Photograph by contributor, Argy Rizos.

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Editorial

We are living in an era of overwhelming crises. Every day we hear warnings about the urgency of the global climate emergency, we listen despairingly to the latest political decisions made by the Trump Administration, we tire at the endless elections taking place in the UK – it seems never-ending.

The current state of the world is enough to leave anyone feeling hopeless, however, every so often, there are stories which remind us about the wonderful diversity amongst humans. This journal contains snapshots of humanity, from Haiti, to Washington, to our own local Leith. Our contributors have examined a range of topics including feminism and eroticism within dance, power relations within medicine, and the contradictory value of ruins in Lebanon. These authors have delved into cultures across the world; their work will ignite your knowledge of people thousands of miles away as well as those closer to home.

Some of these articles will leave you feeling inspired by the revolution of everyday people, others will leave you despairing at the global state of human cultures. True to the nature of humanity, there is a mixture of good and bad, beauty and violence.

re:think is a peer-reviewed, open-access, interdisciplinary journal exploring the potential of ethnography as a form of creative research practice and expression. We welcome pieces from all undergraduate students in the form of academic essays, shorter informal or reflective pieces, short films, and photo-essays. This is our second year of publication and we were delighted and overwhelmed by the number of pieces we received. The articles in this journal are but a small selection of undergraduate ethnographic research.

We would like to express our gratitude to the peer reviewers who made the publication of these articles possible. Their kind and constructive criticism helped our authors to finalise the pieces which are present here. We also thank John Harries and Leah Eades who guided the whole process. Thank you to Alexandra Woodhouse who designed our posters and the vibrant lightbulb symbols which decorate this journal. Finally, we thank all our authors – your ethnographies have shaped this edition of re:think into a thought-provoking journal which showcases excellent undergraduate work.

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Talking About Tiny Houses: An Interviewing Profile of Erin and Chris

Ellie Cleasby

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Talking About Tiny Houses: An Interviewing Profile of Erin and Chris.

Ellie Cleasby

Abstract

This piece is a snippet of an interview from a larger research project titled: "The Social Practice of Living and Travelling in Small Mobile Living Structures". Using a style popularised by Studs Terkel in his book 'Working' (1974), I have used the interviewee's own words but manipulated the order of the sections to make a cohesive narrative about living in a Tiny House. Erin and Chris talk about life in their tiny house within the framework of Social Practice Theory, informing the reader about the skills, materials and meanings that have contributed to their current living situation.

Keywords: tiny houses, interviewing profile, Terkel analysis, sustainability

We currently live in a world which uses the logic of inequalities and unlimited extractivism to drive the economy, to the detriment of the environment and the people who are oppressed (Keil, 2018). These exploitative practices have contributed to climate change. Meanwhile, people have formed communities in opposition. They inhabit tiny homes on wheels, converted vans and RVs. These 'Small Mobile Living Structure(s)', (*SMLS),* attract people who do not want to spend up to half of their income on housing, as Americans increasingly must (Desmond, 2015), or be fixed to one location.

This article is a snippet of conversation from an interview I conducted with Tiny House dwellers, Erin and Chris, for part of wider research titled: 'The Social Practice of Living and Travelling in Small Mobile Living Structures'. It has been written up in a style popularized by Studs Terkel (1974), named a 'master of oral history' (Manzoor, 2017). The first paragraph is written in the third person as an introduction to the interviewees and their situation, then the rest of the text uses their words and a first-person perspective. While each individual has their own reasons and motivations for joining the tiny movements, Erin and Chris's interview

touches on several key themes identified in my research: sustainability, flexibility and affordability.

Erin sits outside her beautiful tiny home, with her dog GorGor, on a piece of land surrounded by forest in Washington State. While it is only about 40 minutes from downtown Seattle, this plot of land could not feel further away from the busy metropolitan city. Returning from his run, Chris joins the conversation. While both Erin and Chris considered sustainable housing, it was Erin who convinced Chris that a tiny home was the way to go. When everything fell into place perfectly, they decided to pull the trigger and do it. It is their way of giving the middle finger to the socio-economic systems which create high rent, high parking prices in the city and the bigger is better mentality.

We did it to kind of denounce the American lifestyle that you just need to have the biggest house you can to be successful. I just don't understand that, I don't agree with it. We've been nomadic people our entire existence. We've always been as small as possible because it uses less energy. Our last place in Capitol Hill (Seattle) was $2200 *a month*. What is that? Where I come from in Montana, that's a mansion payment. That's insane. So, it just made every bit of sense to us. We love being out in literally the middle of the forest. We're close enough to the city but we're in the middle of the forest here.

This is plan C for so many people who are just so stuck. We're stuck. Like we're never going to own a home. The median house price in Seattle is what, like $700,000?! No - that to me is shackles. That doesn't make any sense. That's all your ducks in one barrel. Every economist will tell you to diversify your assets. I'm a bartender and he's a tattoo artist so we both have unverifiable income to a certain extent. So, this is the only home ownership we could ever have. This is a solution for so many people who can't get over the rent trap.

It keeps your existence in check. To sift through what's important possession wise. You end up with so much crap that you just don't need, and it makes you feel like you're under water at certain points. This allows you to live simply and think about what you're gonna buy before

you buy it. You know, can I fit this into my existence? No. We're under 90 square feet of no. It adds discipline to your spending too. Like why buy things anymore on a dying planet?

I hope we don't have to move our Tiny House around. We're so happy. I mean we have a pool. We *love* it out here. But we can. That's one thing about our generation specifically. Who knows where our job is gonna be tomorrow. The fact that we just have the ability to move is huge. That's such a weird weight off our shoulders. If everything goes wrong, if the earthquake happens tomorrow, we're ok. We can move. It affords you a little bit of freedom. But, we really hope we never have to. We're in paradise. I could stay here for the next 20 years.

It takes a lot of skill and time too. Just putting it up, parking it, unhooking it, levelling it took an hour. I had to learn how to not pee and poop at the same time with our toilet because, it's separated. You have to go then flip the lever. That was the biggest learning curve. And you have to close the lid to the toilet no matter what, so it can aerate properly. We do grey water. Everything is sustainable here. So, we had to learn to haul our grey water over to the little mulch pit that we made where it'll aerate and what not. Once you got used to what went where and how it works, it was really a snap to do it. It took a little while to figure it out. But now it's half an hour of actual work at most. Everything has been made so simple by a lot of modern technology. I mean a lot of the technology we use here has kind of been perfected by RVs. They've done a lot of the work for tiny houses.

Rather than getting up and having breakfast and a coffee, you gotta get up and empty the pisser, fill the water, empty the grey water. You actually have to get up and start doing stuff or else your day is not going to be well by the middle of it. I like the discipline it provides. It's oddly enough a lot nicer to start your day taking care of your homestead and living entirely for yourself opposed to immediately being in this place where you're living for other people. You don't have this immediate ego trip of trying to compare your life to other peoples'. Same thing with the news. You start here. You start present. It's the best. I'm stoked on our decision.

We're essentially hiding in plain sight out here, in a way. It's illegal to live in an RV full-time, unless you're a carer. I'm starting to become a care taker for my cousin, Wendy, who has arthritis, so I can qualify as a carer and I can live completely legally out here in an RV. For whatever reason, King County classifies them as RVs because they're small and they're on

wheels so they fit the same zoning requirements. But they need to be redone. It's really important that these get reclassified in a certain way because these can be a solution for so many people. You can do it sustainably. You can do it healthily. You can do it safely. There are ways to do this that are by code.

This was definitely something [Erin] designed, almost entirely. She figured it out before we pulled the trigger on it. So, without her, I probably wouldn't be doing it. I'm stoked that I'm here for sure. It's rad that what once was a pipe dream – to live more simply and sustainably in the woods – this allowed it to happen now. It was a way to make it happen without having to sink some hundreds of thousands of dollars into land that I don't know whether or not I would like in a few years. Well, even then it's not legal to park a tiny house on your own land because they're not to code. The exception is places where they are legal: Olympia, Portland, there's a couple of others.

Now that I think about it, all my friends who do this are either women or couples. I only knew one male doing it, and he didn't get all the way. I think women are naturally nesters and home makers. There are exceptions of course but I think that might just be a woman thing for whatever reason. We have always been nesters. I think a lot of women feel taken advantage of by renting systems too because they're so predominantly male owned. They'll pull back from that. You're your own master. Women have balls too. We're dreamers, we're creators, we're all these things. Maybe it's cause men have more toys too. They like big TVs. We're building a shed to keep all his toys in, his tools. Women have our things, like too many shoes and whatever, but they'll fit in a closet.

