associated words in the account description: mother, mom, momma, mama, father, dad, papa, parent. The author further manually filtered results to remove instances where the user referred to someone else or did not identify as being a parent. Quite a few identified as "dog mom." The author identified hockey players by filtering for descriptions matching "hockey player," "goalie," or "hockey coach," and then removing results not referring to the user, such as "my favorite hockey players

are...”

In addition, the author performed queries to count the percentage of original tweets compared to retweets (reposting) of another user’s tweet, and to count the percentage of original tweets that included a photo. Image analysis to confirm that the photos were of hockey sticks is beyond the scope of this project, but the author examined a sample of thirty randomly selected tweets and found all users had shared photos of hockey-sticks. These choices represent levels of effort: retweeting allows a user to participate and spread the word with relatively little effort; an original tweet requires more investment; actually putting hockey sticks out, taking a photo, and posting it represents full participation in the ritual.

For comparison purposes, the author gathered a somewhat random baseline set of tweets from the same time period within the limits of the software. The Twitter API does not have the capability to collect a true random set of tweets for a particular timeframe, only the results of a search, so the baseline set of tweets consisted of the combined results of searches for the common words “he,” “she,” “are,” and “our.” The author performed these searches for the second half of each day from the target period, April 7-13, 2018, with a maximum of 500 results for each word for each day. This search retrieved 13,219 tweets that the author categorized using the same procedures as for the main data.

The Twitter API results include location information if the user has set a public location in their user account profile. This location must be manually entered; it is not real-time location information from their phone or other device. The user can set any location; it does not have to be a real location. Twitter performs geocoding to attempt to match the chosen location text to a known location, and if successful, populates fields for country, region (state/province), locality, etc. Twitter does not document the specific data source and process used for geocoding.

Results of Analysis of Tweets

The #PutYourSticksOut hashtag search produced 46,317 tweets from 32,826 distinct users. Of these, 44,819 tweets appeared on 31,718 accounts of individuals. Only 1,108 accounts were organizations. The baseline set searches produced 13,219 tweets from 12,840 users and 12,972 tweets from 12,606 accounts of individuals. To explore what the data can tell us about the characteristics of those who participated in #PutYourSticksOut, we compared the percentage of individual users between the baseline set and the #PutYourSticksOut tweets (see Table 1).

Category	General Twitter Usage	#PutYourSticksOut
Gender		
Female	27.9%	37.3%
Male	25.4%	41.9%
Undetermined	46.7%	20.8%
Parents	1.7%	14.0%
Players	0.03%	1.0%

Table 1. Categories of Users of #PutYourSticksOut Hashtag

The clearest difference in the #PutYourSticksOut tweeters is the percentage who identify as parents, 14% vs. 1.7% in the baseline set. This suggests that being a parent was a factor in motivating users to participate in this newly created online ritual. Compared to the baseline set, the #PutYourSticksOut tweeters also included many people who were themselves hockey players, but the overall numbers are small enough that it is unlikely this alone is a significant motivating factor.

For the level of participation in #PutYourSticksOut, 29% of tweets were original, and 71% were retweets. Of the tweets, 22% (9,866) were original tweets with photos. As a point of reference for typical Twitter behavior outside of an organized activity like this, only 3.3% of tweets in the baseline set were original tweets with photos. The author observed no trolling (negative tweets) and only ten “spam” tweets.

Users from 104 different countries tweeted the #PutYourSticksOut hashtag. This number includes personal as well as organizational accounts. While Canada had the largest number with 17,606 tweets, the U.S. was second with 6,730 tweets. After North America, the number of tweets decreased. Other countries which produced large numbers of tweets with the hashtag in descending order of volume of tweets were the United Kingdom (493), France (58), Germany (50), Australia (36), Djibouti (34), Mexico (30), Papua New Guinea (28), and the Central African Republic and Finland (23 each). People in countries in Africa, Asia, Central and South America also tweeted with the hashtag. However, the country of location could not be identified in 19,478 of the tweets, which is slightly under half of the total number of tweets (see Table 2).

Country Location	Tweet Count
Unidentified	19,478
Canada	17,606
United States	6,730
United Kingdom	493
France	58
Germany	50
Djibouti	34
Mexico	30
Papua New Guinea	28
Central African Republic, Finland	23 (each)
Curacao	20
Ireland, Italy, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines	16 (each)
Brazil, North Korea, Switzerland	15 (each)
Spain	14
Belgium, South Africa	13 (each)
Cote d'Ivoire, Nigeria, Norway, Philippines, Sweden	12 (each)
Bolivia, Georgia, Japan	10 (each)
Bangladesh, Cape Verde, Indonesia, Sri Lanka, United Arab Emirates	9
India, Mauritius, Morocco, Netherlands, Serbia, Solomon Islands	8
Andorra, Kenya, Montenegro, New Zealand	7 (each)
Armenia, Hungary, Jamaica, Russia, Singapore	6
Burkina Faso, China, Czech Republic, Egypt, Macedonia, Pakistan, Ukraine	5 (each)
Colombia, Iceland, Jordan, Qatar, Samoa, Uruguay, Zimbabwe	4 (each)
Congo, Hong Kong, Latvia, Luxembourg, San Marino, Thailand	3 (each)
Belarus, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Chile, Dominican Republic, Lebanon, Malawi, Malaysia, Mongolia, Peru, Sant Martin, Venezuela	2 (each)
Argentina, Belize, Cayman Islands, Costa Rica, Croatia, Denmark, Gabon, Ghana, Greece, South Korea, Lao, Lithuania, Madagascar, Malta, Nicaragua, Oman, Poland, Portugal, Rwanda, Saudi Arabia, Somalia, Timor-Leste, Turkey, Yemen	1 (each)

Table 2. Countries of Origin for #PutYourSticksOut Tweets

Newly Created Hashtags and Images as Performance of Grief

The recent online hashtag using the formula #PlaceNameStrong was used soon after the accident; however, two days after the accident, many people who had a connection to hockey but not specifically to that team, created their own new expression of grief, #PutYourSticksOut. Although he did not create this expression of grief, Canadian regional sports broadcaster Brian Munz urged his followers to leave their hockey sticks out on porches, at front and back doors, gaining inspiration from a high school friend who did the same. Munz said in a tweet (Figure 1): “Got this text from a friend who I went to high school with in [sic] Humboldt.” The tweet also showed a photograph of a hockey stick leaning on the porch and the message reads: “Leaving it out on the porch tonight. The boys might need it...wherever they are” (Mezzofiore) (Figure 2).



Figure 1. Brian Munz’s First Tweet on April 8, 2018 with Photo of Hockey Stick.



Leaving it out on the porch tonight. The boys might need it.....wherever they are.

Figure 2. Photo and Text Message Included in Brian Munz's Tweet.

Within two days, thousands of people from 104 countries tweeted the user created hashtag #PutYourSticksOut (see Figure 3) These photos and the hashtag were not commercial and not connected to any fundraiser or monetary compensation. Many of the messages discussed how the tweeters felt the deaths deeply. These public expressions emerged from the fictive kinship of hockey fans. People used the hashtag to demonstrate they felt part of a larger "hockey family" on social media, no matter what team they root for.



Figure 3. Location of Tweets Used #PutYourSticksOut Week After The accident.¹

Why Was the Reaction on Twitter so Vast?

Why was there such a big reaction? Several factors may have made this reaction widely felt. Hockey playoffs which started that week in all the junior, minor, and major leagues resulted in an overall heightened awareness of hockey in general. The major league hockey playoffs, which lead to the Stanley Cup series, are a mega sports event. Viewership of the Stanley Cup games on television, not counting streaming services, can reach 4.8 million people, depending on the teams playing (Paulsen “Stanley”). While the number of people who watch professional hockey playoffs is smaller than the number of people who watch the Olympics (several hundred million) or the U.S. football Super Bowl (approximately 111 million

¹ Source: Map generated from Twitter geocoded user location data using Google Maps “My Maps” feature.

viewers) (Paulsen “Superbowl”), a large number of people consider themselves part of the hockey fandom across multiple countries and are aware of hockey related news.

Something which may have caused the Humboldt accident to resonate is that most of those killed in the accident were teenagers or young adults. Deaths with a high symbolic value to a community often receive attention in the media. The unexpected deaths of people who are not yet adults can symbolize the future of society, making such deaths more likely to be ritualized (Pantti and Sumiala 24). As Candi Cann argues in “Virtual Afterlife,” the death of children or young adults is more likely to be expressed through car decals or t-shirts (89, 95), something which can be seen by anyone exposed to the person visibly displaying those objects on their person or on their car or truck. While the hockey sticks put outside would not be easily visible beyond a person’s neighborhood, now with social media, it is possible to perform grief to a large number of people.

A sensational manner of death or death in a disaster can cause someone to become known after death (Radford and Block 141). That members of the Broncos team died in a random and tragic traffic accident may have contributed to the wide reaction to the deaths because people cannot control tragic accidents. Additionally, many of those who tweeted about the Humboldt accident felt a sense of sameness with those who died. People who are parents of hockey players could possibly imagine themselves in the same situation with a child who plays on an organized team. Of those who posted #PutYourSticksOut, 4,301 users identified as parents in their user description, and they created a total of 6,429 tweets. Another way that people may have identified with the Humboldt team is as a hockey player. There were 511 tweets from 345 people who self-identified as hockey players.

Why did so many people perform this newly created mourning ritual? A reason to share grief online for someone in a parasocial network may be a sense of identification (Klastrup 6). One possible significant component is that the public expression of grief could express a desire to create or maintain their membership in the “hockey family.” Being online lets people actively interact with others who have the same interests even if they are not in the same location (Radford and Block 142). Identifying as a fan of a specific sport or team helps mark a person’s place within society. No matter the reported or unreported connection to hockey, many of those who tweeted about the Humboldt accident felt a sense of sameness with those who died.

Constraints on Expressions of Grief in Culture Today

As Cann observes in *Virtual Afterlife*, in the U.S. grief is not only unwanted in the workplace, it is unwanted in society (10). Most employers only offer three days of bereavement leave for a family member, and that is usually only for benefitted employees. Cann hypothesizes that public memorializations have increased because death is disappearing from our lives (xii). We are displaced from death, compared to people in the time before the late industrial revolution and the creation of the modern funeral industry during the U.S. Civil War (Cann 2). This is very different than in the nineteenth century, when it was acceptable to perform rituals related to grief for months or years, through clothing, decoration, and other objects (Carroll and Landry 342). Prior to social media, formal obituaries in newspapers constituted the preferred way of memorializing, making the obituary section one of the most lucrative sections of the newspaper and one of the most widely read (Carroll and Landry 341). Formal obituary notices notified a wide number of people in a person's social network and at the same time enabled a form of remembering the deceased (Carroll and Landry 342). In North America, the cultural expectation is that people should resume a "normal" way of life after a short period of mourning (Carroll and Landry 342).

Grief is so compartmentalized that it is no longer considered part of everyday life (Cann 10), and there is little opportunity provided in society for shared mourning (Cann 12). This in turn creates a need to express and perform grief in ways recognized by members of communities. Social media may provide a safe space to perform grief, especially grief which might be discouraged in other contexts (Klastrup 4). Another reason for so many online messages expressing grief in general is that it may be easier for some to practice grief online than offline in daily life (Christensen and Gotved 4). These issues may then contribute to the unique, grassroots public expressions of grief, such as #PutYourSticksOut and the connected images.

An increase in popularity of "grassroots" memorials and ways in which people remembered those who died began in the late twentieth century in the United States. These memorials and discourses help create meaning from death and also seek recognition for those grieving (Cann xi). While personal examples of memorials can include t-shirts or vehicle decals (Cann 89, 95), widely used social grassroots memorials such as roadside crosses (14, 22-3, 117) at the site of car accidents and ghost bikes at places where bicyclists have died also memorialize deaths (31-36).

Another example is The Names Project, also known as the AIDS quilt, in which people or organizations created quilt squares, which were added to other larger units to be displayed in public locations (The Names Project Foundation). In addition to memorializing a person, these performances of grief strive to make meaning out of death by promoting awareness, acceptance, and activism in the case of The Names Project, or bringing attention to dangerous locations to try to prevent deaths in similar circumstances in the case of roadside crosses and ghost bikes.

Social media provides another unique way to perform grief. These online activities can take the place of or supplement behaviors performed at cemeteries, funeral homes, and in religious services (Carroll and Landry 341). One proposed reason for online mourning rituals is that social media helps meet the psychological needs of those who are mourning (Carroll and Landry 341). Social media allows people to participate in mourning over a longer period of time (Sanderson and Cheong 329).

Discussion

New grief traditions form and become part of the public sphere (Cann 12). Online, these new grief traditions include social network memorials. The mass popular reaction on Twitter to the hockey team accident from people not directly affected by it is the type of reaction commonly seen online for famous people, like the musician Prince in April 2016, or for larger scale tragedies such as after the mass shooting in Las Vegas in October 2017. The performance of grief on social media such as Twitter shows a need for memorialization that goes beyond traditional mourning. Many want to mourn in the public sphere and be recognized as a member of the group allowed to mourn (Cann 126). Cann hypothesizes (128) that people participate in online mourning specifically because ways to mourn individually are not easily available due to lack of time off or are exclusive and leave some people out. Mourning on social media is both a private and public conversation (Cann 129). While we cannot ignore the fact that Twitter and other social media are commercial enterprises whose focus is data and advertising (Fuchs 80), even so they allow people to come together to form their own communities or calls to specific action, such as for Black Lives Matter. While it is capitalist media, social media enables expressions of agency and belonging in the online and larger hockey community, even if individuals are not fully aware that this may be a factor. This is in opposition to Habermas's idea that capitalist media messages are only created from the top

(Habermas 55), such as by the owners of the media platform and of the hockey leagues. Instead, this mass mourning showed unique and meaningful messages can be created from below by users of the media platform. Participating in online mourning may be a way for people to express their agency in a culture which is quick to dismiss the grieving process.

While formal mourning rituals can be performed by religious or governmental institutions, individuals can perform spontaneous mourning rituals, which Mervi Pantti and Johanna Sumiala call “civic rituals” (127). The posting of images created by individuals of hockey sticks left outside of doors or buildings with the #PutYourSticksOut hashtag is an example of a civic ritual. Media can share these messages, which allows more people to participate as well as feel a sense of community and compassion (Pantti and Sumiala 127). By showing these individually driven civic rituals, social media allows others a way to perform grief (Pantti and Sumiala 129). At the same time, the media displays of mourning rituals bring people together with a sense of belonging (Pantti and Sumiala 133). Avenues to explore in the future research on the performance of grief on social media include the unpaid social labor of Twitter users; how people use grief for advocacy; and analysis of images used in mourning rituals on social media.

The user created content of #PutYourSticksOut shows it is possible to break through commercial platforms to create meaning and take part in a ritual of mourning in a non-commercial way. This is important in cultures where people have a very limited amount of time to perform grief as individuals. But when the accepted opportunities to perform mourning rituals for those in one’s immediate personal network (family, close friends) is culturally limited, it is acceptable to perform grief for parasocial connections on social media. By their reactions on Twitter, users created meaning for themselves and their online community.

During the April 2019 hockey playoffs at the junior, minor, and major leagues, teams actively commemorated the one-year anniversary of the Humboldt hockey team accident by creating and showing #PutYourSticksOut videos, photos, and social media posts. Hundreds of individuals also used the #HumboldtStrong hashtag as well as #PutYourSticksOut during the anniversary of the accident, although not in as large numbers as they did in 2018. The remembrances of the Humboldt accident one year later on social media are examples of “public memory,” a shared memory that relates to the audiences of the message’s common interests (Butterworth 205). Public memory is likely to be invoked in times of shared crisis (Butterworth 205), such as the sudden unexpected deaths of teens and

young adults in the accident. Public memory can be used to advance ideas of good public behaviors (Butterworth 205-206). Organizations related to hockey (teams, leagues), which could be seen as promoting hockey as much as remembering people killed in an accident, published the majority of the messages one year later. People in Canada, particularly Saskatchewan province, posted the majority of the personal messages one year later that used the #PutYourSticksOut and #HumboldtStrong hashtags. Based on tweets and official webpages at both the one and two year anniversaries of the accident, the event had not been monetized by the Humboldt Broncos or the junior league. While NHL teams performed public displays of #PutYourSticksOut at the one-year anniversary of the accident with photos and social media messages (see Figure 4), they did not observe the second anniversary of the event.