There's a lot to think about. I think it was Dee Williams who said tiny houses were meant for cities. I get you can fit more people, and there are houses in Seattle that have huge back yards. It's great but we would not have done this if we didn't have this situation. That's what really got the ball rolling. Figuring out where to put it is the hardest thing. If you don't have access to water or have enough space to compost everything, it's probably going to get a little messy. It wouldn't be quite as sustainable. It makes you prioritise your water usage, cause you've got to fill up the huge tank again. In my opinion if you're not going to use it to do a certain thing like that then what's the point? I mean if you're not going to try to use less or reduce your, for lack of a better word, carbon footprint then why?

We still work in Seattle but I don't know how much longer that's going to last for me. It's so expensive. Parking is insane, it's literally half of minimum wage. There are so many problems with housing. So many problems with foreign investor companies coming in causing a bubble and profiting from it and no one wants to do anything about it. It's an economic disaster that we could potentially control but no one wants to. It's trying to reason with people who are making a profit. I think for both Chris and I, more than anything, this is a giant middle finger to all of that. It's punk rock as hell. This is our 'fuck you' to all that, and financial institutions. Don't want no part, don't have to have a part. Our bills are so low that I don't feel this pressure to be like 'I've got to figure something out because I've got rent due and it's thousands of dollars…'. I could just maybe not too. Maybe I just won't.

I feel like a lot of people are searching for something like that because people are fed up with how convenient life is; it's very unnatural. You want to see what the actual world is all about. I think there's a growing interest in that and it causes us to live in a Tiny House. That's kind of a driving force behind it. It's kind of a perfect storm between that and the economic crisis plus climate change and stuff like that. This is us trying to make a difference in that respect. Change our lives for the better, so hopefully we can feel more comfortable with the impact we're having on the planet.

Living in a SMLS is a very different experience to that of a traditional house. It requires those who undertake it to learn a variety of new skills. In this uncertain world, plagued by environmental problems and increasing inequalities, it offers an environmentally sustainable, affordable alternative. As a new movement, the possibilities for SMLS are still being discovered, with conversations like this one building our understanding.

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The Power of Cough Syrup: How Suffering is Controlled and Regulated in a Rural Haitian Clinic.

Michael Cole Grady

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The Power of Cough Syrup: How Suffering is Controlled and Regulated in a Rural Haitian Clinic.

Michael Cole Grady

Abstract

During my time working at a clinic in rural Haiti, I noticed one of the doctors was engaging in a rather odd practice: prescribing cough syrup at completely inappropriate times. I attempt to analyze such a practice, revealing how it can control how pain is experienced and expressed. I also discuss the histrionic nature of this practice and how it helps perpetuate trust when combined with other situational nuances. To conclude I discuss how it reflects medical humanitarianism on a global scale and the implications of power that come with it.

Keywords: Medicalization, Pain, Control, Power, Trust, Medicine

Introduction

I did not begin this journey with ethnography in mind, and to be perfectly honest it was not until after I came home that I began to critically think about what had happened. I was volunteering at a clinic in Grand-Bois, Haiti, with a secular NGO partnership based in Atlanta. It is only through reflection that these experiences reveal their truth.

The spectacle of such an extravagant building amongst the backdrop of a rural mountain community incited feelings of grandeur and a strange sense of awe. I could easily have been gazing

up at the Eiffel Tower or the Great Pyramids. The clinic grounds were a bustling social space; if I had not been told otherwise then I would have assumed it was a community center. People were sitting on the concrete steps, telling stories and bantering; a vendor had set up shop not too far from the gates; children who had just finished school for the day were rushing by; a mother was filling up jugs of clean water from a well dug by the clinic. To say it was an overwhelming sight would be an understatement. I was quickly ushered inside, away from the liveliness of the grounds. I was shocked to be met with a piercing silence, to be hit with dim lighting, grey floors, and the distinctive, sterile smell of a hospital.

Before I had the chance to take any of it in, I was given the grand tour. I was directed to the maternity wing, outpatient consultation rooms, and a ward for treating malnourishment. What was most striking, however, was the room for people convalescing from traumatic injury and serious illness. The injured and sick were promptly separated from the benevolent chaos of the exterior, their humanity stripped away as they laid in beds, putting all their faith in well dressed, well-spoken men with stethoscopes. Their entire lives were reduced to nothing more than a flesh wound or malaria.

The matrices of control surrounding the hospital are by no means hidden. Whether it is through the characteristic scrub uniforms that physically separate surgeons from their patients, the surrendering of control through anaesthesia, or even the medical terminology that sounds like jargon to the untrained ear, medical complexes do their best to reaffirm authority wherever possible.

The inherent power relations in biomedicine are strengthened when applied to other cultures and groups. A report by Aida Benton on the treatment of the Ebola crisis provides a clear example of this. When a Sierra-Leonean doctor contracted the virus, the request to evacuate him to Germany for further treatment was denied by the WHO; this was despite a pressing shortage of medical staff in the midst of the crisis. However, when two American missionaries fell ill, they were promptly evacuated and treated. Health is experienced and approached differently for different people depending on who is in power. In the case of Ebola, supranational health organizations were in power, creating the circumstances necessary for the marginalization of Sierra-Leonean doctors' lives (Benton 2010). A similar phenomenon is taking place at the clinic.

The health and wellbeing of those who visit the clinic are undergoing a process not unlike the one described by Benton. However, instead of local communities being treated differently in the context of Ebola, the residents of Grand-Bois are putting their health in the hands of an outside force. As soon as they cross the barrier from the lively exterior to the grey, clinical interior, they are automatically assigned a position in an unavoidable hierarchy as either a healer or a patient. By entering the clinic as a patient, one medicalizes their own body. They willingly submit control of themselves, running the risk of being labeled only by their affliction. And what perpetuates this system of control in a rural Haitian clinic: cough syrup?

Cough Syrup: The Ultimate Prescription

I was shadowing one of the doctors as he was treating patients with minor afflictions and complaints, most of whom were pregnant women or people complaining of stomach aches. He

talked me through the motions: asking the patient what was wrong, feeling their bodies for any physical abrasions or lumps, doing a quick ultrasound, writing a prescription, and sending them on their way. It was, on the surface, entirely typical of a clinic; there was nothing too out of the ordinary. My perceptions quickly changed when I noticed him consistently prescribing cough syrup at completely inappropriate times.

A short conversation yielded the purpose of such an odd practice. He told me that it was the best way to keep them happy and trustful. Many complaints could not be feasibly and efficiently treated; in order to save time and resources for more urgent matters, he needed a way to quickly cycle through patients without fear of belligerency or the degradation of trust. In other words, cough syrup was being used as a 'magic bullet' but, instead of attacking only one affliction or disease, it was attacking all of them.

John Mann explains the concept of the 'magic bullet' better than I ever could (Mann 2004). It is essentially a specific cure to a specific virus that acts without harming the rest of the body. Upon ingestion or inoculation, it targets one bodily ailment, completely ignoring the "healthy" parts of the body. By portraying cough syrup as a tool to cure all ailments, the doctor is cementing his role as a powerful, knowledgeable healer with the expertise and ability to cure – or at least treat – a wide range of illnesses. In situations where he decides that "real medicine" is not required, he turns to his "magic bullet", a tool that is reinforced by patients' trust in both him and the clinic as a whole.

The feeling of suffering can be a very personal, very isolating experience. It is often completely subjective, being only defined by the one in pain. Cough syrup changes this – it takes the ability to identify and confront suffering away from the patients and into the hands of the doctors. By being able to dictate "lesser" forms of pain through a quick, dismissive prescription, they are essentially deciding the extent to which one suffers. When they decide that someone is in "enough pain", the patient is wheeled off to the back of the clinic when they can begin to heal in isolation from the outside world. However, because cough syrup is being presented as a cure – or at the very least an effective treatment – the patients accept their prognosis and drink the bitter-tasting liquid, believing that it will assuage their condition. When the pain persists weeks, or even months, into the future, they come back to the clinic for a follow-up, only to be met with the same result.

How pain is expressed and socially perceived, however, tells an entirely different story. Nancy Scheper-Hughes, in her ethnography about Nervoso in Brazil, provides a beautiful example of how defining a disease can influence how people experience it (Scheper-Hughes 1993). She discusses how medicalizing starvation impacts how it is dealt with, felt, and confronted. Nervoso is hunger taking the form of illness; it is lived, described, and treated as one, but it cannot be cured. Her case study highlights both the subjectivity of illness and how powerful defining diseases can truly be. Doctors at the clinic, however, use a generalized treatment to influence how it is perceived and experienced. By defining an ailment only by its treatment, the doctors are effectively controlling the nature of the disease itself – in doing so, in regulating both public and personal pain, the clinic is exerting even greater control over the community (Ravinder 2017).

The Theatrics of Trust

In order for this system to work, the trust between patient and doctor must be almost unconditional. The grandiose appearance of the clinic, the apparent genius of the doctors, the sociality of the clinic's exterior, the ethos inherent in the word "clinic", and even the dark, clean, cold atmosphere of the interior, all serve to build trust and faith. It is a stark contrast to the lively outside world, where typical daily life reigns. The audacious and bourgeois nature of the structure proves a perfect foil to the dirt roads of the agrarian community. The clinic presents itself as a large, imposing structure. Anna Barford argues that 'uneven connections between places reinforce inequality and disempower poorer nations' (Barford 2017, p.31). It could be argued that the unequal nature of the clinic and its power structures serve to disempower the community's residents, manipulating them into trusting the new installation. This complex is not restricted to the one clinic; the inequalities between doctors and patients, between the sterile, orderly nature of the hospital and the chaotic and often dangerous outside world can be applied to medicine as a general statement. The situation in which the clinic exists, however, only serves to amplify feelings of disempowerment and their potential psychological impacts.

Continuing on the theme of trust, this act of prescribing undoubtedly plays a massive role in perpetuating a trustful relationship between the doctor and the patient – regardless of how one-sided it really is. It is a physical symbol of the doctor's expertise, existing as ethos contained within a piece of paper. Especially on the smaller scale of the clinic, it would be easy to avoid prescriptions for drugs that are not as valuable or scarce – cough syrup being one such drug. The act of writing a prescription, however, changes its purpose from an over-the-counter cold and flu relief to something much more intense. It becomes something more than it is, a commodity that

the generous doctor is sacrificing for the well-being of a patient. Trust in hospitals revolves around keeping up appearances, and prescriptions are certainly no exception to this trend. The theatrics surrounding the prescription of cough syrup play a vital role in making this system work; it is important to realize their role in perpetuating trust in the medical sphere.

However…

I hold great respect and admiration for the doctors I shadowed and the people I got to know during my time in Haiti. This should by no means be interpreted as a critique of them.

Medicine and the people who purvey it are often seen as one-dimensional heroes, geniuses who spent a great deal of time, money, and stress, to get where they are. A portrait of perfection is painted and advertised to the world. They are romanticized as healers who go off to distant corners of the world to help people, leaving in their wake a legacy of health, empowerment, and well-being.

As many lives as medicine has saved – as much suffering as it has cured – it is dangerous to view anything so bluntly. The world is not a Disney movie; there is no objective right and wrong. Even something as seemingly noble as a clinic in rural Haiti must be evaluated holistically, from the miraculous impact it has had on the community, to the control it perpetuates, and everything in between. This should be interpreted as a microcosm of the interactions between 'Western' medicine and the Global South. The relationships of trust, control over the suffering body, and the theatrics of medicine may manifest themselves in many different ways, but they are essential to

understanding and limiting the negative implications of medicine, all the while preserving its integrity and its extraordinary nature.

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Producing Truth?
Some Reflections on Ethnographic Research

Rachel Runesson

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Producing Truth?
Some Reflections on Ethnographic Research.

Rachel Runesson

Abstract

An extract of fieldnotes is presented from the first ethnographic research I participated in: a transect walk with Mormon missionaries on Middle Meadow Walk. In this short reflection, I look at some of the issues that arose when applying knowledge from books and lectures to real-life interactions with human beings during research. In particular, issues around the self in the field are discussed, and some further questions concerning the nature of anthropological interpretation raised.

Keywords: Reflexivity, the self in the field, religion, decolonisation.

Transect walk with Elder Jacobs and Elder Mac (pseudonyms)
6th Feb 2019
Early afternoon

The weather was deceptively spring-like, save for the occasional gust of cold wind reminding us that winter is not over just yet. We meet the Missionaries outside the Library Café, both are well-dressed with shiny black name tags attached to their coat. As it turns out they have just finished an interview with another group doing a similar project, and I feel a stinging sense of guilt. Elder Jacobs, however, assures us that it's alright – 'after all', he says, 'we pester people all the time'. [...] Elder Mac comments that the Meadows would be good for our purposes (I assume they knew that the focus of our project was the Meadows).

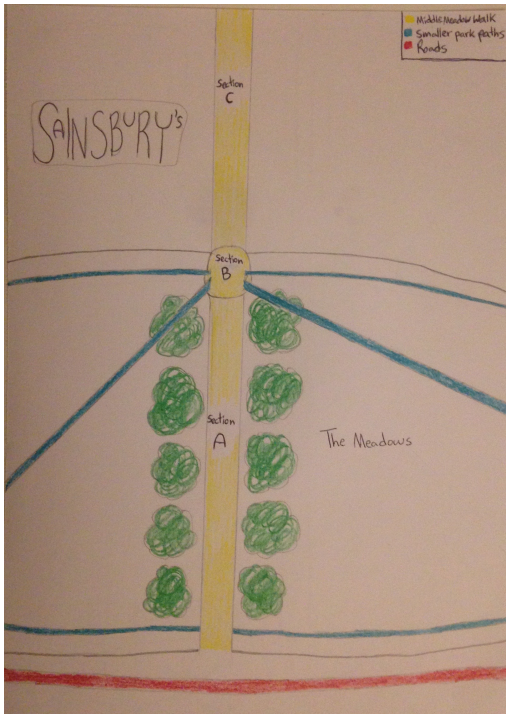

Figure 1 Simple map of Middle Meadow Walk showing a division of the space into three sections: A, B, and C, from the bottom up. Drawn by Rachel Runesson.

As we walk along one of the smaller paths towards Section B (see Fig. 1), Elder Mac suddenly turns away from the group, and asks a woman what music she was listening to. She did not remove her earphones and looked down at her phone defensively, perhaps trying to avoid having a conversation with the Missionaries. Elder Jacobs keeps walking and talking, and I am unsure about how we should proceed. Should one of us stop and stay with Elder Mac? If so, should we keep our distance while he talks, or walk up and be clearly *in* the conversation? The energetic Elder Jacobs is still telling us about his home, and so both of us keep walking with him. We have now reached the busy Section B, where all paths in this area cross. Elder Jacobs seems a little unsure of how he should act. He asks one person how their day was, but they continue right past without even raising their eyes.

We stand for a time centrally in Section B. I would have thought we were in the way, but there is plenty of space and no one seems bothered by us. Elder Mac joins us and we ask a few questions. There are a fair number of people walking by, but the Missionaries say it's not exceptional. We ask why they always walk in twos, and Elder Jacobs surprises me by asking if we want the 'Biblical' or the 'real' answer. Surely they must consider the Biblical to be part of reality? He proceeds to give us both: The first is that the testimony of two is better than that of one, and the second is that it is safer in twos. We ask what dangers they encounter and they tell us it is not unusual to be punched, even in midday in seemingly safe areas. They also ask us how *we* respond to missionaries, and I answer that I have my own religion (I'm a Lutheran), but that I always enjoy a discussion. All of us seem uncertain of how to continue this talk, but in the end both Missionaries start talking to people close by, while my group member and I stand to the side and observe. It feels odd standing there, watching them and writing in my book. I feel intrusive, if only because the people they approach do not know who we are or even that we are watching them. We are still in Section B. I am standing closest to Elder Jacobs

and can hear parts of the heated conversation he is having with a man about the existence of God. Though they stand in the middle of a path, just at the edge of Section B, the walk is wide and people have no trouble walking around them. When he finishes he comes over to us and talks about how people often attack their religion, despite the Missionaries never pushing their views. I respond with understanding, and explain that I sometimes have to deal with aggressive people who become upset about religion. Both talk to a few more people, but most either walk by with blank stares straight ahead, or with a word about some appointment. I ask Elder Jacobs if they usually stay in one area for this long, and he says that no, they usually walk around more. He also comments that he usually jokes more, but he's nervous with people watching.

Reflection

I had read about fieldwork, attended lectures about fieldwork, and discussed fieldwork: in theory, everything was crystal clear and I thought I was ready. Yet there I was, fumbling to participate in observation (or was it observing in participation?), 'hang out' (but 'deeply'), and blend in seamlessly with the Missionaries, not disturbing their work. It is not strange, perhaps, that my group member and I had a strong sense of uncertainty delving into our first ever fieldwork experience. Of course, I had learned about the challenges of fieldwork as well, the need for reflexivity and the inevitability of influencing the situation around you. However, nothing brought all this to such a degree of reality as actually being 'in the field'.