Examining mourning and grieving performances online in social media is a developing area of research. Social media may provide a safe space to perform grief, especially grief which might be discouraged in other contexts (Klastrup 4). Because of social media, the relationship between rituals and media has changed. It is possible to participate in virtual mourning and the creation of new rituals (Pantti and Sumiala 120) across economic, geographic, and social distances (Hjorth and Kim 554). Social media allows people to organize and create messages in new ways in addition to participating in parasocial networks that have meaning for the individual. Tweeting #PutYourSticksOut became a way to symbolically show membership in a community, in this case, hockey fandom. While social media may have negative aspects, the creation of #PutYourSticksOut offers a counter-narrative that demonstrates positive aspects of social media.



Figure 4. #PutYourSticksOut Image, Social Media Post During Washington Capitals (NHL) April 6, 2019 Game

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The Misrepresentation of Representation: In Defense of Regional Storytelling in Netflix's *The New Legends of Monkey*

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The 2018 Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC Me), Television New Zealand (TVNZ), and Netflix's coproduction of the original series *The New Legends of Monkey* (2018) is a fantasy-based television series that reimagines *Monkey* (1978), a British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) dubbing of the Japanese television series *Saiyūki* 西遊記. *Saiyūki* was an adaptation of the historically significant Chinese novel *Xiyou ji* (Wu Cheng'en, 1592), known in English as *Journey to the West*. *Monkey* gained a cult following in Australia, New Zealand, and other international markets leading to the 2018 reboot *The New Legends of Monkey*, which, unlike *Monkey*, was released in the United States (Flanagan). This new iteration prompted cultural confusion from those largely unfamiliar with the preceding series, the contexts in which it was introduced to English-speaking viewers in Australia and New Zealand, or the cult response that resulted. This article presents the recent series with this background in mind and within the context of locally produced television in New Zealand, where *The New Legends of Monkey* was filmed. Analysis of online discussions exposes the interpretive differences arising from this lack of context regarding the show's connection to *Monkey* and highlights the problems viewers face interpreting stories outside of their local production markets—an increasingly relevant problem as more regional productions become accessible to a wide range of audiences through transnational streaming services like Netflix.

The 2018 *The New Legends of Monkey* television adaptation, produced by and for the Australian and New Zealand markets and co-produced for international

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streaming by Netflix, pays homage to and capitalizes on nostalgia for the 1970s BBC production of *Monkey* in these countries (Hausler; Nguyen “The New”; Ma). Rather than an adaptation of the Chinese novel, *The New Legends of Monkey* adapted the BBC television series *Monkey* from four decades prior, replicating for the Australian and New Zealand audience a transcultural product whose complexity evades easy explanation (Hausler). The 2018 Netflix release of *The New Legends of Monkey* introduced the series to audiences more familiar with other adaptations of the Chinese story *Journey to the West*, which led to controversy regarding *The New Legends of Monkey* and claims of “whitewashing” as the series appeared to ignore the Chinese roots of the tale despite the production incorporating a more gender and ethnically diverse cast (Hausler). This paper analyzes online articles and discussions about the two series, arguing that many of the accusations of whitewashing are situated within the dominant American discourse of racial politics and fail to recognize the historical intercultural and intertextual context of the production that was inspired by *Monkey* that itself has little to identify it as Chinese.

Monkey is best understood as the television adaptation that introduced the Chinese tale to British, New Zealand, and Australian audiences as fantasy productions rather than cultural artifacts. Without the religious, cultural, and historical knowledge that contextualizes the importance of *Journey to the West* to the cultural heritage of China (Geoghegan), *Monkey* was simply an amusing and entertaining series as foreign and abstract as other Japanese productions, such as *Godzilla* (1954). As an adaptive work, *The New Legends of Monkey* combines a distinctly Australian/New Zealand television production style with the story of the Monkey King that all but ignores the historical legacy of *Journey to the West* in favor of what the producers claim to be the universal themes. Michael Carrington, head of Children’s television at ABC Television, a co-producer of *The New Legends of Monkey*, highlighted the universality of the story that “continues to captivate global audiences.” He said, “We can’t wait for fans to see this new series that features the heroes they love, and we are just as excited to introduce this re-imagined magical and exciting world to a whole new generation of viewers” (Mitchell). Many of the online comments seemed confused about the New Zealand filmed series as well as the realities, constraints, and processes of local television production in an increasingly transnational media environment that has evolved in the twenty-first century as television has transitioned to include streaming services such as Netflix.

Literature Review

In examining the articulation between cult television and transnational discourse, this article contributes to an as yet relatively small body of research in this narrow subfield of cult media and transnational studies (see Tierney; Smith *Hollywood Meme*). While this article argues that *The New Legends of Monkey* is in fact a direct adaptation of another television work, namely the BBC's *Monkey*, rather than a literary source, the series is nonetheless an indirect adaptation of *Journey to the West* (Wu Cheng'en), a classical Chinese text from the Ming Dynasty that has attracted a substantial body of scholarship in both Chinese and European languages (see Hsia; Plaks; Yu, "To Literary Examples, "Religion"). This article contributes to the currently under-examined area of television adaptations of that enduring text.

Contemporary scholarly attention has focused primarily on literary adaptations of the novel rather than televisual. Cross-cultural reproduction is a staple of production media in general (Nicholas), with *Journey to the West* enjoying a large selection of adaptations, including multiple feature-length movies, television series, stage productions, video games, and print media. Notable examples include the China Central Television's (CCTV) 西遊記 *Journey to the West* (2000) and the feature film *The Forbidden Kingdom* (2008), starring Jet Li and Jackie Chan. Works in print include Aaron Shepherd's 2005 novel *Monkey: A Superhero Tale of China*, *Monkey King* by Patricia Chao (1998), the graphic novel *American Born Chinese* by Gene Luen Yang (2006), and the immensely popular Japanese *Dragon Ball* franchise (Burke; Mínguez-López). This recent Western scholarship addressing adaptations of *Journey to the West* and those specifically engaging with the character of the Monkey King have usually been completed in an American context, with Radovan Škultéty going so far as to claim the Monkey King mythology to be "a sovereign property of American Literature" (Škultéty 116). Likewise, Stephen Pearson argued that the "use of the Monkey tradition by American authors and in distinctly American contexts has the effect of naturalizing Monkey as an American myth" (Pearson 358). As contextualized by this literature, the 2018 series *The New Legends of Monkey* functions in a similar way in the Australian and New Zealand context by taking the story elements introduced in *Monkey* and recasting and culturally transplanting them in ways that make the Monkey King myths recognizable as Australian, British, and New Zealand rather

than Chinese artifacts. In this way, *Monkey* has entered the hearts and minds of a generation of New Zealand and Australian children through the late 1970s television adaptation *Monkey* that led to the 2018 nostalgic reboot *The New Legends of Monkey*, a trajectory largely disconnected from the original *Journey to the West* text.

Paralleling research on *Journey to the West* adaptations, much of the existing research on Netflix comes from an American perspective deeply rooted in discourses surrounding television and its relationship to the cultural and political history of the United States (Jenner). This academic and social media trend largely ignores, and in some cases is blind to, the fact that Netflix has integrated itself into local mediascapes around the globe, with subscribers in 190 countries (Smith “Netflix Statistics”). Netflix works within the existing media structures in each country, facilitating partnerships with local producers (such as the ABC and Television NZ) to produce content that is both widely appealing and locally relevant, particularly in these smaller markets. The approach has been hugely successful with audiences accessing a range of internationally produced content under Netflix originals (Jenner).

In addition to adaptation and new media studies, the reboot of the cult series *Monkey* necessitates recognition of fan and cult television studies. Cult television becomes a part of the experiences of the audience, producing additional meaning and knowledge (Le Guern 3). Matt Hills argues that it is necessary to consider cult status in relation to both fan and commercial distribution (“Transnational” 80). Ernest Mathijs and Jamie Sexton claim that cult cinema is transnational (Mathijs and Sexton 120). The willingness of audiences to embrace these shows is explained by Milly Buonanno, who theorizes that audiences bring their own national experience to the texts (89), a concept that echoes Edward Hall’s suggestion that cultures interpret others through their own cultural understandings (63). Hall’s theory likewise explains the naturalization of *Journey to the West* both into American society and into British and Oceanic societies. The rise of Netflix is accompanied by an increase in online social media, which has provided a space for transnational dialogue, bringing together fans otherwise separated by vast geographical distances and allowing transnational audiences to connect with one another (see Jenkins; Jenner; Smith *Hollywood Meme*). The increased prevalence of user-mediated content has allowed widespread dissemination of independent reviews and opinions that make moral and political claims on popular entertainment, included in the examples analyzed here, yet as Hall notes, these

interpretations are always mediated through the cultural assumptions of the individual.

Methodology and Data

This study draws on articles and the comments section of six separate media articles and one online focusing on the television series *The New Legends of Monkey*. *The New Legends of Monkey* was chosen due to the intertextual and intercultural nature of the adaptation and its international production collaboration as well as the attention it has garnered surrounding accusations of “whitewashing.” The article forms a case study examining interpretations made by the general viewing population expressed through their comments in relation to representation in the series, particularly focused on interpretation of the series as an adaptive work and trans-Tasman production based on the BBC’s 1978 series *Monkey* (Ma “ABC”). The articles used in this piece were those found on the first few pages of search results for the program’s name. This approach was taken to ensure that the articles selected were those that the average person would likely find when conducting a similar search about the series.

The articles used are: “‘It Has a Lot of Diverse Ethnicities:’ Producers of *New Legends Of Monkey* Hit Back at Claims of ‘Whitewashing’ Cast for Reboot of Cult TV Show” by Stephen Bisset for *Daily Mail Australia*; “Netflix Remade a Classic Chinese Story with a Non-Chinese Cast” by Christopher Luu on *Refinery29*; “Why the *Legend of Monkey* Is Not Racist or ‘Whitewashing’,” an opinion piece by Jack Van Beynen on the New Zealand news site *Stuff.co.nz*; “The *New Legends of Monkey* Writer Responds to ‘Whitewashing’ Accusations” by Wenlei Ma on the Australian news website *News.com.au*; Diana Lodderhose’s article on *Yahoo* entitled “See-Saw and Jump Team on ‘Legends Of the Monkey’ for Australia, Netflix”; Robert Mitchell’s “See-Saw’s ‘Legend of the Monkey’ Swings Into Production for ABC Australia, Netflix”; and finally, a forum thread on the popular online site *reddit* entitled “Anybody watching *The New Legends of Monkey*” (Spartacats, 2018).

The researcher used close reading techniques to uncover viewer engagement with the series and knowledge of the connection between the program and its predecessor *Monkey* and New Zealand where production took place. The researcher examined and coded a total of 188 comments to expose the various ways

commenters engaged with themes of representation arising from the online articles focusing on “whitewashing.”

Results

The media articles examined here uncovered misunderstandings and presumptions about the series in the following areas: the relationship between the series and its predecessor *Monkey* and the original Chinese novel *Journey to the West*; a lack of knowledge about the region of production, particularly the distinction between the two separate countries of Australia and New Zealand involved in the project, along with their vastly different demographic, televisual, and colonial histories; and a hyperfocus on issues of representation and identity politics that privileges an American racial and televisual history and largely fails to address the unique heritages of Australia and New Zealand.

In the international context, much of the online discussion that engaged the theme of whitewashing appeared to come from American audiences. The online conversations revealed significant confusion surrounding the relationship between the new series and the BBC series *Monkey*, with many users unaware of *Monkey* and assuming the show was a direct adaptation of the *Journey to the West* novel. While many New Zealand and Australian viewers will recognize this ancient tale only through the BBC’s 1978 series *Monkey*, which enjoyed repeat screenings on national broadcast television between 1981 and the late 1990s, with little to no knowledge of the Chinese origin of the tale, most commentators did not recognize this point. As Hanh Nguyen notes, “Mainstream American audiences may not be quite as familiar with the original tale as viewers in Australia, whence this new adaptation hails” (“Netflix’s”), an error made here by the article writer rather than the commenters. The misattributed connection to the earlier text was considered a slight against Asians and suggests that audiences thought the series was an attempt to deliberately circumvent the Chinese-ness of the story.

The writer did not acknowledge that *The New Legends of Monkey* is based on a British production that used Japanese and not Chinese televisual material. As one commenter noted, “Asians get screwed on this stuff all the time” (Commenter 1). “Fuck no. This show took a legend that is incorporated into literally every Asian culture and did not include any Asians in it” (Commenter 2). Ironically, comments such as these highlight a cultural blindness and hypocrisy of some of the commenters, who themselves conflate Chinese culture with Asian identity, an

allegation leveled against the series because of the universal fantasy approach taken by the producers. Nguyen, who was remarking only on the series and not the response to it, including his own, stated that this approach is unfortunate because it “maintains the misconception that not only are all Asian cultures the same, but they’re also random and indistinct” (“The New Legends of Monkey”). “The New Legends of Monkey” has instead created an entirely separate fantasy realm. It’s one that’s vaguely orientalist though, from the look of its wushu-esque martial arts and armor design to its religious trappings and incomprehensible writing” (“The New Legends of Monkey”). Nguyen, in this way fetishizes and appropriates a European focused but inauthentic Asian aesthetic in favor of a fictionalized fantasy universe that is said to be “exploring the universal themes of identity, family and destiny” (See-Saw-Films). “Thus, it’s dressed itself up in Chinese inspiration but does so without having to actually acknowledge the Chinese” (Nguyen “Netflix’s”), which reflects a lack of awareness of the series’ obvious connection to *Monkey*, in which Asian cultural representation was garbled through the Japanese televisual product that was over dubbed by the BBC.

The problematic assumption that the series is an adaptation of *Journey to the West* while failing to account for the acknowledged connection to *Monkey* helps solidify a justification for the accusations of whitewashing that surrounded the series. Notably, two of the whitewashing articles followed previous media releases by Nguyen (“Netflix’s”) and Ma (“ABC”) about the production of the series that highlighted the nostalgia of Australian and New Zealand fans for *Monkey*, as well as revealed the cast without revealing its ethnic makeup. Rather than a deliberate attempt at whitewashing, the apparent failure of *The New Legends of Monkey* is that it does not directly mimic the historic source of the story by incorporating ethnically Chinese actors, written language, or visual clues. However, the point largely overlooked by the commentators in deference to a hyperfocus on racial politics is that, as already noted, these cues were already absent from the show’s source material, *Monkey*. The introduction of Chinese elements into a television program produced and acted in New Zealand would rightfully leave the series open to similarly racially charged allegations of exoticizing cultural difference by defining these cultures through a Western lens of Orientalism (Hills “Ringling”; Martin; Said). In this case, the term whitewashing has been substituted for the more nuanced issue of cultural recognition, specifically, Chinese representation, or perhaps simply Asian representation, yet by using the term whitewashing, these discussions

have introduced the concept of racial whiteness to an artifact that, in fact, has very little whiteness at all.

Craig Irvine, one of the series' writers and directors, defends the series by pointing out that "The cast is really diverse—more than half of them are non-European" (Bissett) and are instead from ethnic groups indigenous to the Pacific region. According to the perspective of those making the program, the mixed ethnicity cast is not heavily white and represents a mixed race cast of New Zealand and Australian actors. Irvine goes on to add, "When you see this, you'll see the world is incredibly varied" (Bissett). Irvine's remarks speak to the racial diversity concerns of New Zealand, ensuring the presence of indigenous actors, specifically those of Maori and Pacific Island descent, and leaves out of the discussion any connection to the story of *Journey to the West* directly addressing the concerns of liberal racial politics that are in this case in conflict with the equally valid representational concerns of the region of production.

The New Legends of Monkey portrays a distinct kind of New Zealand mainstream diversity. As one poster (Spartacats) wrote on the *reddit* thread observed, "This show is typical for Australian/New Zealand fantasy productions, a diverse cast that usually has quite a few Tongan and Maori actors" (Commenter 3). Claims of whitewashing in relation to the lack of Chinese actors in *The New Legends of Monkey* fail to take into account the demographic realities of the region. As an example, one poster commented, "I don't know why the casting is the way it is. I am sure there are plenty of Chinese actors in Australia and New Zealand. It is not like the series is full of stars or anything" (Commenter 4). New Zealand, also known as Aotearoa in the Maori language, the location for filming of *The New Legends of Monkey*, is a relatively small island nation in the South Pacific with a population of just under 4.8 million people (World Population Review). Aotearoa/New Zealand has a bicultural heritage of Maori and European. Only 163 thousand (Stats NZ) Chinese were recorded in the last New Zealand census, many of whom would fall outside the age range to make them viable actors for this series, without taking into regard that most of them are likely not actors. This relatively small number can be compared to the comparatively staggering Asian American population in the United States, making representation of Chinese and Asian actors a less achievable goal than in the United States. Given the demographic makeup, proportionally the series is in fact heavily Asian, if not specifically Chinese, a distinction argued earlier that the commentators could not themselves decide upon.