It is crucial to realise that research is part of the world that it studies (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007), and this is true on more than one level. The impossibility of removing oneself from the process of research seems obvious on paper, but our actual experience brought about many thoughts. On one hand, there was the reality of the Missionaries reacting to us. Elder Jacobs and Elder Mac could not simply ignore us as if we were benches or trees – we were human beings who must be interacted with. The presence of our physical selves influenced their reactions to us, for example in Elder Jacobs' comment that he was acting differently than he normally would, or in the fact that they stayed much longer in one area than usual. Our inexperience certainly worked to shape how the fieldwork played out, but there is more to the self than simply being in a place.

In Scheper-Hughes' (2000) article discussing reactions to her controversial book about madness in Ireland, she emphasises how the ethnographer's own feelings will shape and impact

their work. Furthermore, she goes against Devereux's idea that all bias and subjectivity can be erased, arguing instead that perceptions are always filtered through what you know, and therefore through *who you are* (Scheper-Hughes, 2000). This is the key factor that became clear in the process of fieldwork, and I believe only *could* be made clear in this real-world context, with the classroom being, to varying degrees, isolated from what it teaches. My position as a Lutheran Christian, and past experiences dealing with people being aggressive towards religion shaped how I felt and presented myself, but also how I interpreted events. It coloured how I thought they would react to things. For example, when Elder Jacobs brought up the verbal attacks on their faith I was quick to try to relate this to my own experiences in high school, perhaps so that he would feel that I understood him and was not just another member of mainstream religio-aggressive society, as I had come to understand it. In a later discussion with my group member, I was considering Elder Jacobs' apparent 'division' of his world into the Biblical and the 'real', since that is something I myself have grown accustomed to doing. Outwardly, I divide my 'religious world' and my 'societal world' depending on who I am with; in the 'academic world', into which this reflection fits, I tend to shy away from speaking of my own religion. Even writing this now I feel apprehensive about possible conclusions that might be drawn about me. Of course, my own experiences may in fact be blocking me from understanding Elder Jacobs' perspective, and I should have been more wary of applying my own experiences to others. But then again, I would not find any lecture on how to deal with conflicts of religion, because religion, of course, is a subjective thing that anthropologists study, not have.

Here is where a series of questions began popping into my mind. Academia, I have been ex/implicitly taught since a young age, is an objective, scientific, secular institution. In our lectures, anthropology has taken issue with such things as objectivity and 'scientific' procedures in a way that brings up great questions, but there has been no mention of *anthropologist's* religions. This came into my mind as I was standing in Middle Meadow Walk, and I realised that my own religion was influencing the way I thought about the situation. I took the idea further and wondered what would happen if I were to be absolutely crazy and start talking about God in my reflections. Should I give the academic mindset precedence? Should I once again hide my own realities of truth? I wondered why the thought of speaking of my own faith academically bothered me so much. By ignoring my own realities, am I not simply perpetuating a neo-colonial discourse where 'Euro-American-scientific culture', as a blanket concept, becomes some standard for how the world should be, and on the basis of

which interpretations should be made? If I were, perhaps, to take *myself* seriously, what would happen? What kind of ethnography would begin to take shape and what new questions would be asked? While the project at hand – seeing how Middle Meadow Walk was being experienced spatially– seemed to have nothing to do with questions of my own faith, such issues were clearly on my mind. If I reflect on my position in order to recognise and filter out bias, why is it that only the secular remains? This is the way in which I understand what Scheper-Hughes (2000) meant when she spoke about not being able to remove the *self* from the fieldwork. We all understand the world through the lens created via our experiences and truths, why then are secular interpretations repeatedly the only ones deemed legitimate? I think the main issue lies in the assumption of neutrality. It is not that the secular perspective is necessarily wrong to use, indeed I see many benefits in it as a methodological tool that most understand, but in assuming that it is a blank slate, issues may arise. It is always important to apply a critical lens to your own standpoint, but assumptions may be easier to miss if academic institutions, and most people within them, agree with you.

These conclusions may seem far removed from a walk with Missionaries in the Meadows, but they are some of the things that became very real when confronted with actual fieldwork outside of the classroom for the first time. This extrapolation of thoughts may become interesting to explore in the future. How much richer might our understandings of the world be if we let ourselves be taken seriously, and bring new and different concepts of truth not just into our ethnographies, but make them the very *base* of our research? How, for example, would an ethnography based on Hindu pantheon of gods/goddesses, examining a Christian concept of trinity look? Or an ethnography based on animism, examining state-run environmental programs? Perhaps we should open up for this mosaic of ethnographies, a mosaic which may help us more deeply understand and take seriously other people. Indeed, is this perhaps where true decolonisation lies?

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Work Bitch: The labour of redefining kinship within Ballroom culture.

Fiona Halliday

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Work Bitch: The labour of redefining kinship within Ballroom culture.

Fiona Halliday

Abstract

Ballroom culture (created by queer, transgender, black and latinx communities in America) has gained popularity throughout Europe in past decades. These photographs depict the community currently growing ballroom culture in Scotland. This queer community destabilises gender and kinship norms, before redefining gender and kinship as collective processes requiring labour. The formation of kinship bonds through labour 'queers' notions of family and enables the Scottish community to feel they are maintaining ballroom culture in an appropriate way. Their commitment to 'authentically' growing the ballroom scene provides insight into the use of 'culture' by marginalised people as a socio-political tool, suggesting its potency out with anthropological discourse.

Keywords: ballroom culture, liminality, queer, cultural appropriation, kinship

"You have to imagine you are a praying mantis. You stare the judges down and you come out thinking 'I am going to f*ck you and then I am going to eat you' "

By collectively performing 'hyper-femininity', Ballroom members draw attention to the relational aspect of gender, thus incorporating kinship into gender performativity. By adopting kinship terminology to define the relationships between community members, they subvert notions of pre-existing kinship by demonstrating that relations are formed through endurance and labour. Ultimately, essentialist assumptions of gender and kinship are challenged by the ballroom community, thus exposing both categories as unstable.

Throughout ballroom performances, gestures are enacted in a purposeful, exaggerated way: what I describe as 'hyper'-femininity'. Hands were often used as a tool to guide the audience's gaze and demonstrate hyper-femininity. The extract below describes Faya demonstrating hyper-femininity through Vogue Femme:

During her hand performance, Faya gently brushes her pubic area and accentuates her breasts. She sculpts the shape of her chest with elegant hands before changing tempo and suddenly pushing them inwards. Her style is about teasing and playing. She directs the viewers eyes with her hands, inviting them to observe her body. Through her visual storytelling, she accentuates her body for display. The gestures are fairly quick and fluid so as only to hint at certain body parts. She is flirting with her audience, never quick focusing at length on one area. Her pace maintains intrigue and excitement. - Fieldnote (10.06.18)

“Having that ethics of care amongst your ballroom family is really important because you can get quite discouraged. Like anything, if you put it out and people don’t respond to it, it’s like shit. It’s really, really, hard. You can get really impatient as well because you’re like, ‘why am I not growing fast?’ You really need people to care for you and guide you through the scene or else it’s quite a difficult road”

The gestures and actions performed by the ballroom community are based on norms of femininity that are assumed to be 'natural'. By exaggerating these movements through hyper-feminine performance, they demonstrate that gender is made through its production. It is the "doing" of gender that creates understandings of being a man or a woman (Butler 2004, p.1 emphasis added). To destabilise gender as biological, they perform an exaggerated, constructed femininity, not an exaggerated 'natural' femininity. It is this crucial distinction which demonstrates how the ballroom community denaturalise gender.

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(dis)connection: in a connected world, all we miss is each other

Argy Rizos

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(dis)connection: in a connected world, all we miss is each other.

Argy Rizos

Abstract

Mobile phone use and social media have become the norm in modern societies around the world. In an attempt to connect with the world out there, people sometimes neglect present time and immediate environments. For some, this is a way 'in' and for others a way 'out'. This photographic ethnography investigates the contradiction between connection and disconnection in people's desire to maintain relationships, stay informed or be entertained.