The absence of Asian actors on Australian and New Zealand screens is a problem under scrutiny in the region. Olivia Khoo argued that Asian identities were being sacrificed in favor of a homogenizing Australian identity. Benjamin Law has also written about the absence of Asian representation on Australian television, noting that a 2016 study by Screen Australia revealed that Australian television suffered from a lack of diversity across all sectors, with 80% of characters being able-bodied, heterosexual, and white. Similarly, Sonia Gray pointed out that New Zealand primetime is also lacking Asian representation: “If you’re a male of North, South, East, West, in fact any Asian descent, your only TV appearance is likely to [be] on *Border Patrol*. And the representation of Asian females is only slightly better.” New Zealand has increased television representation of Maori and Pacific Islanders since the 1990s, yet Asian New Zealanders still remain largely out of view. Recognizing that representative inclusion of Asian identities in Australian and New Zealand film and television is still developing, it should be acknowledged that this series goes far in increasing Asian representation on the small screen.

The unfortunate product of the online discussion highlighting the supposed whitewashing in the series was that many of the commenters minimized or failed to recognize the Asian actors who were present in the production. One *reddit* user broke it down like this, “And most everyone is white/New Zealander. Just from the first episode Luciane Buchanan as Tripitaka, Tongan Heritage. Josh Thomson as Pigsy, Tongan Heritage. Rachel House as Monica, Maori heritage. Then a bunch of throwaway secondary characters, mostly played by folks of various Asian heritage” (Commenter 3). In addition to referring to the Asian actors as “throwaway characters,” this particular breakdown of only the first episode is problematic in a number of ways: firstly, the poster conflates the distinct racial dynamics of Aotearoa/New Zealand, ignoring the diversity of race and heritage and the legacy of colonialism even while articulating the different races of the primary characters; secondly, the post is notable because of the absence of the title character Monkey, played by Chai Hansen of Thai-Australian descent. The variety of minor roles deemed as “throwaway characters” were filled with Asian actors, including Chinese New Zealand actor Tian Tan, “often regarded as something of a role model for Asian diaspora youth” (Tseng), who was overlooked by commentators on both sides of the argument. Neither Tan nor any other of the actors beside Hansen, including Daniel Sing, JJ Fong, and Min Kim, were identified by name in a single post examined in this piece, a reality that highlights the invisibility of the Asian cast even to those championing for their inclusion. The apparently culturally blind

approach of casting a diverse set of actors inferred by Irvine's statement about the series' diversity misses the point of specific Chinese representation, but as Irvine rightfully highlighted, the series does well in presenting diversity that includes a proportional amount of Asian New Zealand and Australians.

In addition to confusion about the origins of the series and the demographic makeup, online discussions also evidenced a high level of confusion about the film and television contributions of each of the nations involved in the production. It was not uncommon to see posts that neglected to note New Zealand's involvement with the production at all despite the New Zealand dominant cast and that the filming took place in that country. Comments on the *reddit* thread included, "Good on Australia for making this!" (Commenter 5), and "It's Australian. It's by an Australian TV Network and Netflix has the rest of the world rights" (Commenter 6). Another poster also confused Australia and New Zealand when they used *Hercules the Legendary Journeys* (1998) as an example: "The style reminded me of Hercules. Then I saw it was an Aussie series so that explained a little" (Commenter 7). *Hercules the Legendary Journeys* (1998) was in fact an American production filmed in New Zealand starring American and New Zealand actors. The conflating of the two countries of Australia and New Zealand is yet another symptom of cultural blindness that is problematic by failing to recognize the cultures doing the adapting, this case, primarily New Zealand. Almost all the articles examined here neglected to acknowledge the nuances of the transcultural nature of the text. In this sense, it is narrow-sighted to criticize the lack of Chinese actors in a television series that is so complexly transcultural while ignoring for example, the Japanese origin of the source television series *Monkey*; the contributions of the Asian actors in the series or New Zealand's role in the latest production.

Conclusion

It is easy to draw on the ever-expanding literature on the experience of Asian Americans and Asian underrepresentation in Hollywood, American television, and television programming (Hamamoto; Ryan; Wang Yuen) as a way to make sense of cultural representation in *The New Legends of Monkey*, an approach I have deliberately not taken here. In terms of adaptation, audiences have privileged *Journey to the West*, also an adaptation, as the sole source of inspiration for adaptation, ignoring generations of storytelling practices reimagining narratives

both in China and globally. By focusing too heavily on rigid concepts of cultural authenticity to original sources, we do a disservice to the ongoing cultural interactions, as well as the unique heritages, histories, and postcolonial and intercultural relations, of Asians in Australia and New Zealand that undermine the distinctiveness of race and cultural relations in these countries. Focusing on American-centric racial politics fails to recognize the unique realities of underrepresentation, Sinophobia, and anti-Asian sentiment past and present in Australia and New Zealand as well as in other regions of the globe. Likewise, the two countries of Australia and Aotearoa/New Zealand are separate and distinct and cannot be easily compacted into each; like the distinct Asian cultures, these countries have their own unique social, political, historical, and intercultural heritages that warrant recognition. In terms of Asian representation on the small screen, the most egregious issue uncovered in these discussions was the failure to recognize the valuable contributions of the Asian actors who participated in the series and the esteem they hold for Asian Australians and Asian New Zealanders, particularly youth.

As the world becomes increasingly connected through consumer media, while at the same time remaining regionally distinct and different, new issues arise around these multidimensional understandings. Even in the face of increased pressure for diversity and particularly minority representation in film and television, hegemonic positions based on population density and consumer power can influence the discussion in ways that may advance one representational agenda or position while ignoring others, including those they seek to champion. Despite the backlash and pressure for better representation of culture and diversity on screen, the endeavor of increasing representation is still in its infancy, and a consensus on how to reconcile these complex issues is far from resolved. The international release of this series on Netflix elicited a response to this failure but also fell short through its own failure to recognize the valuable contributions of the Asian actors in this series. Commenters also were ignorant to the cultural histories and geographic realities of New Zealand and its uniqueness as a country separate from Australia, often conflating the two or ignoring New Zealand as an entity at all. If public discourse has the power to persuade producers to make this change, it must first recognize and acknowledge the need and desire for this broad representation, which includes diverse communities that differ from those represented in the hegemonic American portrayals.

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The Paranoia of Popular Culture: Lacanian Psychoanalysis and Music Videos

JACOB W. GLAZIER

The coyote is the most aware creature there is [...] because he is completely paranoid. Charles Manson, circa 1969 (as cited in Hansen 413)

While not directly related to this essay, the coyote, in the above quotation, represents a powerful figure, indeed one that is not just literary, which can be used to demonstrate what it means to know in a “post-truth” culture. In fact, the relationship the coyote has to knowledge may offer us, upfront, an almost complete map of the relationship between paranoia and knowledge. With specific regard to what follows, as I hope to show, the epistemological logic of the conspiracy theory discourse comes as close as one can get to the paranoid nature of knowledge itself. This final point, what is the nature of knowledge, is relative to one’s own biases, philosophies, or personal stakes. Yet is not this very questioning the source of all epistemic claims?

In agreement here is Jacques Lacan, who is arguably the most famous psychoanalyst in history. Lacan perfected the Freudian practice of treatment over the long course of his seminars, referred to in French as the *Séminaire*, which he delivered from the years 1953 to 1980, right before his death. Perhaps, however, it was his first seminal scholarly work, a doctoral dissertation on the case of Aimée in 1932, that laid the foundation for what has come to be known in literary, academic, and even popular culture circles as Lacanian theory.

In its properly conceptual treatment, paranoia is considered by psychoanalysis and Lacan himself to be a diagnosis, a category or label, that the analyst assigns to a patient to conceptualize and treat them. Its formal symptomology usually includes an enduring suspicion or deep skepticism about the subject’s social role in relation to the larger sociological structure, their culture or society (McWilliams 215). This

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mindset can lead to beliefs, in the subject, that others are out to deceive, trick, or even harm them. As a consequence, being typically the case, paranoid patients report that their sense of belonging, indeed even their very identity, becomes unstable and up for grabs since they are unable to engage in a reciprocal relation with another human being.¹

As a case in point, with regard to the specific case of Aimée, Lacan (“The Case”) describes the subset of paranoia, paranoid psychoses, in the following symptomatic terms when writing that “[Aimée] fits the usual criteria perfectly: egocentricity, logical development from false premises and gradual use of defense mechanisms to consolidate it” (219). Thus, it is easy to see how the case of Aimée represents a prototype for Lacan—soldering the connection between popular discourse and paranoia—one that featured predominately in informing the construction of his larger theoretical oeuvre over the next fifty years.

Indeed, it would become intrinsic to Lacan’s approach to psychoanalysis that the subject is intimately linked with paranoia, not unlike the way Lacan develops it in his doctoral dissertation about Aimée. That is, in even stronger philosophical terms, paranoia is a necessary condition for any form of knowledge that the subject may possess, thereby making it central to understanding how subjects or identities are produced. Glen Gabbard, Bonnie Litowitz, and Paul Williams relate this by saying that “from Freud’s text [“Some Neurotic Mechanisms in Jealousy, Paranoia and Homosexuality”], Lacan took the central idea that a paranoid knowledge (*la connaissance paranoïaque*) exists at the core of each subjectivity” (225).

The forthcoming analysis will show that far from representing a sort of pathology on the part of the actors, the conspiracy theorists or the music artists, the way that they co-construct a discourse that can be labeled as paranoid actually exposes the very nature of knowledge itself. Put differently, they may be closer to the “source” of an ontology of epistemology. Psychoanalysis, given its penchant for speaking in clinical metaphors, may talk about this using something like the following: the stubborn encasement of the signifier within the subject becomes

¹ Nancy McWilliams signifies the importance of an analyst considering the historical, economic, and political etiology of the symptom. The example she uses is National Socialism and the rise of Nazi ideology. She writes that, “the crushing humiliation of Germany in World War I and the subsequent punitive measures that created runaway inflation, starvation, and panic, with little responsiveness from the international community, laid the groundwork for the appeal of a paranoid leader and the organized paranoia that is Nazism” (McWilliams 224). Indeed, McWilliams relates, right before this, that the psychological origins of Nazism mimic the childhood events reported by paranoid analysts.

emptied of meaning and gets pushed out, resulting in a knowledge that is not exactly epistemological, in that it is not shared, but is truer to the desire of the subject.

Why music videos as opposed to other more recently created popular discursive artifacts such as internet memes, TikTok clips, or celebrity Twitter posts? Indeed, the genre of music videos is by all accounts, given the fast changing nature of technology, an older form of media; nevertheless, foregrounding a postmodern discourse that has found its way today into social media (Rubey 873). What I take to be especially relevant about music videos that does not necessary apply to the aforementioned social media phenomena is their seeming interrelatedness or, to use more literary language, intertextuality that appears when one reads several music videos side-by-side. Not only does this highlight the strange similarities—and symbols—that many music videos seem to exhibit, it also raises the somewhat suspicious question: Why is this the case?

One of these symbols that shows up in the popular music videos being analyzed in this essay is the pyramid with the all-seeing eye, along with its mutations and permutations from one video to the next. This symbol quilts and binds many of the chains of signifiers that give form to the discourse that is produced—a kind of textuality that is more free-floating than, perhaps, traditional academic texts insofar as it is born in the precise liminal space between these two interlocutors. The interplay of how the discourse is created is necessary, then, to explain why this conspiratorial textuality is paragon of popular discourse in general thereby revealing the nature of knowledge for Lacan: plainly, how knowledge is fundamentally paranoid in nature.

A Technical Treatment of Paranoia in Lacanian Theory

It may be helpful, at this point, to follow the lead of Jon Mills and provide a brief etymology of the very term paranoia. He describes this etymology: ““paranoia” is derived from the Greek, *para*—outside of or beside—as in ‘*beside oneself*’—and mind (*nous, νόος*), thus beyond intelligible thought (*noēsis*), hence madness” (31, emphasis in original). The literal meaning of standing outside or beside oneself nicely conveys the essence of the term. Putting this into Lacanian language might produce something like the following: how there necessarily must exist an alterity, between subject and other, such that the other stands outside or beside oneself, and that this alterity is utterly unintelligible to the big Other, gibberish, whereby the knowledge that the paranoid subject produces is socially and relationally barred.

The big Other (*L'Autre*), as it is sometimes referred to in the secondary literature on Lacan, or just the Other with a capital O, is the relationship the subject has to social, material, and cultural environments and institutions to which the subject must relate. The fact that the subject is typically barred from its Other was formalized by Lacan using a symbolic shorthand that he called a *matheme*. A *matheme* is used to transmit, in this context, psychoanalytic concepts. The specific *matheme* that corresponds to the preceding etymology of the term paranoia is Lacan's *matheme* of the fundamental fantasy, which is $\$ \diamond a$. In a general sense, this can be read by saying that the barred subject, the *analysand*, the one who seeks knowledge, etc. (\$) sits at the left side of the \diamond , separating, as it were, this subject from the *objet petit a* (*a*). Or, as Lacan says, "the stamp is read 'desire of,' to be read identically in the retrograde direction, introducing an identity which is founded upon an absolute nonreciprocity" ("Kant" 62).

This "absolute nonreciprocity" is precisely that which bars or restricts the subject from knowledge of the Other. But, as Lacan claimed in the previous quote, the subject, nonetheless, desires this inaccessible scrap of the real of its being, the *objet petit a* (Ruti 17), which is not an epistemological and therefore paranoid knowledge but a certain embodied, enacted, or practiced type of knowledge. When the subject becomes frustrated at its inability to access this part of its being, illustrated to us at the onset in the case of Aimée, it lashes out in uncharacteristic aggression.

Indeed, it is perhaps this notion of aggression that best captures and illustrates, in an intersubjective way, how paranoia results from a misrecognition of what actually is the case. Mills, in even stronger terms, states that "by closely examining a few of Lacan's key works, it becomes increasingly clear that aggressivity suffuses the very fabric of human knowledge, a paranoid residue of the dialectic of desire" (33). Holding Mills to his final phrase here, the paranoid residue of the dialectic of desire, this formulation begs the question of exactly "why" this is the case for Lacanian theory. It is not enough to accept, uncritically, the principle for the fundamental fantasy given earlier whereby the lacking subject remains necessarily caught in the dialectic of desire, since one must give an account of how this kind of paranoid subject comes into being in the first place—i.e., how subjectivity, on account of this view, is produced.

Lacan famously argued, on certain developmental grounds, that aggressivity arises during the mirror stage at the early part of the subject's lifespan (Dor 96). During the mirror stage, the infant comes to recognize itself in the mirror as discrete

from its environment, which can be construed in many different senses. Empirically, this is the case insofar as the infant can see itself in a literal mirror and tell the difference, understanding that its reflection is not identical to its being. Yet, in more abstract and symbolic terms, the mirror stage represents a specific kind of subjectivation or production of identity, one that gives rise to unique ways the subject organizes its libido, its relationship to its own desire, and its understanding and relationality toward its Other.

The initiation can be understood in two ways: both through the ideal ego and the ego ideal. For Lacan, the ideal ego begins with the mirror stage, and by extension the Imaginary register, and is the subject's projection onto futurity of its unconscious wish-fulfillments, to use Freud's words, or, in slightly more obverse Lacanian terms, its aspiring to be the phallus for the (m)Other—i.e., how can I plug the lack in the Other's being? As Bracha Ettinger points out, the (m)Other is a Lacanian neologism that helps get at the undifferentiated relationship between self and world that we all have had during development, or the foundation of what Freud called primary narcissism (95). When this agitation of the subject becomes frustrated, finally realizing it can never fill this hole, it results in aggressivity. It follows, then, that knowledge in this sense perpetually defers itself, never to be punctuated—and, I would go so far as to claim that the ideal ego of the subject, that one that seeks the knowledge the Other has to offer, follows suit here.

On the other hand, the ego ideal is the reverse side of the ideal ego, therein making it purely Symbolic in nature, which is to say that the ego ideal, for the purposes of the present analysis, inflects and internalizes a non-paranoiac “knowledge,” one that does not fall under the transferential entanglements of the Imaginary (the domain of images and, consequently, music videos), but that enacts the logics of the properly paranoiac structure of knowledge in mimetic and inverted terms. This is not the aggressivity of the ideal ego, with its flaccid going to and fro between its own desire and the desire pushed upon it by its Other, but a signification that may actually ‘get behind’ this aggressivity in the first place, one that, in terms of knowledge, exposes the ego ideal in its fantastic and paranoid elements.

Bringing this theory down to the ground, the mistake that Aimée made was not the fact that she attacked and stabbed a famous Parisian actress, even though this is most certainly to be denounced, but that she mistook celebrity, incarnated in this actress, for her own ideal ego—projecting her own desires, wishes, and fantasies onto this object, her *objet petit a*, therein making it a troubling and menacing source of excitement and knowledge. Unable to contain herself anymore, Aimée's own

personal paranoia transformed in such a maniacal and consuming fashion that she was compelled to try and extinguish this source of meaning. She tried to consume the other, in reverse terms, by attempting to destroy it.