Keywords: Technology, social media, relations, connection, disconnection

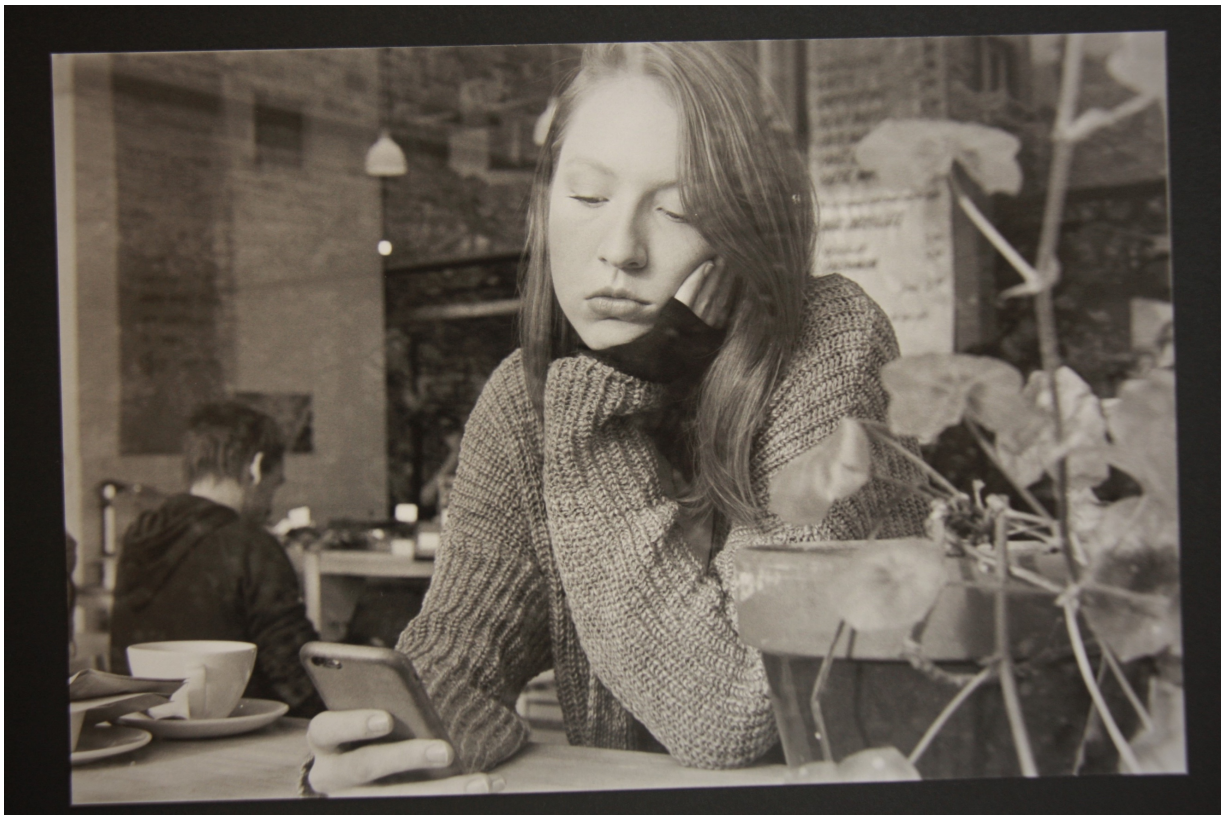
A photographic ethnography about the effects of the use of mobile devices on the individual and the social environment. People get caught in a contradiction between the connection and what's not there, while at the same time they disconnect from their surroundings. Mobile phone use, mostly for social media, allows for relationships to be constantly in motion but this also leads to isolation and avoidance.

"...I should be working on this new contract but I can't help checking out the news today. I will be able to get back to work once I finish reading this article. That's what I said to myself an hour ago..." - Mark, Marketing Consultant

"...I'll have a quick look at my messages while I have the chance; my boyfriend will be in the toilet for at least two minutes. I don't like letting people wait for my response. It is rude, isn't it?..." - Sheela

"...We always spend our time between lectures together, but somehow each of us ends up somewhere else. I don't think any of us is really bothered, talking can sometimes be hard work..." - Edinburgh College of Art students

"...I always look at my phone in public places, especially bus stops. I find it really annoying when people look at me and I'm aware of it, or even worse when they try to say something like 'good morning'..." - Dorian, Apprentice



"...I'm so bored, I'm so bored. A couple of videos should make the time go much quicker. Unless I pick up that book that my friend gave me last month that's still in my bag... maybe not" - Crystal

"...the weather outside is crap so we're staying in today for some family time. That's after we all have some 'me' time first..." - Morningside family

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From *Taroosh* to Tom Jones: Mediating Local and Global Discourse through 'Gay Lingo'

Victoria G. Amos

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From *Taroosh* to Tom Jones: Mediating Local and Global Discourse through 'Gay Lingo'.

Victoria G. Amos

Abstract

This essay explores how members of the LGBTQ+ rights organisation, UP *Babaylan,* discursively navigate queer identifications and concepts of belonging, based on fieldwork conducted in Quezon City, Philippines. I argue that elements of 'gay lingo', one of many Filipino LGBTQ+ argots, establish interlocutors as members of both LGBTQ+ communities and 'post-colonial' Philippines at large, amidst prevailing cultural logics that situate them as external Others. Appropriating and subverting hegemonic structures of language, they utilise local linguistic patterns and reference global queer connectivity in their endeavour to embed themselves within both spheres, illustrating that global concepts are inevitably syncretised through local contexts.

Keywords: LGBTQ+, The Philippines, globalisation, language

Camillo happens to live down the street from where I am staying, and we share a *traysikel*[1] to the Quezon City campus for my first visit to the University of the Philippines (UP). We unearth a shared passion in LGBTQ+[2] activism and musical theatre on the ride over, although I am quickly established as a novice in both fields by comparison. Camilo prefers speaking in English because it is his first language, and laughs as he tells me that his friends consequently tease him for being a *coño.*[3] He also muses that this was probably the reason he had a hard time

[1] Passenger vehicle, essentially a motorised rickshaw
[2] Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans, Queer/Questioning etc
[3] Slang that here refers to someone rich and from the country's capital city, Manila

learning *Babaylan's* 'gay lingo' and jokingly warns me that I won't be able to understand anyone in the organisation. I meet some other students after arriving on campus, and all of us end up cramming into a *dyipne*[4] to grab a few beers nearby. Mrs. Tan, a decorated drag queen and model, as well as an active member of Babaylan, conspiratorially asks me if I'm religious at all before showing me a video on their phone where they have donned a nun's habit (and not much else) while performing at a night club. They describe themselves to me as "queer, but likes boys" and after I introduce myself as an anthropology student, playfully quizzes me on my knowledge of gender theory - I try to do Judith Butler proud, but I am unsure whether I pass muster.

As the day wears on and Camillo's warning has been long forgotten, a fear starts to set in that I have overestimated how much Filipino I can remember in the ten years since I was last in the Philippines. As the members fill me in on some ongoing drama within the organisation, the conversation is peppered with words like *chopopo* and *taroosh* that I have never heard before; while we discuss where to buy dinner, Welsh singer Tom Jones is mentioned seemingly at random. Someone eventually comments on how lost I look but the group quickly puts me at ease, everyone chiming in to describe the complexities of *Babaylan's* 'gay lingo' and mention examples that they are personally fond of. The discussion moves along and I am intermittently offered translations of certain terms to commit to memory, but I find myself recalling Camillo's comment for the rest of my time in Quezon City.

'Gay lingo' (also known as 'swardspeak' and 'bekimon'[5]) is an umbrella term used by the student members of prominent Filipino LGBTQ+ rights organisation, UP *Babaylan,* for the

[4] Public transport vehicles originally made from World War II US military jeeps
[5] *Sward* and *beki* are Filipino colloquialisms referring to gay men

dynamic argots of Filipino LGBTQ+ communities. These argots incorporate several languages such as English and Spanish, and employ intricate, seemingly random wordplay. A key aspect of queer sociality, 'gay lingo' confers belonging upon its users as part of queer Filipino collectives such as *Babaylan* and likewise signals their socio-linguistic connections to LGBTQ+ communities on a global scale, the latter being a significant topic of scholarly analysis (Leap & Boellstorff, 2004; Manalansan, 2003; Pascual, 2016).

However, Tom Boellstorff (2005) critiques the main trope of literature exploring queer subjectivities through the lens of globalisation, referring to 'gay and lesbian movements, structured by similitude… assumed to be globalising and positively affected by globalisation' (*ibid*: 27). Coined the 'Gay Planet', the trope assumes that LGBTQ+ identifications are static and equivalent in cross-cultural analysis. Drawing on Boellstorff, I posit that lived realities are not so easily defined. J. Neil and C. Garcia's call for a 'nativist' perspective is also applicable here, in that subjectivities of LGBTQ+ people in the Global South must first and foremost be situated in their specific cultural and historical contexts as well as engaged in global evaluations (2013). This is especially true in the context of post-colonial Philippines, where LGBTQ+ people must mediate daily between both historic and contemporary concepts of 'foreign' and 'indigenous', and I argue that 'gay lingo' is specific to Filipino linguistic patterns as well as referencing global queer connectivity. By using these argots, *Babaylan* members identify themselves as belonging not only to LGBTQ+ communities but also to the Philippines; by acknowledging the historical and contemporary realities of Filipino queer identification through language, they dispute prevailing colonial logics of a biological gender binary that categorise them as an external Other in the very place they call home.