In an analogous manner, according to Mills, knowledge as such “is saturated with paranoia because it threatens to invade the subject, and it is precisely this knowledge that must be defended against as the desire not to know” (43). The ideal ego does not want to know that it is not the Other or that it is lacking in some way. It follows that the desire not to know is equivalent, then, to the kind of aggressivity that knowledge produces. The two, on account of Lacan, actually go hand-in-hand and can only be consummated or extinguished through the ego ideal, in symbolic and signifying terms which are less meaningful than what the ideal ego has to offer.

Lacanian Knowledge and Conspiracy Theory

Given the foregoing Lacanian treatment of the paranoid nature of knowledge, it seems that a certain homology may exist in terms of how the two function and deploy themselves, between the way that conspiracy theorists take up knowledge and Lacan’s own work. This is not to suggest that certain conspiracy theories are right or wrong, having some correspondence to reality or saying something deeper than their surface and discursive structure. It is, however, to suggest that the adjective “conspiracy” operates by a similar psychoanalytic logic and deploys similar discursive effects as does the barred subject in the clinic and, more generally, in the way knowledge institutes and restricts the subject from its Other.

First, it may be helpful to get a definition going of what I mean when I use the term conspiracy theory. On this point, David Ray Carter has the following to offer:

The term “conspiracy theory” is commonly used to refer to a belief that differs from or runs counter to the accepted line of thinking on a particular topic. It is almost exclusively used derogatorily, implying a view that is unfounded, illogical, or paranoid [...] conspiracy theories are an approach to historical analysis that discard the accepted versions in favor of alternate ones by interpreting the historical record differently or, as is often the case, using a different set of records all together. (5)

There are several things that stand out in this definition. The first, as should be clear by now, is to reject the connotation that there is something derogatory or, least of all, illogical about the term conspiracy. For, as we have seen, knowledge is by its very nature “conspiratorial” or, more technically, paranoid in the way that the

subject is forced into handling it. Therefore, it cannot be said that one should view conspiracy theories in a pejorative sense since they display, perhaps most overtly, how knowledge comes to circulate itself in its epistemological and sociological sense.

In addition, Carter seems right to proclaim that the storehouse of knowledge, the archive, for conspiracy theorists contains alternate or non-hegemonic meanings that challenge the accepted status of the most popular socially circulated knowledges—the beliefs about the state of affairs of the world held by most people. However, according to Lacanian theory, conspiracy theories indicate an even stronger sense by which knowledge operates; that is to say, that the archive is lost from the start (Roudinesco 51). There is no place by which to house more truthful or correct meanings, an alternative theory, because the lack of an archive is what makes the nature of knowledge *ipso facto* paranoid, the experience that the subject cannot ever seem to find the archive.

In another attempt, Michael Barkun casts conspiracy through the lens of theodicy. This way of explaining conspiracy provides a mythological and etiological account as to the nature of evil in the world. The conspiratorial discourse, then, arises from a paradigm that takes alterity, the difference between self and other, as necessarily menacing. Barkun writes:

The essence of conspiracy beliefs lies in attempts to delineate and explain evil. At their broadest, conspiracy theories “view history as controlled by massive, demonic forces.” The locus of this evil lies outside the true community, in some “Other, defined as foreign or barbarian, though often [...] disguised as innocent and upright.” The result is a worldview characterized by a sharp division between the realms of good and evil. (3)

The Other, in the sense of being controlled by the most evil demonic forces imaginable, is most definitely not the same Other understood by Lacanian theory. For if that were the case, it would be difficult, if not impossible, to explain why the creation of alterity is ultimately threatening or subversive to the Other. In other words, the foregoing explanation of conspiracy homogenizes even as it purports to make a radical distinction between good and evil. In fact, this latter point, the dualistic nature of its logic, is precisely why any kind of difference would become obliterated, nihilistically leveled, at the feet of the power of this kind of Other.

What Barkun does get right, if we were to recast this in Lacan’s terms, is that conspiracy theory does contain an element of “disguise”—one that can make knowledge slippery and unstable for the subject insofar as the subject can never be

certain of its place in regard to this Other that produces its knowledge. Such is the paranoiac nature of knowledge: What is the final signifier that would give my past meanings a terminal sense for me? There is ultimately no answer. Consequently, this leaves the subject's knowledge claims, their empirical validity and their very intelligibility, even in a reciprocal solipsistic sense, unstable, contestable, and potentially harmful, through the mechanism of aggressivity developed during the mirror stage and illustrated clinically in the case of Aimée.

An Analysis of the Repetition of a Symbol in Music Videos

Making the jump from the connection that Lacan's doctoral dissertation has to celebrity and popular Parisian culture, the way his case study demonstrates that aggressivity can result from the paranoid nature of knowledge, it is not too far afield from applying a similar practice of analysis to contemporary popular culture and some of the most highly circulated signifiers found in this discourse. Accordingly, in what is to follow, as a matter of precision, I focus on the medium of popular music videos.

Carol Vernallis provides us with a beautifully written manual on the nuances of music videos. From cinematography to costumes, she eruditely shows how the minor details of the medium figure into the often complex messaging the video imparts. As she suggests, this happens even on the levels of rhythm, note, and timbre. Her discussion of the way imagery figures into the narrative or nonnarrative structure of the music video, while very savvy, seems confined to the parameters of one specific video. Perhaps what is unique about this essay is the fixation on a specific symbol—a trope that can be read consistently from one video to another and, indeed, even from one music artist to another. I will set this analysis against the backdrop of conspiracy theories found on the internet, via places like YouTube or popular conspiracy websites, which I argue can be read as producing a precisely paranoid discourse of knowledge.

The specific symbol, as I alluded to earlier, will be the pyramid with the all-seeing eye, along with its repetitions and mutations within different videos. I have chosen this one particular symbol on several grounds: that is, it seems to have a certain popularity status, of its own right, within the already highly shared discourse surrounding music videos. This gives it a certain privileged place insofar as it cuts across and traverses many varied and disparate media and epistemologies. In other words, this symbol can be found not just within the music video community but

also in many other places: some of which have been talked about by the conspiracy theorists, including street art, corporate advertising, political literature, and religious iconography.

With regard to the present study, the object of inquiry is, however, specifically music videos. Even within this more tightly defined domain, the symbol seems to have a rather robust resiliency, appearing in videos for music artists like Rihanna, Lady Gaga, Kanye West, and many others. What this resiliency amounts to is a certain repetition, what can be described in broad symbolic and theoretical terms as the Other's repetition compulsion. This is important because it explains, psychoanalytically, the symbol's function as providing consistency to the Other specifically without the need to arbitrate any kind of truth claim, which is impossible given Lacan's theory of knowledge.

Briefly, the repetition compulsion is usually ascribed, in the psychoanalytic tradition, to the subject, analysand, or discrete entity that is under analysis. However, given the preceding development of the mirror stage and how this results in the ideal ego, a specific form of projection by the subject onto reality, it makes sense to talk about the repetition compulsion, in this case, as belonging to the big Other, from which arises the more superficial production of the symbol as a socio-cultural symptom. The comparatively robust repetition of a symbol, across discursive domains, makes a psychoanalysis of such a symbol possible: Why does the Other choose to address itself in this way?

This is an inversion of the standard Lacanian adage given by Mari Ruti in that "the symptom is a coded message addressed to the Other" (61). In our formulation, however, it would be that the symptom of the Other, the symbol as indicative of the repetition compulsion of the broader socio-cultural, planetary, and mediatic stratum of planet Earth, betrays the Other's coded message to the subject. In this sense, then, the symbol, while still symptomatic insofar as it remains to be deciphered, nonetheless carries with it a certain "truth" as to the nature of the meaning, intention, and even suffering of the Other—if one is allowed to ascribe these personological terms to such an abstract concept.

To analyze now, concretely, the pyramid with the all-seeing eye, I will use three music videos as ciphers that will help unlock and burrow into what the conspiracy theorists have to say: "Pyramids" by Frank Ocean featuring John Mayer (2012), "Dark Horse" by Katy Perry featuring Juicy J (2014), and "Grass Ain't Greener" by Chris Brown (2016). An astute consumer of this media genre will notice, right away, the typical symbol one thinks about when invoking the phrase "the pyramid

with the all-seeing eye” is not straightforwardly represented in any of these music videos. This, of course, begs the question as to what the typical or commonsensical symbol would be: Is it the one found on the side of the paper currency of the United States? How it appears in Masonic literature, publicly or privately circulated, its architectural and emblematic correlates? Or, is it the iterations located in Egyptian iconography, the symbol’s widely accepted origin story and historiography, perhaps its most well-known material manifestation being the Great Pyramid at Giza?

All of these questions are misleading, I would suggest, because they aim to hypostatize the symbol, rendering it static, immutable, and non-interpretable, when, at least on account of Lacanian theory, such is precisely not the nature of meaning, knowledge, and even the superficial sharing of signs and symbols. In fact, it is rather the symbol’s popular mutability and easy ability to be appropriated, across cartographies of media, in these different music videos, that makes it so interesting to analyze, not the fact that it may get at some esoteric or conspiratorial meaning or knowledge. Such a project goes beyond the analysis of identity politics, positionality, and even iconography described by Dan Rubey insofar as the present endeavor is predicated on the virtual undoing of these systems of reference. This is not to say that pointing out how viewers from various ethnic, gender, or age categories interpreted Madonna’s music video for “Papa Don’t Preach” differently is not relevant; rather, the paranoid nature of knowledge, coupled with the conspiratorial nature of some of the music videos that follow, takes us beyond an analysis of iconography and identity, the superficiality of the visual image, and into a realm that is devoid of content—that, in other words, lays a claim to some unified theory that the music video as a medium is being coordinated in some way.

In this ethos, tracking the way the symbol appears and changes in these popular mediums is supportive of a Lacanian understanding of epistemology, the sedimentation resulting from the sharing of signs and symbols. Compounding this is the utter degree of the sociological effects popular media has, the fact that it is, by definition, that which is shared among the most interlocutors imaginable. Strictly speaking, the two are mutually constitutive of each other, the symbol’s mutability being an effect of the underlying paranoia contained within its appropriation by the subject itself.

As a case in point, in the music video by Chris Brown for the song “Grass Ain’t Greener,” the somewhat loose narrative has Chris and his clique driving to some party in the desert in the middle of the night. After a few exchanges of dialogue

between Chris and his friends poking fun at each other for being too scared to attend, they all finally make their way toward the neon lights and arrows that are pointing the way toward the party. Following the red and blue neon arrows leads them to a large, levitating pyramid with a purple, neon diagram on the top of one of its sides. This scene cuts away, immediately, to Chris wearing his clothing line, black pyramid, and a corresponding image of a black pyramid on his shirt. The music then finally starts.

There are several commentaries on this song and video that can be found around the internet, on discussion boards, various websites, and YouTube. One of the most interesting comes from a YouTube channel that uses the screen name A Call For An Uprising; the reactionary positionality this name has in relation to its Other is already telling. The user says during his video commentary that “[Chris and his friends] are headed right towards the pyramid. They’re heading right towards it. Look out in the distance. It’s the pyramid out there that’s where the party is taking place. What a coincidence, right?” (A Call For An Uprising). There is, here, in even the early part of this user’s discussion of the music video, a certain fixation on the symbol of the pyramid as betraying the hidden meaning of the Other.

This is interesting since it prefaces or colors virtually all of the subsequent analysis given by this particular conspiracy advocate. Both the fact that the pyramid shows up at the beginning of the video, prior to the music, and that the YouTube user, following his announcement of the pyramid onto the scene, says the following, indicates what he thinks this could mean: “I guess they just thought it would be cool to put the pyramid in there. It has nothing to do with the secret societies and the Illuminati or anything like that. Chris Brown just wrote it in because he loves pyramids” (A Call For An Uprising).

The power of this symbol, in this example, to bring forth a certain paranoid rhetoric is indicative of the cartography of conspiracy as such. That is, the symbol of the pyramid with the all-seeing eye structures the way in which signifiers are allowed to be strung together within the conspiracy discourse, functioning as a policing agent of semiology, language, and rhetoric. Of course, the symbol itself has no inherent meaning, if Lacan is right about anything, since its use in enunciation must be taken into account. Nevertheless, the fact that there is some Other, as per what A Call For An Uprising says, “secret society and the illuminati,” that must repetitively display this symbol, thereby structuring its social dialectic, is the most heightened form of knowledge—one that pushes the knowledge of the

Other to the brink of collapse because the subject sees it as totalizing, covert, and all-consuming.

Indicative of this is the sarcastic tone and use of disavowal by the user in the latter string of dialogue: “it has nothing to do with the secret societies and the Illuminati or anything like that. Chris Brown just wrote it in because he loves pyramids” (A Call For An Uprising). Returning to the earlier discussion of the mirror stage, what this demonstrates is the aggressivity of the ideal ego in relation to its Other, the sublimation of a subject that wants to be taken seriously. I do not, however, want to suggest that I am making any kind of judgment about the actual content of these claims, since I actually think that they point to the very nature of knowledge: i.e., this is not pathologizing or diagnosing the subject behind the username. To demonstrate this, as a matter of fact, one could even take this YouTube channel and cast it as a sort of double agent of the Other, one that is working to distribute and disseminate propaganda precisely for the agenda of those in control, according to A Call For An Uprising. In this place, it would become absolutely untenable to properly ‘know’ anything at all.

“Dark Horse” by Katy Perry is another music video that features the pyramid and the all-seeing eye rather prominently. A permutation of it is shown, perhaps most clearly, at the climax of the video and song, near the very end—this is not to mention that the entire location of the video is set in a remixed version of ancient Egypt inaugurated by a stone pyramid in the opening scene. At the climax of the song, Katy Perry is ascending a large, levitating, and technologically enhanced pyramid structure with purple neon lights, which highlight how the viewer’s attention should be directed toward the capstone. At the top of the pyramid, in this final scene, Katy Perry, or Katy-Patra as she is known in the video (presumably a tongue-in-cheek play on the name Cleopatra), walks to the top of the pyramid with a set of wings, that she somehow non-narratively attained, outstretched with a cloud portal of lightening flashing all around her.

A well-known conspiracy website on the internet known as Vigilant Citizen shares an analysis of “Dark Horse” saying that, in this final climatic scene, “when Katy-Patra steps on top of the unfinished pyramid, she becomes imbued with crazy magical powers. She even grows wings” (para. 35). These “crazy magical powers” are certainly part of the paranoia that is intrinsic to the conspiracy theory discourse, such that the writer of this article supposes their existence as an actual possibility, albeit occult, secret, and hidden from most of the public.

Yet, in a more totalizing sense, the analysis given by Vigilant Citizen blankets the Other with monolithic signifiers, thereby obfuscating political, historical, or even symbolic nuances that would antecedently be required to bring something like this about. The conspiracy theorist writes that “seeing this pyramid, Katy-Patra gets very excited because that’s what she, and the elite, truly wants: Unlimited occult power over the world. The illuminated pyramid essentially represents the Illuminati’s high-tech control over the world” (Vigilant Citizen para. 34). As indicated earlier, terms like the “Illuminati” are homogenizing in nature, which is often a characteristic of conspiracy rhetoric in general. As Carter writes, “The Illuminati is often used as a placeholder, invoked when the real identities of those behind a conspiracy are unknown” (133). What they attempt to signify, an esoteric manipulation and takeover of planet earth, demonstrating the paranoid Other of knowledge as such, can only be accessed or decrypted through a symbol that stands in the place of the signifier. In the examples I have been using, this symbol is the pyramid with the all-seeing eye.

This relationship between the symbol and the chain of signifiers that give the Other of knowledge any meaning whatsoever is necessarily made through a paranoid connection, even if the degree of this paranoia is normal and aids in everyday functioning and sociality. To bring this home a bit more, Lacan (2006) refers to the rationalist philosopher René Descartes in the following quote to demonstrate the form of madness that is intrinsic to this conspiratorial logic, between the symbol and the meaning it allows the subject to access:

Assuredly, one can say that the madman believes he is different [*autre*] than he is. Descartes said as much in his sentence about those who believe “that they are arrayed in gold and purple robes,” where he conformed to the most anecdotal of all stories about madmen [...] [this] was the key to understanding paranoia. (139)

The form of madness that Lacan quotes Descartes on is also found, I suggest, in the following excerpt taken from Vigilant Citizen. The actual conspiracy theorist says, referring back to the “Dark Horse” video now, “standing on top of the Illuminati pyramid, Katy-Patra turns into a super-powerful tyrant. That’s probably not a good thing. More importantly, she becomes a personification of the goddess Isis” (Vigilant Citizen para. 36).