"FORGING BONDS, CHANGING LIVES"[6]

Upon starting my fieldwork, I was struck by UP *Babaylan's* reputation as the oldest and largest LGBTQ+ student organisation in Asia, with close links to many other advocacy groups across the Philippines (Santos, 2018). Primarily known for its equality activism, I was told by interlocutors that the student organisation has two main purposes. Firstly, it functions as a human rights advocacy group, campaigning for equal 'SOGIE' (an abbreviation of 'sexual orientation and/or gender identity and expression') rights across the Philippines. Although prolifically political, *Babaylan* was most often described by members as outstanding in its role of fostering a sense of LGBTQ+ validation and even family. Accordingly, its second purpose is being a support group for those who regularly face social, political, and/or economic discrimination because of their gender and/or sexuality identifications.

While *Babaylan* members hail from all over the Philippines, and UP Diliman is a coeducational public institution, it is worth highlighting that everyone I interviewed was either a university student or graduate. They were all fluent in English (the significance of which I will later discuss), with access to several resources of gender, queer, and political theory. Considering this positionality, I was able to establish connections being of similar age, occupation, being able to speak Filipino, and identifying as part of the LGBTQ+ community myself. With that said, I have lived abroad for most of my life and was unfamiliar with the nuances of local queer culture and discourse in Quezon City, as my initial encounter with *taroosh* and Tom Jones illustrates. I am also afforded certain structural privileges due to being mixed race and white-passing, and cannot claim to fully empathise with my interlocutors' experiences. Alongside my personal limitations, I recognise that I can only speak to the experiences and 'gay lingo' of a specific subset of the Filipino LGBTQ+ community here. Quezon City makes for a very

[6] *Babaylan's* motto

particular fieldsite, an urban hub that was once the capital city of the Philippines. It still holds the titles of having the largest population and geographic area in Metropolitan Manila,[7] which in turn is the seat of Filipino government. Although *Babaylan* members came from an assortment of socio-economic backgrounds, they develop very different worldviews to LGBTQ+ people living in rural provinces for instance, being university educated and currently situated within an urban locale (Benedicto, 2014). As well as being enthusiastic social activists that choose to place themselves in the public eye (for example, through widely advertised LGBTQ+ Pride events held on campus), members also have relatively heightened mobility and access to LGBTQ+ and/or politically charged spaces, discourses, and cultures. Although this ultimately lies beyond the scope of my essay, I acknowledge these details in a bid to avoid a common critique of literature concerning queer communities; that analyses of 'middle-class' or urban experiences are often applied across other groups where intersections of socio-economic status and geographic location are markedly different (Sinfield, 2000). The advantages of living in urban locales only go so far however, considering the ingrained nature of sexuality and gender inequality that interlocutors articulated over the course of my fieldwork.

'CONTRACTING COLONIALISM':[8] ORAL ORIGINS OF BIOLOGICAL BINARY

Many members consistently acknowledged that the contemporary national identification of 'Filipino' could not be detached from colonial encroachments of the past. This complex history binds present-day Philippines both linguistically and ideologically to the Spanish project of Roman Catholic conversion from 1565 to 1898 (Rafael, 1988), and the successive period of American imperialism from 1898 to 1946 (Thompson, 2003). As I exemplify throughout this

[7] The 'National Capital Region of the Philippines', one of three definitive metropolitan areas across the archipelago
[8] Referencing Vicente Rafael's 1988 book of the same name

essay, these were neither passive nor uniformly successful processes, but the invalidation of LGBTQ+ identifications in contemporary Filipino culture and politics is frequently attributed to colonially implemented hierarchies in both scholarly and mainstream discourse (Garcia, 2013; Rafael, 1988). These remnants are often set in opposition to the perception of pre-contact ethnic groups as egalitarian and fluid in their conceptions of gender and sexuality, heteronormative or otherwise (Brewer, 1999).[9]

In contrast, the rigid biological binary of heterosexual 'man' and 'woman' was subscribed to by patriarchal Spanish ideologies and employed throughout the Philippines during the colonial project (Brewer, 1999)[10]. In the records of missionaries, shamans were particularly emphasised as non-conformers to such binaries (*ibid*). Once elevated figures in local social hierarchies, shamans were considered the key intermediaries of spiritual welfare in animist pre-contact cultures, known as *babaylan* in the indigenous language of the Visayan area (UP *Babaylan's* namesake). Although predominantly designated as 'women', they were also noted to be 'men' who cross-dressed, whose sexuality was unclear, and/or exhibited behaviours that were delegated to be 'feminine' by Spanish gender norms, blurring the delineation of superior 'male' and subordinate 'female' (*ibid)*. These disparities would serve as the basis on which Spanish missionaries went on to quite literally demonise such figures in the new cultural and religious order being established, branded 'abominable sin[s] against nature' by transgressing the supposedly inherent demarcations of gendered behaviour (Brewer, 1999: 19). Thus, shamans' eminent status dwindled as various ethnic groups across the archipelago gradually converted

[9] I do acknowledge however that the framing of pre-colonial societies as inherently 'good' and accepting of all gender and sexuality identifications against the colonial advent as inherently 'bad' and exclusionary is a romanticised and generalising notion in itself

[10] I myself must rely on similar terms in English that are ultimately confined by Euro-American norms, based upon definitions of biologically sexed bodies that are historically and culturally contingent (Butler, 1990)

to Catholicism and began to view sexuality and gender non-conformers in a similarly 'unnatural' light.

The Filipino national language itself now is a result of the archipelago's complex history, being a standardised, 'universalist' fusion of Spanish, English, and pre-colonial Philippine languages (Gonzalez, 1998: 488). Offering an example with the Visayan curse word *yawa,* one member I interviewed further illustrated how Spanish religious discourses continue to undermine non-conformers such as the eminent *babaylan* through language. The etymology of *yawa* is strongly attributed to a Visayan goddess named *Malitong Yawa,* a powerful *babaylan* in an indigenous folk epic that exemplifies the egalitarian gender norms of pre-colonial ethnic groups (Zafra, 2016). Such a narrative did not align with the ideologies of Spanish colonisers, who went on to appropriate local oral traditions in translation as a method to establish Christian ideals and patriarchal power structures (Rafael, 1988). Friars purportedly began using *yawa* in derogatory contexts to mean 'devil' and, given their frequent interactions with indigenous peoples in their local languages, this distorted meaning eventually transformed the word into a curse in casual use, even by the interlocutor who relayed this story to me (Zafra, 2016).

Despite the impact of Catholicism, the Spanish language itself was only spoken by around 3% of the Filipino population upon invasion by the United States' military forces (Thompson, 2003: 16). American imperialism perpetuated much of the same gender binarism already established. Their military presence had previously 'liberated' other colonies over the course of the Spanish-American War, and was similarly justified by the United States' government as a bid for Philippine freedom from their oppression under the Spanish (*ibid*: 14). Given that the bulk of the population was formally 'uneducated' and divided by their use of numerous languages, free schools were subsequently established across the archipelago. The exclusive

use of English in these institutions sought to usher in the era of a more 'progressive' Philippines, a 'tool to enrich, ennoble, and empower Filipinos from every walk of life' (Thompson, 2003: 22), while indigenous languages and social structures were reduced as obstacles to modernity (Osborne, 2017: 121). Euro-American biomedicine, rooted in the same ideologies of binary gender and sexuality implemented by the Spanish over three centuries beforehand, was also institutionalised and naturalised through the education system, aiming to further 'modernise' the country (Garcia, 2013: 53). The Philippines was eventually granted formal independence from American sovereignty in 1946, but the legacy of its imperialism has secured fluent English as a form of social capital across the archipelago, alongside its institution as the country's second national language (Gonzalez, 1998: 496; Osborne, 2017: 119). If we recall the label of *coño* in response to Camillo's linguistic proficiency and the perceived elitism this garnered, it appears such attitudes still linger in collective memory.