The form of sovereignty that both of these quotations point to must necessarily, if Lacan is right, contain that kernel of madness that is part-and-parcel to the production and circulation of knowledges, a madness that is, by its very nature, a

paranoid madness. This sovereignty, in both cases it would seem, is found strictly from within the Other. That is to say, the subject, Descartes, Vigilant Citizen, and so on decipher the coming of such a sovereignty, emanating out of the totalizing and encircling powers that the pyramid with the all-seeing eye stands for—i.e., using their words: “a super-powerful tyrant” (Vigilant Citizen para. 36) that is “arrayed in gold and purple robes” (Lacan *Écrits*, 136).

To cap off the analysis of how the pyramid symbol within the conspiracy theory discourse helps to demonstrate the essentially paranoid nature of knowledge, the final video is aptly just named “Pyramids” and is performed by the music artists Frank Ocean and John Mayer. As one might expect, the pyramid is featured extensively in this music video, showing up either as a part of the landscape or in its more stylized version, again, constructed out of neon lights.² This time, however, instead of being a machinic superstructure upon which the sovereign of the Other sits, this scene depicts a neon-blue pyramid with a neon-red Kabbalah tree of life at its center. Frank Ocean and John Mayer stand and play guitar at the pyramid’s base.

This certainly establishes a different dynamic to the scene when contrasted to the “Dark Horse” video, since there is no apotheosis of a sovereign, no overt ascension to the top of the pyramid. It is also different in kind from the “Grass Ain’t Greener” video in that the pyramid does not signal a party or an invitation to join a secret club. Rather, in Frank Ocean’s take, the pyramid connotes a certain spiritual path, made overtly manifest by the reference to the Kabbalah tree of life.

Illuminati Watcher, a popular website that frequently details the connection between the music industry and conspiracy, writes, specifically in reference to this video:

The Sephirot (a.k.a. Sefirot) is better known as the Tree of Life. It shows us eleven circles (but only ten attributes), with each one representing one of God’s emanations [...] it is best expressed through the concept that we are all part of one ocean of consciousness. (Weishaupt 3)

Here, even the conspiracy theorists agree as to the nature of the pyramid and how it may contain, quite literally in Ocean’s video, an esoteric or occult spiritualism.

² Unfortunately, it is somewhat beyond the scope of the present analysis to explore the repetition of the neon motif and how this might relate to the pyramid structure within the selected music videos or elsewhere. Suffice it to say, the connection is interesting, particularly if it is positioned next to the claim by some conspiracy theorists that insinuates an ecumenical motivation to the nature of the Other.

Yet again, for the purposes of this article, I want to highlight the way that the pyramid is jostled and appropriated by these different music videos. In other words, it never takes on a stable consistency whereby one may then definitely ascertain its “hidden” meaning.

Bringing these differences back to the beginning of the discussion of the Other’s repetition compulsion at the onset of this section, what this amounts to is the Other trying to signify an encoded form of trauma, ultimately its symptomology, to the subject. However, attempting to interpret this symptom, concretized in the pyramid with the all-seeing eye, necessarily belies a paranoia such that the subject is helpless to do anything about it. This results in a discourse that is as close to “knowledge” as one can actually get.

The “Truth” to the Conspiracy: Discussion and Conclusion

Understanding the nature of conspiracy is now more important than ever. As alluded to at the inauguration of this essay, the “post-truth” world we now inhabit contains plenty of examples of conspiracy gone mainstream: the politically and internet-driven QAnon movement (LaFrance), the sensationalized *Plandemic* documentary (Frenkel, Decker, and Alba), and tweets by the President of the United States that Black Lives Matter protestors are a funded terrorist organization (Perez and Hoffman). What are we to believe? Who are we to believe? And, first and foremost, what is the nature of belief itself? A revived treatment of how a kernel of paranoia exists within all knowledge and beliefs goes to show precisely how these ideas gain traction: through the false projection that there is some hidden hand controlling the social order.

The pyramid with the all-seeing eye epitomizes this, symbolically. As we have seen in the foregoing analysis, the way that the symbol functions in the video and the way that it is taken up by the conspiracy theorists is a dialectical move such that the symbol comes to represent a self-reinforcing and paranoid sedimentation of the knowledge itself, underpinning its popularity and shared epistemology. It is not the case, then, that one is able to say anything definite about the validity of this kind of knowledge, least of all via a correspondence theory of truth, as though the symbol has some signified to which it referred. Nevertheless, the large territory that this discourse occupies on the internet and in the material lives of the actors involved, music artists and conspiracy theorists alike, says something about its own

truth power, its ability to replicate and reproduce in spite of any authoritarian sanction or institutional proclamation.

The upshot this has for popular culture is the revelation that the ‘surface’ nature of epistemologies makes them especially amenable to an analysis using Lacanian theory that is aligned with similar values as to the way signs and knowledges are shared communally. Put simply, the only way one can judge the truth claim of a bit of knowledge is precisely through the socio-symbolic effects that it has, the degree to which it is shared among its interlocutors. In this way, the distinction between what is real and what is not, as if there were a signified, gets lost in the textuality of popular culture. In a strict theoretical sense, then, popular media enjoys a privileged domain of research and knowledge insofar as this domain is predicated on the Lacanian conspiratorial and paranoid understanding of knowledge.

What this says about the genre of music videos specifically is very close to Lisa St. Clair Harvey’s point when the researcher writes that a way to broaden understanding of popular culture “is to expand critical theory’s rejection of media’s surface *meanings* to include a rejection of surfaces *uses*” (40, emphasis in original). Such an intervention, by the music video, sets sail old and dated notions of structure that are the remnants of either modernism or, at the very least, a generation of artists, practitioners, or researchers that have relied on the firm and binding distinction between, in the previous example, meaning and use to buttress their intuitional positions and identity. Pushed further, as Harvey noted, this is even to challenge critical theory to self-reflect on its own *modus operandi* and the protocols and technologies that it secretly may take as axiomatic.

Yet, in contradistinction to Harvey, a Lacanian interpretation of music videos, specifically as it pertains to knowledge and discourse as such, does not constitute “just a ritual” that goes toward the smooth functioning of sociality: “the overall maintenance of the social order, as do all good ritual devices” (Harvey 60). Upon the forgoing analysis in this article, the secret messages that are supposedly hidden within the music videos work toward an apocalypse of the social order, in its etymological sense, insofar as this ‘apocalypse’ requires the fantasy of teleological progression—e.g., the culmination of the conspiratorial logic and its subsequent collapse into normative knowledge practices.

The abandonment of sense, in the most general understanding of the term, as well as taking seriously the surface ontology of popular media studies—the fluidity of the meaning/use distinction—does not amount to a genre or media, like music videos, that is substantively vacuous therein imparting no real knowledge. As Sue

Lorch says, music videos “are the metaphysical poetry of the twentieth century [...] conveying truths inexpressible discursively” (143). I would share a similar pollyannaish sentiment about music videos, in line with Lorch, albeit tinged with a healthy dose of Lacanian irreverence as if to say that music videos are the epistemological poetry of the twentieth century. They do not only convey inexpressible discursive truths but they also, in a stronger sense, lay bare the paranoid heart of discourse itself—popular, colloquial, or otherwise.

In no way, however, is this a cynical or nihilistic take on the phenomenon since, as I have argued, such a thesis brings epistemological production (e.g., music videos) as flush as possible to Lacan’s own ideas on the matter. Now in agreement here, Lorch writes:

By showing not that it is possible to erase the line between truth and fiction, but that *that line does not really exist* [emphasis added], music videos recognize the power of the creative intelligence and suggest to us that we are the art which we ourselves have made. (154)

Indeed, the blurring of the difference between the artwork and the artist, alluded to earlier, could be the very thing that Lacan was trying to transmit; his medium happened to be language and Rihanna’s happens to be music videos. In both cases, it would seem, “the paranoia of popular culture” intercedes precisely at the disjunct of not being able to comprehend this unique and very strange form of creation.

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The Timeliness of *Hamilton*: An American Musical

ERIKA ARIVETT

“This is a story about America then, told by America now,” Tommy Kail said of Lin-Manuel Miranda’s not-yet famous musical in its pre-publication stages; in 2020, Kail and Miranda have not given up this claim (Miranda and McCarter 33). Miranda, the writer and original star of the 2015 Broadway musical hit, *Hamilton: An American Musical*, entertained a vision that would be both historically true to the life of an American Founding Father, and an honest representation of the modern America that Alexander Hamilton helped form. After reading Ron Chernow’s biography *Alexander Hamilton* in 2008, Miranda knew he wanted to develop a concept album centered around the titular historical figure, and the genre would be rap and hip-hop. Miranda did not know until 2012 that his *Hamilton Mixtape* project would ultimately be formed into a Broadway show (Miranda and McCarter 10, 32, 46), the first rap and hip-hop display to ever make it big on the famous New York City stage (Viagas).

When *Hamilton* premiered at The Public Theater in 2015, everyone knew this production was something special. Not only was it a tremendous display of talent, it seemed to speak emotional volumes to the viewers; performers and audience alike were in tears (Miranda and McCarter 113). Later, when matinee shows for school children became available, inner city kids who had never seen a musical and never cared about the founding of America suddenly could not stop talking about this new show centered around a mostly-forgotten Founding Father (Miranda and McCarter 157). *Hamilton: An American Musical* became an unprecedented pop culture sensation, with the Original Broadway Cast Recording (OCR) album ranked number two on the “*Billboard* 25 Best Albums of 2015” (Viagas). Presidents visited the theater. Cast members performed at the White House. The U.S. Treasury Department even renounced their decision to remove Alexander Hamilton from the \$10 bill (Paulson).

When a revolutionary production like *Hamilton* sweeps the nation, the question immediately raised is: Why? Why this musical and not one of the plethora of others

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on Broadway? Why this unprecedented success of rap and hip-hop on the Broadway stage? What makes *Hamilton* so special? I suggest that the reason *Hamilton: An American Musical* has been received with overwhelming positivity by everyone from Barack Obama to Dick Cheney to “Weird Al” Yankovic is its perfectly placed rhetorical situation (Hayes and Gale 42-3). It is difficult to say whether, in another time and place, this Broadway smash hit, with its “mostly Black cast [that] ‘turns the tables on the practice of using white actors to portray ethnic characters,’” (Yankovic qtd. in Hayes and Gale 42) would have succeeded, or if it could have been created at all. After all, the makers of art are the products of their time. Could someone like Lin-Manuel Miranda, the son of an immigrant, even have conceived something like *Hamilton* fifty years ago? The exigence of *Hamilton* created the kairos of the production. Put simply, America was ready for *Hamilton*.

Michael Harker, in his article “The Ethics of Argument: Rereading *Kairos* and Making Sense in a Timely Fashion,” suggests that a functional definition of kairos has been largely omitted “as a key term in composition studies” (79). Drawing on many scholars and rhetoricians, Harker proposes that kairos should not be understood merely as “saying the right thing at the right time”; rather, this Greek word implies the *perfect* time, the *right* time, the *fullness* of time, “a significant season...poised between beginning and end” (Kermode qtd. in Harker 81, emphasis in original). In the critically acclaimed song, “My Shot,” Hip-Hop Hamilton raps about the American Revolution, saying, “This is not a moment. It’s the movement, where all the hungriest brothers with something to prove went” (Miranda, *Hamilton OCR*). Like the revolution of the historical Alexander Hamilton, Lin-Manuel Miranda’s *Hamilton* came to realization in the fullness of time, when the moment was right to begin a cultural movement.

In this paper, I will examine the rhetorical elements of *Hamilton*, particularly its exigence and kairos, exploring the needs that drove this production, the manner in which the show answers those needs, and the impact of saying the right thing at the right time. *Hamilton* is an extremely self-aware and highly philosophical production, addressing the issues of “post-racial” America through intentional cross-cultural casting, a wide variety of musical styles, and an emphasis on the role of immigrants in the American founding. Being “a story about America then, told by America now,” *Hamilton* creates a radical juxtaposition between the colonial America of the eighteenth century and the diverse colors, cultures, and music of America today (Miranda and McCarter 33). Since premiering in 2015, between the last term of America’s first Black president and an upcoming push against

immigration by the Trump administration, *Hamilton* continues to exist in a space that correlates with the racial tensions of the American people.

Wait for It

Lloyd F. Bitzer defines exigence as “an imperfection marked by urgency; it is a defect, an obstacle, something waiting to be done, a thing which is other than it should be” (qtd. in Miller 111). While exigence is “something waiting to be done,” Arthur B. Miller argues that the rhetorical situation must be rightly timed (*kairos*) for that thing to be effectively received by the listeners. In other words, the need must speak to the constraints of the hearers for it to function as exigence. If the need is not perceived as relevant to the audience, Miller claims, then the constraints of the speaker and hearer do not agree, and the phenomenon of exigence does not occur (117).

While exigence is “something waiting to be done,” this does not mean that the materials or concepts which prompt an exigent work must be new or unique in nature. The thing that is waiting to be done may sleep until the constraints of the audience are prepared to receive that idea or concept. The story of Alexander Hamilton was certainly not new when *Hamilton* hit the Broadway stage in 2015; in fact, it was largely forgotten by the American public. Neither was Ron Chernow’s biography, *Alexander Hamilton*, particularly new when it fell into Lin-Manuel Miranda’s hands in 2008. Rap and hip-hop were not new, having been popular music forms for decades. What, then, about this combination of nothing-new elements (and a historically unreceptive audience) creates rhetorical exigence for *Hamilton*?

According to musical giant Questlove, who Miranda and McCarter refer to as “the Pope of hip-hop [or at least a high-ranking cardinal],” there had been a long string of attempts to bring hip-hop to Broadway prior to *Hamilton*:

A man of [Questlove’s] stature ends up sitting through a lot of pitches from people who want to bring hip-hop to Broadway. These long ago took on a wearying familiarity: “You know, aerosol spray cans, ‘up in da Bronx,’ breakdancing in the first act—that sort of thing,” he says. When people told him about *Hamilton*, he assumed it had to be another entry in this grim parade. (Miranda and McCarter 196)

However, what Questlove saw in this new musical floored him. *Hamilton* did not appeal to any of the formulas of previously attempted hip-hop musicals. There was

no spray paint and breakdancing. The New York on stage was historical, yet echoed the urban inner city of today. The music was fresh. This play had managed to revolutionize, not only Broadway, but hip-hop itself (Miranda and Carter 196). This was accomplished in part because the sounds of *Hamilton* were only emphasized by the other facets of the play, which continued to tie-in history, Broadway masters, and hip-hop greats in a way that appealed to a broad audience.

In *Hamilton*, the historically unreceptive audience encounters not only the boom-bap beat, but also visual and lyrical ties to both Broadway classics and rap roots. While avoiding the “hip-hop clichés” cited by Questlove, as well as showcasing rap, hip-hop, and R&B genres alongside showtunes, the play makes bold visual statements in terms of set, choreography, and costume design. Calling upon theater of yesteryear, costume designer Paul Tazewell drew inspiration from designers and artists like Joe Papp and Kehinde Wiley to design period clothing for contemporary characters; choreographer Andy Blankenbuehler brought his love for *A Chorus Line*; and David Korins designed an innovative set that implied everything about historical New York as well as modern hustle and bustle all in one place (Miranda and McCarter 38, 113, 181). Their attention to purpose, detail, and timing culminated in a show that would bring hip-hop a success on the stage never seen before, grabbing hold of the rhetorical situation.

Despite its popularity, hip-hop had had little success in musical theater up to the time of *Hamilton*'s release. While some commercially successful musicals like *Rent* in 1996 and *Bring It On!* (for which Miranda was a writer) in 2011 occasionally utilized rap and hip-hop genres, it was uncommon for this to be the primary mode of any successful show. According to John Bush Jones in *Our Musicals, Ourselves: A Social History of the American Musical Theater*, this may be owed in part to Broadway ticket prices soaring in recent decades. Musical theater is produced with an audience in mind, and for the last several decades, that audience has been older, wealthier, and whiter (Jones 3). Jones writes:

Therefore, with certain ethnic and “radical” exceptions (such as *Hair*), socially relevant shows have mirrored the concerns and lifestyles of middle Americans, their primary audience. The reality of commercial theater dictates that, no matter how brilliant or artistic, if a show doesn't interest or entertain its audiences, it won't run long enough to make back its investment. (3)

Given the standard Broadway audience and social conditions, it is no surprise that although hip-hop and rap had been used on Broadway before *Hamilton*, its success

in popular circles was limited; the intersection of the audience, content, and time did not generate the necessary constraints of exigence.

Look Around at How Lucky We Are to Be Alive Right Now

Although met with more limited success, musical theater's history of rap, hip-hop, and a dialogue on race did in fact begin long before *Hamilton*. However, despite noteworthy exceptions such as *Shuffle Along*, which was written, produced, and performed by Black artists in 1921, Broadway remained a white sanctuary for decades after the Harlem Renaissance (Maloney), with people of color often appearing on the mainstream stage in roles written by and for the entertainment of white people. Heyward and Gershwin's 1935 *Porgy and Bess*, which starred Black characters and is often touted as America's most famous opera, was written and produced entirely by white people. While such plays reveal much about the white American psyche, they did not accurately depict life for people of color in America (Noonan 1-2).

Courtney Bliss, in her article "From B-Boys to Broadway: Activism and Directed Change in Hip-hop," chronicles the history of rap and hip-hop, tracing it from an urban grassroots movement to one of self-empowerment and commercial success for people of color and residents of the inner city. This self-representation in music, rather than the traditional white-created roles often seen on Broadway, allowed activism and directed change to become a prominent part of the rap and hip-hop scene as young people spoke to communities like their own. Despite the rise in popularity of hip-hop and rap as a self-empowerment tool as early as the 1970s, its place on Broadway was hit and miss at best; hip-hop and rap were most successful in the communities they came from, while The Great White Way remained just that (Bliss 225).

By the 1990s and early 2000s, ethnic Broadway plays had begun to challenge traditional white narratives. Unlike early iterations of Black minstrelsy, which relied on stereotypical character models and appealed to the fantasies of a white audience, plays like *Bring in 'Da Noise, Bring in 'Da Funk*, a Tony Award winning rap/tap which premiered on Broadway in 1996, "dare[d] to challenge the mythology and re-educate the miseducated masses of America" using a historical lens of Black experience (Terry-Morgan 678). Others were less successful, such as *Holler If Ya Hear Me*, a jukebox musical featuring the music of Tupac Shakur, which received mixed reviews and was criticized for the use of stock characters, despite terrific

music (Hetrick). Conversely, in 2007, Lin-Manuel Miranda's release of *In the Heights* featured an original score and generated roles written by and for people of color, eventually earning a place on Broadway and three Tony Awards in 2008 (Grein).

Drama critic Jeremy McCarter, who would eventually partner with Lin-Manuel Miranda in the early days of the *Hamilton Mixtape* project, advocated for years before *Hamilton* that "hip-hop can save the theater" (Miranda and McCarter 10). While acknowledging that the older, wealthier, whiter Broadway audience did not exactly match the typical hip-hop audience, McCarter recognized that this was the music of American youth, and it had the power to make theater accessible and relevant again (McCarter). For decades, the appearance of rap and hip-hop on Broadway was relegated almost exclusively to musicals *about* rap and hip-hop. Before *Hamilton*, Lin-Manuel Miranda mixed hip-hop, salsa, and ballads in his first musical, *In the Heights*, in a way that astounded McCarter. Miranda had, without genuine precedent, written a hip-hop musical "[telling] a story that had nothing to do with hip-hop—using it as form, not content" (Miranda and McCarter 10).

McCarter proposes that *Hamilton* is a long-awaited answer to current American culture, utilizing history and hip-hop to offer both a reflection and a preview of American diversity. While Miranda is deeply influenced by Broadway hit shows like *Les Misérables*, *Fiddler on the Roof*, and *West Side Story* (Miranda and McCarter 174), *Hamilton* is also a testament to Miranda's love of popular genres, referencing numerous rap and hip-hop greats such as Eminem, Big Pun, Jay Z, Wu-Tang Clan, and the Notorious B.I.G. (Vozick-Levinson). By bringing these elements together, *Hamilton* pays homage to both Broadway and hip-hop roots, utilizing the music that shaped a generation of "young, scrappy, and hungry" Americans. McCarter calls the show a "revolution...a musical that changes the way that Broadway sounds, that alters who gets to tell the story of our founding, that lets us glimpse the new, more diverse America rushing our way" (Miranda and McCarter 10). After decades of whiteness on Broadway, *Hamilton* came at the right time, when the nation was ready to receive a musical that reflected its changing culture.

It Must Be Nice to Have Washington on Your Side

"Sometimes the right person tells the right story at the right time, and through a combination of luck and design, a creative expression gains new force," Miranda

and McCarter write of the first time Miranda performed at the White House Poetry Jam in 2009. Although Miranda was invited to perform because of the success and cultural implications of *In the Heights*, he chose the occasion to perform, for the first time in public, a song from the *Hamilton Mixtape* project. The video of his performance now has over one million views on YouTube and features a standing ovation from President Barack Obama (Miranda and McCarter 15).

Standing before America's half-Kenyan, first Black president, the then 29-year-old Nuyorican rapped, "How does a bastard, orphan, son of a whore and a Scotsman, dropped in the middle of a forgotten spot in the Caribbean by providence, impoverished, in squalor, grow up to be a hero and a scholar?" (Obama White House). Variations on this refrain are reiterated many times throughout the published version of *Hamilton*, describing the adverse conditions of Alexander Hamilton's early life, and his defiance of circumstance to become the first U.S. Secretary of the Treasury. At a turning point in America's history, the election of the nation's first Black president, a cultural shift in the minds of American citizens began to be realized, making room for the immigrants of our nation's narrative. Terming Hamilton as "another immigrant comin' up from the bottom," Miranda speaks of this American Founding Father in terms that are relatable to people like Miranda's own father, President Obama's father, and a plethora of other American citizens (Miranda, "Alexander Hamilton," *Hamilton OCR*). In Miranda's eyes, Alexander Hamilton, the bastard, orphan immigrant, "embodies hip-hop," the music of an American generation (Obama White House).

Another three years would pass before the idea of the *Hamilton Mixtape* went from concept album to musical theater production. As individual numbers turned into ensemble performances, one thing that became clear was the need for diverse voices to appropriately express the rap and hip-hop genres Miranda employed. Ron Chernow, who acted as a historical adviser to Miranda for *Hamilton*, was taken aback the first time he saw a preview performance of Act I, when he realized that the men playing America's Founding Fathers were all Black and Latino. Like Miranda and Kail, Chernow quickly became a "'militant' defender of the idea that actors of any race could play the Founding Fathers" (Miranda and McCarter 33). As America's first Black president sat in the White House, the Black first president took the stage in New York.

A Plot Blacker Than the Kettle Callin' the Pot

Alexander Hamilton and all the American Founding Fathers were, of course, white males. However, this is not what the audience sees and hears when they witness a performance of *Hamilton*. Asserting that “history is entirely created by the person who tells the story,” (Miranda and McCarter 33) a prominent theme in *Hamilton*, Miranda believes that part of the beauty of the show is that it changes who has the right to tell the American story. The historical Hamilton was an immigrant, and, “although the Founding Fathers were white, the fact that they were colonial subjects marked them as inferior; they were marginalized and did not enjoy the same rights British citizens had” (Ahumada and Jung 175). For Miranda, the Founding Fathers represent the marginalized peoples of America’s history. In modern America, those marginalized peoples are best represented by people of color, women, and other minority groups. As part of this vision to tell the story of the “young, scrappy, and hungry,” *Hamilton* utilizes intentional cross-cultural casting, with little or no regard to race and gender.

Miranda’s choice to intentionally cast non-white actors as the Founding Fathers also gained some legal pushback in 2016, when a casting call for non-white actors for the show’s national tour was called discriminatory by a New York lawyer. Among discussions of “reverse racism” and “Black privilege” (Kornhaber), the producers of *Hamilton* adamantly defended the casting call as legal, and true to the intentions of the author (Deerwester). Miranda fully intended for the main characters to be played by people of color as part of the message of the play, and to open avenues for minority performers. The realm of musical theater is white dominated, and creators like Miranda have particular goals in mind to produce opportunities for non-white actors. Without intentionality regarding casting, a show like *Hamilton* can easily end up with a mostly white cast in later iterations. This had already happened in Miranda’s previous musical, *In the Heights*, when one Chicago theater cast a white actor of Italian descent to portray the show’s main character, Usnavi, who is Dominican (Greene). Determined to end this cycle, the decision for non-white casting in *Hamilton* has been upheld by its creators, and the only main character portrayed by a white performer is King George III (Deerwester).

Though not without controversy, Miranda’s diverse casting choice for *Hamilton* is an overwhelmingly celebrated decision. Historian Ron Chernow extolled Chris Jackson’s performance as George Washington, and Miranda said of the tall, athletic, Black first president, “Chris is so sure of his instrument and has this kind of moral authority onstage...He’s just f--ing majestic” (Miranda and McCarter

59). The strategy for costumes in *Hamilton* is “period from the neck down, modern from the neck up” (Miranda and McCarter 113). This leaves Chris Jackson making his grand entrance as George Washington looking very different from the man on the dollar bill, and yet commanding every bit of the revolutionary general’s authority. This unprecedented move during the Obama administration, a time when America was receptive to the idea of a Black president, still leaves performers and audience alike prepared to declare at Jackson’s appearance, “Here comes the general” (Miranda, “Right Hand Man” *Hamilton OCR*).

This is Not a Moment; It’s the Movement

“‘The production itself was just so alive,’ says Anthony DeCurtis of *Rolling Stone* magazine. ‘You go there, and you walk out and you’re flying’” (España). *Hamilton* was an overnight sensation on Broadway, and instantly became a landmark production. Not only did the show introduce hip-hop and rap on Broadway in ways never seen before, it also opened incredible new avenues for performers of color. In a workshop at The Miracle Center of Chicago, Miranda said of his first musical, “I started writing *In the Heights* because I wanted to make a way for myself” (España). As a Puerto Rican American, Miranda admits that there are very few leading roles available in the Broadway canon for men like himself—men of color who are not ballet dancers and who have rock voices, rather than operatic voices (España). This goal of creating spaces for minority performers and increasing minority representation is not unique to Miranda or *Hamilton*; however, it is a piece of a larger movement in Western popular culture.

In the 2010s, the exigence of representation is coming to a head, while there has been a significant influx of minority roles and casting choices in popular media. From the Marvel Universe developing ethnic and minority versions of popular heroes (Miles Morales as a Black/Latino Spider-Man; Kamala Khan as a Pakistani-American Muslim Ms. Marvel; and even a female iteration of *Thor: Goddess of Thunder*) to John Krasinski’s choice to cast Millicent Simmons, a deaf actress, in the role of a deaf character (*A Quiet Place*), conscious cultural effort is being made for representation and the creation of space for minority performers. Shipla Davé, in her 2017 article “Racial Accents, Hollywood Casting, and Asian American Studies,” comments on the struggles of “nonwhite actors [deciding] to take the [racially characterized acting] job in the hope it will lead to a successful series with good money and exposure or wait for (or create) another role that allows for some

variety and flexibility” (143). Miranda is one of many such non-white actors who chose to create new roles for people of color, rather than letting racial characterization determine their careers.

Despite its apparent suddenness, the sweeping phenomenon of hip-hop, rap, *In the Heights*, and ultimately, *Hamilton*, did not spring up out of nowhere. By the time *In the Heights* premiered on Broadway in 2008, musical theater was ready for a shakeup. The majority of Broadway shows at that time were jukebox musicals, which used the pre-existing music of well-known artists (think *Mamma Mía!*), and the creative aspect of the industry was failing (España). Musical theater was ready for something new, and performers like Lin-Manuel Miranda were ready for new opportunities in theater. This exigence, this “imperfection marked by urgency...something waiting to be done” (qtd. in Miller 111) was answered by Miranda first with *In the Heights*, and was later culminated in *Hamilton: An American Musical*. Walking on paths created by musicians, writers, and performers before him, Miranda, like Alexander Hamilton, “picked up a pen, [and] wrote [his] own deliverance” (Miranda, “Hurricane,” *Hamilton OCR*).

Immigrants—We Get the Job Done!

The meaning of *kairos* as a rhetorical device has been debated, simplified, and reimagined over the years, with an attempt by some scholars to return to the earlier roots of this Greek word. In Greek mythology, *Kairos* is a god personifying opportunity, poised for action at the right moment. Pythagoras conceived of *kairos* as “a means of coordinating the situation with response in such a way that the consequence is not simply one of propriety, but also justice” (Crosby 263). This idea of *kairos* correlates with Lloyd F. Bitzer’s concept of exigence as “an imperfection marked by urgency,” in which *kairos* results in justice for the imperfections of exigence (qtd. in Miller 111). Richard Benjamin Crosby proposes in his article “*Kairos* as God’s Time in Martin Luther King Jr.’s Last Sunday Sermon” that *kairos*, rather than being used merely as a tool of rhetoric, is an independent philosophical concept upon which rhetoric stands. For *Hamilton*, this understanding of *kairos* suggests that Lin-Manuel Miranda’s production achieved such success, not only because of intentional choices to say the right thing at the right time, but also because it steps into a space where *kairos* was already present, entering an ideal rhetorical situation.

While some of the narrative and lyrical elements of *Hamilton* were of course intentional, others were happy accidents. The emphasis on Alexander Hamilton as immigrant was done purposefully, but one of the most iconic lines from *Hamilton*, “Immigrants—We get the job done!” (Miranda, “Yorktown”, *Hamilton OCR*), was a surprise hit for Lin-Manuel Miranda. In his notes on the libretto, Miranda remarks that he simply thought the line was funny. The audience reaction was completely unexpected. “I never anticipated that the audience response would drown out the next few lines every night,” (Miranda and McCarter 121) Miranda writes, explaining that bars had to be added to the song to accommodate the inevitable applause. Miranda goes on: “Why does it get such a delighted response? Because it’s true” (Miranda and McCarter 121). Without meaning to the show struck a chord with the audience because it spoke to their existing rhetorical situation. The 2015 American audience was already prepared for the themes and content of *Hamilton*, giving the show influence and success that could not have been achieved decades before.

Caroline Miller, discussing the kairos of the rhetorical situation, asserts that “an opening can be created as well as discovered” (qtd. in Crosby 265), indicating that a rhetor might venture into territory where kairos exists already. In addition to Miranda’s unprecedented casting decisions, the kairos of *Hamilton* steps into modern political conversation by focusing on Hamilton’s status as an immigrant. Portraying Hamilton as a self-made immigrant from the Caribbean, a description fairly consistent with his early history but neglecting Hamilton’s later political stances, makes his character “contingent upon his being a bastard immigrant in a world disposed to high-born inheritance” (Magness 498). While the historical Hamilton did have a “comparatively low status” (Magness 487) next to the other Founding Fathers, this portrayal is more closely connected to Miranda’s rhetorical choices and the conversation surrounding modern immigration. *Hamilton* launched in 2015, when a Black president sat in the White House, and before the push against immigration that began with the Trump presidential campaign of 2016.

“In New York you can be a new man,” the *Hamilton* chorus sings as young Alexander arrives on the American shore (Miranda, “Alexander Hamilton,” *Hamilton OCR*), “a stranger in a strange country...[with] no property here, no connexions [sic]” (Miranda and McCarter 13). By 2016, American demographics were changing, with a surge of multiethnic influence and immigration, and *Hamilton* emerged as “the greatest artistic expression that young, multi-racial, urban America [had] yet produced” (Kasinitz 69). The appeal of 2016 presidential

candidate Donald Trump was largely related to the discomfort of an older, whiter generation of Americans who struggled with the changing face (and skin) of the America that *Hamilton* represents. On the same day that *Hamilton: An American Musical* was officially nominated for sixteen Tony Awards, Donald Trump won the Indiana Republican Primary, the last major rung on his climb to presidency (Kasinitz 69).

No More Mr. Nice President

The kairos of a production like *Hamilton* is not limited to its influence on musical theater, or even American history. If we are to understand kairos as a philosophical construct as imagined by Richard Benjamin Crosby, then kairos can create responses that generate justice, as well as mere timeliness. Crosby writes, “[Kairos] is also a tool for social change—a way to alter the trajectory of time itself” (265). *Hamilton* did in fact become such a tool and altered the trajectory of theater and popular culture; the show generated avenues for minority performers and gave voice to the immigrants of America’s past. Miranda’s masterpiece was praised by celebrities, critics, laymen, and presidents from both sides of the aisle. However, the positive endorsement of *Hamilton* from the White House of 2015 would not last in the new administration.

In 2016, Vice President-elect Mike Pence attended a showing of *Hamilton*. There was something unusual in store for this performance. The timeliness of *Hamilton* in the wake of the 2016 presidential election resonated with audiences that night, with “many lines [landing] quite differently” (Lee and Konerman) due to Pence’s presence in the auditorium. Show stopping lines like “Immigrants—we get the job done!” and various quips about Vice President John Adams throughout the show held a different energy (Lee and Konerman). Finally, as the vice president-elect departed the auditorium, the *Hamilton* cast read him a message:

We are the diverse America who are alarmed and anxious that your new administration will not protect us, our planet, our children, our parents, or defend us and uphold our inalienable rights, sir. But we truly hope this show has inspired you to uphold our American values. We truly thank you for sharing this show, this wonderful American story told by a diverse group of men and women of different colors, creeds, and orientations. (Lee and Konerman)

Vice President-elect Pence, who was booed by audience members when he entered the theater (an action discouraged by the *Hamilton* cast), stated later that week that he understood the cast's message and was not offended by it, even conceding that the boos from the audience were "what freedom sounds like" (Bradner).