CONTEMPORARY 'SIDE-EFFECTS'

Both individuals and institutions within contemporary urban Philippines largely acknowledge only cisgender and heterosexual identifications in the wake of this tumultuous past, and non-conformity is often branded an illness or sin by mainstream dialogues and religious doctrine (Garcia, 2013: 60). I do acknowledge here that individual agency should be considered when discussing hegemonic structures and imbalances of power (Rafael, 1988), and my interlocutors themselves evidence that such interactions are varied and complex. However, it is difficult to deny the influence of colonial perspectives that now emanate through Filipino society at large. These entrenched ideologies are also woven through contemporary political agendas, providing the current administration with ammunition to render non-heteronormative genders and sexualities abhorrent or simply invisible in the eyes of the state. Although President Rodrigo Duterte's public stance on same-sex marriage has oscillated on multiple occasions, his recent

statement at an event held in Myanmar references and criticises concepts of gender fluidity (*CNN Philippines Staff*, 2017):

> *"Wala nang gender* because you can be a he or she... *yun ang kultura nila. 'Di kayo lang, hindi 'yan pwede sa amin. Katoliko kami at* there is the Civil Code, which says that you can only marry a woman for me… for a woman to marry a man. [sic]*"*

> "There is no more gender because you can be a he or a she… that's what their culture is. Well that's only them, we can't have that here. We are Catholics and there is the Civil Code, which says that you can only marry a woman for me… for a woman to marry a man. [sic]*"*

Alongside these statements that delegate non-heteronormative genders and unions to 'their' (i.e. 'Western') culture, recent surveys taken to gauge Filipino attitudes towards the civil unions of same-sex couples reveal that 61% of the respondents oppose any law that would allow them, based predominantly on religious grounds (Brewer, 1999; Deslate, 2017; *Social Weather Stations*, 2018). If we take political denunciation into account alongside the deeply ingrained nature of Catholicism within contemporary Filipino culture, the status that non-heteronormative genders and sexualities currently hold is one of 'abnormal' character or total obscurity. Whatever they may be, such identifications seem to have no place in the mainstream ideology of what is 'Filipino', rendering them a politicised Other against institutionalised heterosexuality (Heckert, 2004: 105). The parameters of group belonging are not simply about abstract concepts, but very tangibly dictate who may or may not speak or act; who is considered part of society and who is not (Weston, 1995: 104). These socio-historically complex

discourses, as well as the negotiations of power and legitimacy that they showcase, set the context in which LGBTQ+ communities navigate the Filipino language in the present day.

'GAY LINGO' ON THE 'GAY PLANET'

As well as signalling belonging to specific social groups (Pascual, 2016), the selection and employment of specific words and phrases creates a new vocabulary for marginalised genders and sexualities with which they can define themselves, instead of being defined by outsiders (Kulick, 2000; Leap & Boellstorff, 2004). Similar techniques are utilised within 'Polari', the 'anti-language' of gay men in twentieth century London (Baker, 2003). 'Polari' allowed its speakers to envision and enact a clandestine group identity, tracing the evolving status of LGBT people in England at the time of its conception; the 'anti-language' was constructed partially from slang and cants of other ostracised communities such as criminals and sailors, concealing gay subculture from outsiders during a period in which homosexual activity was criminalised (*ibid*). I argue that *Babaylan's* 'gay lingo' creates a similar sense of LGBTQ+ belonging and performativity in a likewise discriminative environment but highlights non-heteronormative identifications rather than concealing them, using globalised language to mediate local concepts.

The incorporation of English words into 'gay lingo' and gender and/or sexuality identification was a recurring element amongst *Babaylan* members, deliberately illuminating and validating the LGBTQ+ subjectivities that heteronormative Filipino culture tends to obfuscate. This borrows from everyday Filipino speech that incorporates select English words and phrases when addressing 'concepts of high sociocultural value', a phenomenon known as 'Taglish' that I later explore in more depth (Osborne, 2017: 118; Thompson, 2003). A frequent example amongst my interlocutors was the deliberate use of word 'gay' in English instead of its rough

equivalent in Filipino *bakla*, as I discuss in more detail below. While Filipino as a language is arguably more inclusive of sexuality and gender diversity, for instance all pronouns being gender neutral, rigid social attitudes and binaries make it difficult for members to articulate and thus validate their identifications when navigating Filipino society at large. A key example and commonly used term amongst *Babaylan* members is the abbreviation 'SOGIE', mentioned earlier. It has increasingly been used within United Nations documents and by non-government organisations in lieu of the powerhouse 'LGBT' and its various QIA+[11] additions, acronyms considered by interlocutors to be unwieldly at best and exclusive of lesser known or more marginalised identifications at worst (Deslate, 2017). 'SOGIE' is thus the term preferred by current members in more formal or politically charged contexts, although variants of LGBTQ+ are employed out of habit or for simplicities' sake in everyday discourse, still being the most widely recognised acronyms. Initially unaware of these nuances, I asked Camillo to describe his identification within the LGBTQ+ community during an interview, and his response summarised their significance:

> "I use 'gay' [for sexual orientation] of course, because learning 'SOGIE' and everything, I'm still a 'cisgender'[12] male [rather] than just 'gay'. My gender expression is 'queer' because, I don't know, I've never really been either one, very masculine or very feminine… that's the only thing that I can't quite pinpoint. I can box myself as 'gay', but my gender expression, I can't really box it in to any of them so I just put it as 'queer'. I don't really use *bakla* because… there are different tones when it comes to [*bakla*] in the Philippines. Some people like it better also, it more encapsulates gender

[11] 'Intersex', 'Asexual' etc
[12] Identifying as the gender you were assigned at birth

> expression and everything based on how we use it here. But I don't know, because [Filipino] culture kind of clumped everyone in *bakla*."

Other members of the organisation also followed this pattern, using the 'SOGIE' acronym to articulate their identifications. As well as acknowledging LGBTQ+ diversity, the use of English in gender and sexuality identification illustrates how these words can act as substitutes for concepts made subversive in Filipino. Although *bakla* was often used amongst members as an umbrella term for any non-heterosexual/cisgender identification, Camillo pointed out the problematic connotations that the word was still imbued with. Having been reclaimed from its mainstream use as an insult directed towards 'feminine' men, *bakla* had a similar trajectory to the English word 'gay', both implemented as casual umbrella terms within LGBTQ+ social circles. However, these words still have derogatory implications when used by heterosexual people and are considered to lack inclusivity by some members of the LGBTQ+ community itself, given their common reference to cisgender homosexual men specifically (Kulick, 2000: 243, Manalansan, 2003: 23).

The English word 'queer' has a comparable history as a slur and was a term I heard in multiple contexts during conversations with *Babaylan* members. Employed here by Camillo and earlier by Mrs. Tan, it is often used to describe an identification that defies the restrictions of hegemonic masculine/feminine and heterosexual/homosexual binaries (Garcia, 2013). Coming into vogue in the early 1990s, the 'queer' identifier was invoked in the Global North with the intention of elucidating issues of exclusivity, brought to light by intersectional perspectives on sexuality and gender theory, practices, and identifications (Butler, 1990; Kulick, 2000). Its use by *Babaylan* members echoes this, especially with consideration to how the complexity of 'SOGIE' identification is often obfuscated and misunderstood in the contemporary Filipino

context (Garcia, 2013). While the deliberate choice of these 'Western' terms draws upon specifically situated vocabulary, the personalised meanings they come to be infused with in diaspora indicate that such identifications do not always exist as static entities (Butler, 1990). They are used to suit the individual and their own gender performance and/or identification, revealing the dynamism of gender outside of the hegemonic binary.

Like many other globalised concepts of queer theory, these linguistic forms are widely employed and compared cross-culturally, with translation being as much about cultural negotiation as it can be about ideological dominance (Rafael, 1988). The meaning and motivation behind the implementation of such forms differ greatly, but global comparisons in the analysis of 'gay lingo' can only go so far in the Filipino context, as I will now expand upon (Manalansan, 2003: 47). Recalling Garcia's (2013) call for a 'nativist' perspective, I now turn to referents of 'gay lingo' that are linked to Filipino linguistic elements specifically, engaging with concepts of national belonging as well as that of queer 'modernity' at large (Manalansan, 2003).

LOCAL LEXICONS

Terms of identification may be comparable in translation, but their specific ideological origins are also vital to consider, such as the parallels drawn earlier between *bakla* and 'gay'. Similar discursive gaps in studies of sexuality have not gone unnoticed in contemporary anthropology, and the advent of scholarly literature originating from authors in the Global South has begun to fill the fissures of previous analyses (Garcia, 2013; Manalansan, 2006). The 'gay' identifier in English has certainly evolved from its original reference to cisgender men sexually attracted only to other cisgender men, but *bakla* has always had more ambiguous meanings in the Filipino language (Manalansan, 2003: 25). The term refers to *physical* transgression of binary

gender norms, and discursively tends to treat practices of cross-dressing, 'effeminate' behaviour, and same sex intercourse as synonymous. It is commonly understood to mean a 'female heart' (i.e. 'female wants and needs') driving a biologically male body, regardless of individual gender and/or sexuality identification (*ibid*). The additional layers of colonial ideologies already discussed lend the term a unique and complex place in the Filipino context, and it is against the specific backdrop of the Philippines that I now consider features of *Babaylan's* 'gay lingo', irrespective of the language being utilised. I argue that their 'gay lingo' reworks familiar linguistic structures alongside colonial concepts of gender demarcation, relating to rather than rejecting inclusion into a Filipino national identification. By appropriating familiar linguistic patterns as tools of Filipino LGBTQ+ discourses, members subvert hegemonic structures of language rather than passively participating in or discarding them altogether, aiming to validate the vernaculars of marginalised genders and sexualities that popular discourse commonly discount (Osborne, 2017; Pascual, 2016; Rafael, 1988).