However, this attitude was not perpetuated by President-elect Trump, who took to social media the day after the performance. Trump's anti-*Hamilton* tweets demanded an apology from the cast and triggered #BoycottHamilton. *Hamilton* remained sold out, and fans of the show responded to the twitter barrage with #NameAPenceMusical (Bradner). *Hamilton: An American Musical* and its supporters grasped the kairos that had been "discovered" by Lin-Manuel Miranda and continued to intentionally "create" kairos of their own (Crosby 265).

When *Hamilton* was written, and even at the time of its early performances, Lin-Manuel Miranda was not yet aware of the outcome of the 2016 election or the pending pushback on immigration in America. This demonstrates a combination of intentional rhetorical choices on Miranda's part as well as the type of kairos explained by Caroline Miller, in which an opening for kairos is "discovered" rather than created (Crosby 265). Kelly A. Myers suggests that kairos does not usually appear alone but is often accompanied by *metanoia*—another Greek term representing the sorrow of those who miss opportunity (Myers 2). *Hamilton: An American Musical* has both discovered kairos and taken advantage of *metanoia* by seizing the opportunity available (exigence). Through such an endeavor, made at the opportune time, makers of art "[remind] the audience of their responsibilities as American citizens...to fight against the ills of society...[creating] a reinvigorated interest in history and social change" (McMahon and McMahon-Smith 130).

I Am Not Throwing Away My Shot!

In the face of the American Revolution, Hip-Hop Hamilton looks to his friends and peers, Hercules Mulligan, Marquis de Lafayette, John Laurens, and the infamous Aaron Burr, and poses the question:

What are the odds the gods would put us all in one spot,
 poppin' a squat on conventional wisdom, like it or not,
 a bunch of revolutionary manumission abolitionists?
 Give me a position, show me where the ammunition is!
 (Miranda, "My Shot" *Hamilton* OCR)

Even within the world of the play (and reflecting some of the real attitudes of the historical Hamilton) Alexander takes action, acknowledging that the elements at hand (exigence) have been brought together purposely for the right time (kairos). The gods, he suggests, have “put us all in one spot.”

Kairos, the Greek god of opportunity, is often depicted as “[balancing] on a ball or wheel to illustrate his unpredictability and [carrying] a razor to warn of the sharp nature of his entrances and exits” (Myers 1). This balancing act of kairos, or opportunity, and the *metanoia*, the sorrow of missed opportunity (Myers 2), requires a perfect timeliness, the act of launching the words, the idea, or in this case, the play, at the opportune moment. Hip-Hop Hamilton raps of his refusal to “throw away [his] shot” (Miranda, “My Shot,” *Hamilton OCR*). Even declaring, “I wish there was a war! Then we could prove that we’re worth more than anyone bargained for,” the young upstart Hamilton is poised for the chance to prove his worth and create his legacy (Miranda, “Aaron Burr, Sir,” *Hamilton OCR*). While Alexander Hamilton (both Hip-Hop and historical) chose to seize the moment of the American Revolution, Lin-Manuel Miranda and supporters of *Hamilton: An American Musical* are using this unique shot to promote representation and American unity.

In her master’s thesis on rhetoric and theater, Anna Sanford Low argues “that the best way to understand the impact and influence of a play is not by examining the artifact directly but the public and its discourse in response to the experience of encountering the play” (i). Not only does *Hamilton* enter a rhetorical situation which allows the production to encourage social change, the kairos of the play also directly impacts audience reception of the content. Despite the White House backlash in 2016 and #BoycottHamilton, *Hamilton: An American Musical* has had an oddly unifying effect on the American public in a time of extreme political polarity (Low 15).

The long-awaited window for representation and unity *Hamilton* provides is celebrated by liberals and conservatives alike (Low i). Lynne Cheney, wife of former republican Vice President Dick Cheney, claims that she and her husband both loved the show, describing *Hamilton* as “a play about human beings who achieved greatly” (qtd. in Hayes and Gale 43). Former President Barack Obama even jokes that *Hamilton* “is the only thing that Dick Cheney and I agree on” (Obama). With Alexander Hamilton, “the bastard, orphan, son of a whore and a Scotsman” (Miranda, “Alexander Hamilton,” *Hamilton OCR*), fighting to better his country as an immigrant alongside Marquis de Lafayette, “America’s favorite fighting Frenchman” (Miranda, “Guns and Ships,” *Hamilton OCR*), *Hamilton*

reframes America's roots, emphasizing the role of immigrants and imagining that anyone can succeed with the right determination (Obama). But what about this musical is allowing these polarized groups to see more eye to eye?

Alexander Hamilton and his musical counterpart often considered the impact of legacy, using time wisely, speaking at the right time, and protecting personal history for posterity. The historical Hamilton got the war he so desired and the opportunity to make a name for himself. However, he died before his time, allowing his "enemies [to destroy] his rep [and] America [to forget] him" (Miranda, "Alexander Hamilton," *Hamilton OCR*). His contemporaries did not know that, at the right time, America would remember Hamilton in a new way. While the historical Hamilton often shied away from his lower-class immigrant status, Lin-Manuel Miranda uses this in another time and place as a source of pride and unity. By combining a variety of musical styles and appealing to many tastes, *Hamilton* allows "members of a diverse audience [to] feel connected to the story...[opening them] to new and disparate ideas being promoted" (Low 16). Developing "a new rhetorical understanding" (Low 16) of the American founding and the role of diversity in America is thus connecting groups of people who would not otherwise have encountered one another. Those disparate groups who encounter *Hamilton: An American Musical* together can sing along with the Schuyler Sisters: "Look around, look around at how lucky we are to be alive right now!" (Miranda, "The Schuyler Sisters," *Hamilton OCR*).

What Is a Legacy?

"What is a legacy?" Hip-Hop Hamilton asks in the potent number, "The World Was Wide Enough" (Miranda, *Hamilton OCR*). This theme, reiterated from Hamilton's youth until the moment of his fatal duel, expresses much of the underlying purpose of *Hamilton*. The question of merit and legacy, at a time when America was open to a new understanding of leadership and opportunity, gives this musical the emotional impact that resonates so deeply with audiences. In the final moments before his on-stage death, Hamilton sings acapella a frantic, impassioned soliloquy:

Legacy. What is a legacy?

It's planting seeds in a garden you never get to see.

I wrote some notes at the beginning of a song someone will sing for me.

America, you great unfinished symphony, you sent for me.

You let me make a difference.

A place where even orphan immigrants can leave their fingerprints and rise up. (Miranda, “The World Was Wide Enough” *Hamilton OCR*)

The historical Hamilton wrote in *The Federalist No. 36*, “There are strong minds in every walk of life that will rise superior to the disadvantages of situation and will command the tribute due to their merit” (qtd. in Eberl 44). *Hamilton: An American Musical* has come to the Broadway stage at a time when society is striving to achieve that very aim, opening opportunities for the determined but historically disadvantaged of our time.

Little could the historical Alexander Hamilton have known that his legacy would be written by a “young, scrappy, and hungry” Nuyorican centuries after his fatal duel with Vice President Aaron Burr. A man with a history not unlike Hamilton’s own tells of that legacy, sung and rapped on a New York City stage in a Broadway sensation that wrecked the musical world. Hamilton’s legacy, and the success of *Hamilton: An American Musical*, is owed not only to the quality of the content, but to its exquisite rhetorical situation. The rhetorical choices of *Hamilton*’s creative team, framing Hip-Hop Hamilton as a scrappy young immigrant rapping his way through the American Revolution, combined with the exigence of the musical world and the kairos of American politics ensured success with the American audience. If kairos can be described as the precise moment of opportunity, then with *Hamilton*, Lin-Manuel Miranda has not thrown away his shot.

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Jae Jarrell: Do-It-Yourself Design (D.I.Y.) for the Revolution

KIRSTIN L. ELLSWORTH

From 1967 to the present, creating a positive image for African American people has been the goal of a group of artists known initially as Cobra, the Commune of Bad Relevant Artists, and later Africobra, the African Commune of Bad Relevant Artists.¹ A close-knit community of male and female African American artists, members of Cobra and Africobra came together to challenge negative depictions of African Americans within American popular culture. Their objective was specific: to produce art that communicated the power, possibility, and beauty of African Americans. Africobra's determination to humanize African Americans diminished by caricature and the imagery of pervasive racial degradation was expressed in, "Black, positive, direct statements created in bright, vivid, singing cool-ade colors" (Jones-Hogu 2). The politics of Black Nationalism and the African Diaspora were among the forces that shaped artists' social and artistic agendas.

While the paintings and posters of Africobra are perhaps most familiar, Africobra member Elaine Annette "Jae" Jarrell (1935-) designed clothing that showcased how the American fashion system could be maneuvered to clothe African American women seeking to identify with Africobra's values. Stylish and expressive of the popular trends of the day, Jarrell's designs exemplified a radical form of what is known contemporarily as Do-It-Yourself (D.I.Y.) design. Jarrell's clothing combined handmade processes, common in D.I.Y. practice, with a subversive re-fashioning of familiar forms. Her fashions took aim almost single-handedly at legacies of dressing for racial uplift, demanding wearers take control of their own representation through clothing situated outside of the white dominated mainstream. Perhaps inevitably, white audiences appropriated her clothing in

¹ Cobra was founded by Jae Jarrell, Wadsworth Jarrell, Jeff Donaldson, Carolyn Lawrence, Gerald Williams and Barbara Jones-Hogu in 1967; Cobra changed its name to Africobra in 1969. Africobra continues in the present day with a changing body of artists.

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varying degrees thus challenging the singularity of Jarrell's D.I.Y. design practice. From one perspective, the appropriations exemplified D.I.Y. design's ability to cycle between the margins and the center of the fashion system. Yet such outcomes were not necessarily of concern to Jarrell, or Africobra, who focused on inscribing separate cultural identities and forms for African Americans.

Jarrell's D.I.Y.

Paul Atkinson views D.I.Y. design as fundamentally the domain of the amateur (1). The construct, familiar in definitions of D.I.Y., equates authenticity with a designer's place within a hierarchical system of specific training and education. Atkinson acknowledges the particular power of D.I.Y. design so defined as, "a more democratic design process of self-driven, self-directed amateur design and production activity carried out more closely to the end user of the goods created" (1). The notion of the D.I.Y. amateur as standing apart from the expectations associated with a given system of design practices and audiences relates to Jarrell. However, for her part, Jarrell was a formally trained artist and designer who maintained her own labels. Within the binary of professional designer versus amateur D.I.Y. creator, Jarrell occupied a third space negotiating elements of both paradigms. She employed professional techniques to construct garments for herself, and other women like herself, whose objectives were not met by American mainstream fashion marked as white.

Jarrell's D.I.Y. element was therefore born of necessity, and yet at the same time expressive of Africobra's objectives. Designs such as Jarrell's advanced clothing as part of Africobra's call for internal transformation as a means for African Americans to change negative views of themselves brought on by white culture. Jarrell used fashion to "voice opposing positions and stances on justice" (Von Busch 69) afforded by D.I.Y.. The messages communicated by Jarrell's clothing had few, if any, precedents in American or African American fashion. The very act of establishing a D.I.Y. fashion practice for African American woman was significant: communicating statements of Black Nationalism radical. As designs intended to read across the African Diaspora, Jarrell's fashion also spoke to community building on global levels. The larger project affirmed D.I.Y.'s capacity to go beyond the local and national. Zack Bratich and Heidi Brush position D.I.Y. as a process for crafting, "an activist community in a way that spatially and analogically links experiments in making futures differently" (234). In such

context, Jarrell's D.I.Y. fashions delivered the clothing for like-minded activism anywhere.

Fashioning Culture

Jae Jarrell was born in Cleveland, Ohio in 1935, the granddaughter of a tailor who was interested at an early age in, "making clothes in order to have something unique" (Bouthiller 65). Jarrell studied at Bowling Green State University and, in the early 1960s, moved to Chicago to attend the school of the Art Institute of Chicago. In 1963, when Jarrell met soon to be fellow Cobra and Africobra artists Wadsworth Jarrell (her future husband) and Jeff Donaldson, she was already operating her own fashion boutique *Jae of Hyde Park* on Chicago's south side (Douglas 19). Jarrell's clientele included white women, and she built part of her business designing clothing for models who needed to provide their own wardrobes (Douglas 64-5). However, when she joined Cobra, and later Africobra, Jarrell focused upon what she describes as Africobra's directive, "to reinvent yourself, reinvent how you were, reinvent your whole manner so that you had a fresh voice" (Douglas 65). To reinvent the image of African American women, Jarrell had to face their uncertain position in American fashion. Cheryl Buckley and Hazel Clark emphasize Jennifer Craik's definition of fashion as, "a technique of acculturation—a means by which individuals and groups learn to be visually at home with themselves in their culture" (23). Yet the use of the singular when describing one's culture encapsulates the problem Jarrell and other African American women faced as they sought to establish themselves as an independent clientele within a white dominated society. In what culture could African American women feel "visually at home" in terms of fashion?

Beauty and fashion choices were, for many African American women, a highly conflicted experience of combatting messages communicating their inherent unattractiveness set against white styles of presentation. The earliest fashion magazines for African American women published after Emancipation cultivated an aspirational agenda derived from white culture. In the late nineteenth century *Ringwood Journal* edited by African American writer Julia Ringwood Coston, had for instance, "as examples of what was considered most fashionable, the magazine offered images of white women on its fashion pages and in its advertisements and articles" (Rooks 50). Physical features of white models such as straight hair and light complexion were construed as components of an American beauty ideal, while

modest garments constructed from delicate, feminine fabrics communicated respectable dress standards. The pressure for African American women to adopt such paradigms contributed to the growth of an African American beauty industry dedicated to hair-straightening products, skin lighteners and other necessities for attaining the correct appearance. Failure to conform to the configuration was more than a gentle disregard for social norms. As Tanisha Ford explains, “for some black women, going out without their hair pressed connoted ugliness, social unruliness, Africanness, and even manliness” (650).

When Cobra and Africobra arrived on the scene in the late 1960s, the expectation for African Americans to follow white American beauty ideals was under scrutiny. In the 1960s, African American women and men began to express their commitments to Black Nationalism often by challenging established norms concerning dress and appearance. Seeking new alternatives, they began to express pride in their physical characteristics, “by flaunting rather than concealing their features,” (Giddings 153). while natural hair styles or Afros became popular. For many Americans, rebelling against fashion norms was a constant in the 1960s as variations in choice of clothing, “reflected the social instability of the decade” (Giddings 152). However, the restrictions for African American women in particular were removed less easily. Bain reiterates that, “by framing well-groomed women as the embodiment of racial progress and respectability, beauty cultures placed a heavy burden on black women” (Giddings 59). If an African American woman sought to abandon the roles of respectability and racial uplift assigned to her by constituencies within both white and African American cultures, she found few fashion models to communicate her new identity. At the same time, Cobra and Africobra were working to develop visual statements participating artist Barbara Jones Hogue described retrospectively as ones, “to identify our problems and offer a solution, a pattern of behavior or an attitude” (Douglas 29). Jarrell’s dress *Ebony Family* was one such solution.

D.I.Y. and the *Ebony Family*

In 1968, Cobra selected the theme *The Black Family* for a group series dedicated to visualizing positive images of the African American family. Three years earlier, the Johnson administration produced a report titled *The Negro Family: The Case For National Action*, also known as the Moynihan Report, in which the African American family was described as the product of a “tangle of pathology” (Klug

48). The Moynihan Report was part of Johnson's War on Poverty and typified the construction of African Americans as a dysfunctional community within American society whose situation remained so due to internal failures, rather than external realities of racism and economic exclusion. For the series, Jarrell designed the dress *Ebony Family* (1968).² Made of velvet with velvet collage and applique, *Ebony Family* incorporated the style trend of the day known as the shift which, with its lack of a defined waist and bust, marked the decade's "gradual breaking down of long-established traditions of gender dressing" (Laver 265). The rebellious quality of the dress's shift form was enhanced by the popular mini skirt length. However, the D.I.Y. applied elements differentiated Jarrell's dress from mainstream trends. *Ebony Family* featured appliqued portraits of a mother, son, infant and father, all of whom resembled members of the Jarrell family. The appliqued letters "B" for Black and "F" for Family reinforced *The Black Family* theme and the role of the Jarrell family as part of a larger community of African American families. "B" and "F" also signified a relationship of heightened significance for Black Nationalists like Jarrell in the late 1960s: the family of one's origin, and the family of the African Diaspora.

Brown and Shaw identify within Black Nationalism two defining, and often competing, approaches: community nationalism directed toward living successfully within white dominated American society, and the complete economic and cultural departure of separatist nationalism (22). Malcolm X, an influential figure for Cobra and Africobra, viewed African Americans as, in Manning Marable's words: "an oppressed nation-within-a-nation, with its own culture, social institutions, and group psychology" (482). For Malcolm X, the African American nation-within-a-nation described by Black Nationalism was a source for positive change on an individual, community, and global scale. In *Ebony Family*, Jarrell's commitment to Black Nationalism was clear. Worn by Jarrell or copied, presumably by other African American women, *Ebony Family* was more than an articulation of the personal is political. The dress circulated intentionally outside of America's mainstream fashion production. Jarrell introduced a mail order service for her clothing (Douglas 25) which facilitated another means for in-community proliferation and profit she controlled. Jarrell's D.I.Y. fashion transcended the day to day and inserted the wearer into a much larger context.

² *Ebony Family* is pictured on the Brooklyn Museum of Art's Permanent Collections website: www.brooklynmuseum.org/opencollection/objects/210701.

Revolutionary Suit

Luvaas locates a D.I.Y. ethos within D.I.Y. production characterized by, “the attitude that fuels it [production], the sentiments that surround it [production], and the logic that guides it [production]” (4). Jarrell’s companion piece for *Ebony Family*, the *Revolutionary Suit*,³ expressed an ethos of Black Nationalism that left no room for question as to the requirements for social and political change in American and throughout the African Diaspora. “Can an unspoken history of violence and brutality find a language in the swish of a skirt gently caressing an ankle?” (Rooks 47). *Revolutionary Suit* was a definitive answer of “no” to the question. In many respects, *Revolutionary Suit* was a fashioned embodiment of Malcolm X’s statement in 1964 of victory in the fight for the rights of Black people to land ownership and dignified treatment, “by any means necessary.”⁴ Made of tweed and suede, *The Revolutionary Suit* included a jacket trimmed with bullets and bandolier. Although she never wore *Revolutionary Suit*, Angela Davis, member of the Black Panthers, was, according to the related folklore, an inspiration for Jarrell’s design.⁵ Was the wearer of the suit willing to commit a violent action to further the objectives of Black Nationalism? Jarrell incorporated with certainty the question into the design.

Jarrell sold versions of *Revolutionary Suit* as part of her line *Jae’s Revolutionary Fashions* while the suit was also featured at Africobra exhibitions across the country throughout the early 1970s (Douglas 40). Jarrell’s use of the two-piece suit for women popularized by Coco Chanel added controversy, in part due to criticisms of Chanel’s introduction of the suit after World War II. Chanel’s

³ Jarrell was photographed by Doug Lewis in 1970 wearing the *Revolutionary Suit*. The photograph is available on the Brooklyn Museum of Art’s Library Collections website: www.brooklynmuseum.org/opencollection/archives/image/64116. A view of the suit on a mannequin is accessible on the Brooklyn Museum of Art’s Permanent Collections website: www.brooklynmuseum.org/opencollection/objects/223730.

⁴ Malcolm X delivered the speech containing the phrase on June 28, 1964. The text of the speech is included in *Malcolm X, By Any Means Necessary: Speeches, Interviews, and a Letter by Malcolm X*, Pathfinder Press, 1970, pp. 35-67.

⁵ The bullets used in Wadsworth Jarrell’s portrait of Angela Davis with bandolier attached to the canvas were wooden (Douglas 40), and by extension it would seem so were the bullets used in Jae Jarrell’s suits.

development of her suit for women in the early 1950s is viewed by some fashion historians as successful for “eliminating ornament in favor of a uniform” (Klein 254). By “taking ornaments away from women, [Chanel] transgendered them [women],” (254) Klein argues, an act which he views as a form of liberation because in part, women were no longer identified derisively as feminine or lesser because of the constraints of cumbersome accessories. Whether the Chanel suit supports a transgendered appearance is open to debate; the lack of stereotypically feminine details such as decorative trim or flowing silhouette does not necessarily connote transgender. Nonetheless, when re-formed by Jarrell, the Chanel suit, with skirt shortened to a mini length not employed by Chanel, and accessorized by bandolier with bullets, read as a military uniform specifically. Buckley and Clark explain that in fashion, “articulation of the everyday also recognizes the possibility of reinvention and resistance as the fashion system is refused, recycled, and redefined” (23). If the Chanel suit was everyday fashion for upper class white American culture, *Revolutionary Suit* was more than a redefinition for the “possibility of reinvention and resistance.” *Revolutionary Suit* was the resistance.

Whose D.I.Y.?

From the perspective of employing D.I.Y. design in the service of fashioning an entirely new identity for her clients, *Revolutionary Suit* and *Ebony Family* were successes for Jarrell. That her fashions gained attention from the mainstream fashion system dominated by whites was a more problematic accomplishment. The potency of Jarrell’s D.I.Y. design revolved upon distance from the mainstream fashion system, and instead upon ideals of economic and cultural separatism. *Jet*, an African American magazine based in Chicago, articulated the problem in the January 28, 1971 issue under the headline “Black Revolt Sparks White Fashion Craze” (*Jet* 42).⁶ As the editor explained of the adoption of Jarrell’s bandolier “look” by white women:

It had to happen. White fashion designers have finally gotten hip. For years white Americans of all sorts have been plagiarizing Black art, music, and dance and laughing all the way to the bank. And now the fashion world,

⁶ The complete issue of *Jet* may be viewed through Google books with the article featuring Jarrell on pages 42-5: bit.ly/3j3lt8B.

long known for its creative larceny, is getting into the act. It is “borrowing” from the Black Revolution. (*Jet* 42)

Re-formations by whites of elements of such as the bandolier in *Revolutionary Suit* were all too familiar rip offs of African American culture, cultivated at the expense of interest in the agendas or motivations behind the material. The reality that the Black Nationalism informing the new fashion craze was aimed, ironically, against the ideologies of white society seemed of no consequence. *Jet's* analysis highlighted the ways in which the co-opting of a D.I.Y. design by the “wrong” community had the potential to lessen the impact of the design by transforming politically significant fashion into a mere fad. The financial implications were also negative. As soon as a design entered the American fashion system, profits left the hands of the designer and were enjoyed instead by predominantly white economic entities.

Matthes explains: “cultural appropriation can harm by interacting with pre-existing social injustices to compromise and distort the communicative ability and social credibility of members of marginalized groups” (353). Jarrell had no control over the use of her fashions by those outside the clients for whom she worked. Africobra understood the nuances of appropriation by the African American community with which they identified, as well as outsiders. In the words of Africobra artist Nelson Stevens: “the real danger is trying to communicate and understand... [i]mmmediately the image maker risks being superficial, creating images too easy for the maker and receiver” (Jones-Hogu 2). Jarrell’s designs were, from their beginning, targeted for a small group of wearers largely ignored by American fashion, and the attention she gained from mainstream receivers was short-lived. Her clothing remained relevant for her African American base, however. Throughout the 1970s, Jarrell continued to develop a body of work that furthered Black Nationalist ideas and showcased certain stylistic approaches: “signature moves of which I am most proud—uncharted drape, refreshing accessory design, fine finishing, with style-setting coordination” (anxiouscatfilms). She also began to incorporate new forms from West Africa in her designs.

Transafricanism

The cover of the same issue of *Jet* that criticized whites for copying the use of the bandolier, showcased Jarrell’s West African styled floor length dress and head-tie ensemble, also with bandolier. The dress was modeled by fellow Africobra artist

Barbara Jones-Hogu.⁷ In her design, Jarrell replaced the use of a West African wax-print cloth for head-tie and dress in favor of acrylic, a popular easy-care fabric favored in the 1970s. She also unified the piece with a single fabric color rather than combining colors and patterns more typical in a West African context. Jarrell's head-tie is derived from a form known by different names across West and Southern Africa, and as the *gele* in parts of Nigeria. The head-tie is often paired with a long dress or a two-piece blouse and longer skirt known in Ghana as the *Kaba* (Gott 13). Jarrell's decision to use the *Kaba* and other elements of clothing from West Africa was perhaps, upon first consideration, reminiscent of other trends in the 1970s toward the so-called ethnic look (Laver 267).

A practice of borrowing from cultures outside of what is often defined as Western fashion, the ethnic look allowed designers to introduce new elements to audiences in search of the unusual. On another level, the ethnic look encouraged wearers to identify with a culture other than their own, much in the fashion of a tourist displaying a recently acquired and superficial taste from somewhere else. Rovine explains the limitations of the latter in the context of Africa:

While boubous, robes, raphia skirts, beadwork and caftans fascinate Western observers, and may provide inspiration for Western fashion, in popular parlance they are not fashion in their own right. Instead they are described by terms such as “costume,” “dress” and “garb,” words often modified by the overarching adjectives “traditional,” “native,” “indigenous,” and “authentic.” None of these terms carry implications of change over time. (Rovine 190-1)

Rovine's analysis raises the question as to whether Jarrell's design engaged in appropriation that risked marginalizing, and portraying as static or unchanging, the cultures from Africa to which she looked for inspiration. Matthes argues: “policing the boundaries of cultural groups can construct common understandings of ‘real’ or ‘authentic’ group members that serve to disenfranchise those who do not meet all of the relevant criteria” (355-6). By incorporating forms from Africa, was Jarrell associating her new designs with a more accurate, or even the only, experience of identity for African Americans?

Jarrell's and Africobra's views of Africa are essential toward understanding the place of forms from Africa in Jarrell's D.I.Y. design. Jarrell explained: “where we

⁷ Please consult the link in note six to view the image: <https://tinyurl.com/Jet-01281971>.

felt empowered is when we began to study our African heritage, out of our own curiosity; and at some point more formal courses as we had the opportunities to take them. We began to see the sophistication in African sculpture. It made you chuckle, it was so beyond anything modern. I mean, it was more modern than modern” (anxiouscatfilms). Africobra artist Michael D. Harris⁸ explicates what Jarrell terms heritage in terms of transafricanism, a concept put forth by Africobra artist Jeff Donaldson. Harris describes transafricanism as, “that which expresses an ‘African’ sensibility through the specific forms and elements found in the milieu of its artists” (34). The emphasis is placed upon the individual artist so that in Jarrell’s D.I.Y. ensemble, all parts work together to create a meaning that is neither authentically “African” nor “African American,” but Jarrell’s. Stated another way, Africobra’s transafricanism, “relieved the artist from the burden of defining in singular terms and therefore delimiting fashion the promise of Afrocentricity as a context for expression” (Ellsworth 33).

Conclusions

In 1977, Africobra represented North America at the Second World Black and African Festival of Arts and Culture (FESTAC) in Lagos, Nigeria.⁹ As part of the North American zone Africobra formed a: “self-defined ‘nation within a nation’” (Apter 56) evidencing their Black Nationalist foundations. Among the objectives of FESTAC ’77 was, “to facilitate a periodic ‘return to origin’ in Africa by black artists, writers and performers uprooted to other continents” (FESTAC ’77 Souvenir 13). Jarrell chaired the FESTAC ’77 Committee of Creative Modern Black and African Dress (Douglas 101-2). Jarrell described the relationship of Africa to her designs in the following terms: “I was struck by the fact that colonized African nations were beginning to be decolonized. And of course, fashion sort of takes a

⁸ Michael D. Harris has been a member of Africobra since 1979.

⁹ The First World Festival of Negro Arts was held in Senegal in 1967.

note of activities occurring in the news, things that would affect expression” (Bouthiller 68). In America, Jarrell’s D.I.Y. designs of the late 1960s and 1970s were themselves acts of decolonization in terms of the liberation of clothing for African American women from the values of white culture and production, and notions of race-based powerlessness, or even ugliness. Fifty years later, as America faces the tragedy of a society still bifurcated by race, and the same system of racial injustice, Jarrell’s D.I.Y. design revolution is more than relevant. Her D.I.Y. design practice embodies a way toward empowerment that counters mainstream white culture while providing a place in American society for African Americans to express their independence and humanity. That Black Lives Matter was the core motivation for Jarrell and Africobra from the very beginning.

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POPULAR CULTURE STUDIES JOURNAL

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The *Popular Culture Studies Journal* is an academic, peer-reviewed, refereed journal for scholars, academics, and students from the many disciplines that study popular culture. The journal serves the MPCA/ACA membership, as well as scholars globally who recognize and support its mission based on expanding the way we view popular culture as a fundamental component within the contemporary world.

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The *Popular Culture Studies Journal* is an academic, peer-reviewed, refereed journal for scholars, academics, and students from the many disciplines that study popular culture. The journal serves the MPCA/ACA membership, as well as scholars globally who recognize and support its mission based on expanding the way we view popular culture as a fundamental component within the contemporary world.

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Reviews should be sent electronically to Christopher J. Olson at olson429@uwm.edu with **PCSJ Review and the author's last name in the subject line**. Reviews should include both the review and the reviewer's complete contact information (name, university affiliation, address and email). Reviews should be sent as Microsoft Word attachments in .doc or .docx format, unless an alternative format has been approved by the editor.

If you are interested in reviewing for the *Popular Culture Studies Journal* or if you are an author or publisher with a work you would like to have reviewed, then please contact Christopher at the following address or email:

Christopher J. Olson, Reviews Editor
Email: olson429@uwm.edu

FOR REVIEWING ARTICLES

Our reviewers are important to us. We appreciate their service as well as the significant role our reviews play in ensuring quality of our publication.

If you are interested in being part of the *Popular Culture Studies Journal* as a reviewer, please complete our online form (mpcaaca.org/the-popular-culture-studies-journal/for-article-reviewers).

For our reviewers who would like a certificate for service, please complete our online form (mpcaaca.org/the-popular-culture-studies-journal/for-article-reviewers).

UPCOMING SPECIAL ISSUES

In addition to *PCSJ* calls for ongoing journal and reviews submissions (above), we are also planning for special issues. In other words, the special issues will appear alongside *PCSJ* articles and reviews in upcoming volumes. If you have an idea of a special issue, please contact CarrieLynn D. Reinhard at pcsj@mpcaaca.org.

APRIL 2021: ROBOTS AND LABOR IN POPULAR CULTURE

OCTOBER 2021: SERIOUS PLAY: LEGITIMIZING LIVE STREAMING AS POP CULTURE

MidwestPCA/ACA

The Midwest Popular Culture Association / American Culture Association is a regional branch of the Popular Culture Association / American Culture Association. The organization held its first conference in Duluth, Minnesota, in 1973. After a five-year hiatus during the 1990s, the organization held a come-back conference in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, in 2002.

MPCA/ACA usually holds its annual conference in a large Midwestern city in the United States. In the last several years, conferences have been held in Wisconsin, Minnesota, and Ohio. Upcoming conferences will be held in Missouri and Indiana. The conference typically is held in October.

Anyone is welcome to join and submit proposals for consideration at the MPCA/ACA conference. Membership in MPCA/ACA is by no means limited to those working or living in the Midwest or even the United States. In fact, presenters have come from as far away as Florida and California, and Norway and Australia.



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Independent Scholar Showcase Dialogue

ZÉLIE ASAVA, SIMON BACON, MONICA GERAFFO,
JASON KAHLER, NICOLE MARGHEIM, SCOTT
MANNING, PATRICK CALEB SMITH, AND PENNY
WICKSON WITH CARRIELYNN D. REINHARD

SPECIAL ISSUE ARTICLES: INDEPENDENT SCHOLAR SHOWCASE

“We Couldn’t Do This Without You”: Flimmaker Labor in Collaborating and Co- Creating with Audiences

JODI COOPER

Role-Playing Games as Art: An Examination of *Dungeons & Dragons* to Determine If RPGs Qualify as Art

ROBERT S. SULLIVAN

“No Tears Left to Cry”: Analyzing Space and Place of the Rock Concert Memorial

MICHELLE PAUKEN CROMER

ARTICLES: STUDENT SHOWCASE

#PutYourSticksOut: Public Expressions of Grief on Twitter About the Humboldt Broncos Accident

TERILEE EDWARDS-HEWITT

The Misrepresentation of Representation: In Defense of Regional Storytelling in Netflix’s *The New Legends of Monkey*

KATE MCEACHEN

REGULAR ARTICLES

The Paranoia of Popular Culture: Lacanian Psychoanalysis and Music Videos

JACOB W. GLAZIER

The Timeliness of *Hamilton: An American Musical*

ERIKA ARIVETT

JAE JARRELL: DO-IT-YOURSELF (D.I.Y.) DESIGN FOR THE REVOLUTION

KRISTIN L. ELLSWORTH

ABOUT THE JOURNAL