While the various 'gay lingos' of LGBTQ+ subcategories each have their own distinctive features, common patterns include the repetition of syllables and the addition of new suffixes to existing Filipino words, for example the transformations of *gwapo*[13] to *chopopo* or *taray*[14] to *taroosh* in the organisation's lexicon that initially perplexed me.[15] The adorning of words in this manner is not unique to this argot however, and is also a distinctive feature of *jejemon*, a Filipino vernacular of instant messaging popular amongst young adults (Schacter & Balaguer, 2017: 280). Originating as a style that truncated words to save money on mobile texts, the term has evolved to conversely refer to the deliberate lengthening and embellishing of words as a method of expressing certain emotions and concepts. Despite having become somewhat of a

[13] Meaning 'handsome'
[14] Meaning 'bratty', 'bitchy'
[15] Both root words being of Spanish and Tagalog ethno-linguistic group origins respectively

pop culture phenomenon across the Philippines in recent years, it is still broadly perceived to signify belonging to subcultures of lower socio-economic classes (*ibid*), much like the use of 'gay lingo' confers belonging to the LGBTQ+ community (Manalansan, 2003: 48; Pascual, 2016). Intentional linguistic complexity is therefore not confined to use in Filipino LGBTQ+ argots. Across the archipelago, such language work is commonplace amongst socially and/or economically marginalised groups as a form of self-determination and expression, even breaking into the mainstream in some instances as evidenced by *jejemon* (Pascual, 2016; Schacter & Balaguer, 2017). This is also the case with some jargon of Filipino 'gay lingo', such as the word *jowa*[16] which I even heard in casual use by heterosexual members of my own family.[17] Although specific argots signify belonging to distinct groups, the methods by which the jargon of various Filipino subcultures are created seem to follow very similar linguistic patterns. Their use can even be found amongst those outside the social group, evidencing how marginal communities can simultaneously interact with and reference links to the nation at large, rather than shunning it altogether (Abastillas, 2018; Pascual, 2016).

Here I return once more to the use of English in everyday speech, but on the national scale. Although total fluency is attributed to higher levels of education (Gonzalez, 1998: 496), English still permeates every strata of the socioeconomic order through the phenomenon of 'Taglish' mentioned previously. Combining the words 'Tagalog'[18] and 'English', this term refers to the scattering of English words and phrases in amongst everyday Filipino speech to indicate emphasis, formality, and value (Osborne, 2017; Thompson, 2003). The unification of English and Filipino is a deliberate conflation of imperial 'modernity' and notions of tradition in establishing a national identity and English promoted as a lingua franca in order to subvert

[16] Gender-neutral term referring to a romantic partner
[17] A potential area of interest that goes beyond the scope of this essay could address the question of how such discourse is being received and interpreted by cisgender heterosexual Filipinos
[18] Language of the pre-colonial Tagalog ethnic group

its perceived dominance and associations with the elite (Osborne, 2017). These negotiations of language and meaning are thus indicative of how 'Taglish' can function to mediate contexts and identifications that are seemingly opposed (Manalansan, 2003: 48). The designation of 'foreign' language as supposedly superior and the 'indigenous' as inferior in Filipino culture can also be traced back to the Spanish colonial project of religious conversion. Vicente Rafael analyses how the translation of Spanish religious vocabulary and ideology was in fact a 'double process of appropriating and replacing what is foreign while keeping its foreignness' (1988, p. xvii), rather than a totalising erasure of indigenous culture. Similarly, 'Taglish' users like my interlocutors situate themselves as valid actors within a globalised world whilst simultaneously maintaining a definitive sense of Filipino national identification (Osborne, 2017).

Notably, 'Taglish' as a post-colonial subversion plays a significant part in *Babaylan's* 'gay lingo'. English wordplay and puns are employed by utilising Filipino as a phonetic base, for example in the phrase *tom jones*: the Filipino word for hungry is *gutom*, the syllables of which are switched to form the slang *tom-guts*. This in turn was perceived as sounding like the name of Welsh singer Tom Jones, and so *tom jones* is used to mean 'hungry' in the specific 'gay lingo' that my interlocutors used. With the Filipino linguistic context in mind, the references to both *jejemon* and 'Taglish' by *Babaylan* members here can be seen to function as devices mediating value and meaning. The specific use of language in this manner not only conflates LGBTQ+ cultures with visibility and value, colonially opposed domains, but additionally conflates LGBTQ+ cultures with Filipino culture more generally (Garcia, 2013; Manalansan, 2003; Osborne, 2017). The 'gay lingo' of the organisation therefore emerges as a product of contemporary Filipino discourse, responding to and subverting the linguistic projects that once reworked the name of a *babaylan* goddess to a Biblical curse, and attempts to reverse the Othering of LGBTQ+ identification in the collective conscience of the Philippines at large.

CONCLUSION

Globalised concepts of contemporary queer theory are imperative in helping us situate certain discourses through cross-cultural analysis, but such comparisons can only take us so far. It is also vital to consider the culturally specific complexity of colonial influences, especially those discussed here that have worked to linguistically erase the diversity of Filipino gender and sexuality identifications, as well as making the national language itself hierarchically inferior (Garcia, 2013; Osborne, 2017: 119). If we examine linguistic concepts on a comprehensive scale, it is possible to identify trends across queer lexicons but this similarity perhaps does not function in the way that the 'Gay Planet' trope implies; that every aspect of LGBTQ+ verbiage can be reduced to direct cross-cultural parallels that laud the inclusivity of globalisation (Boellstorff, 2005; Manalansan, 2003).

I argue that 'gay lingo' used by UP *Babaylan* members does not reject hegemonic Filipino cultural norms outright but subverts the way they are usually implemented, resulting in linguistic transformations like *taroosh*, and revealing their variability and deliberate social construction (Butler, 1990; Manalansan, 2003). The use of other languages are additional tools in this endeavour, exemplifying how global discourses can create concepts of identification that span continents and connect Wales to Quezon City through the playful punning of pop singers, as well as articulating local LGBTQ+ practices and aspirations (Boellstorff, 2005: 6). This incorporation also addresses a key pitfall of the 'Gay Planet' trope and globalisation theory itself; imbuing global discourse with culturally unique meaning eventually and inevitably transforms it into local discourse, regardless of where in the world it originated (*ibid;* Garcia, 2013).

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Coming to One's Senses: Decolonising Artefacts at the Museum of Anthropology

Nicole Anderson

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Coming to One's Senses: Decolonising Artefacts at the Museum of Anthropology.

Nicole Anderson

Abstract

My paper is concerned with decolonising contemporary museological practice, specifically in relation to ethnographic collections at the Museum of Anthropology, Vancouver. I propose that display practices can be reformed through Indigenous collaboration with artefacts and visitors critically engaging with their display. I recognise that decolonisation must happen on a structural basis with institutions revoking their authority to Indigenous groups. Reclaiming this power grants the autonomy to decide how their collections are displayed and represented. I also explore ways for visitors to decolonise the space introspectively, by becoming critically aware of their own colonial gaze – how they perceive, critique and analyse museum spaces.

Keywords: museology, First Nations, free choice learning, museum display

Introduction

I feel my breath catch in my throat as the scene unfolds in front of me. As if in slow motion, I watch his hand stretch out. The museum visitor, clad in beige shorts, socks and sandals, a camera swinging around his neck, slowly extends his arm. He firmly, and deliberately, leans against a massive twenty-foot totem pole. He smiles jubilantly and raises his free hand into a jaunty "thumbs up". His wife raises her own camera and snaps a photo nonchalantly.

I am watching this action in the Great Hall at the Museum of Anthropology (MOA), Vancouver. It is an expansive room, light and airy with thirty-foot ceilings. Structured in the style of a First Nations long-house, its concrete beams form a tall, square glass wall. It reminds me somewhat of a chapel, quiet and sun-soaked. I could see little flecks of dust waltzing slowly through the air.

Figure 1: Exterior of MOA's long-house style Great Hall. Photograph by author.

I feel deeply unsettled by this interaction but it took me a moment to decide why. I decide the physical act of leaning against a totem pole was disrespectful. As if it was an old post, or a wall, he acted as if it were an object. It was most definitely not an object, but an artefact. This distinction carries many weighted connotations of preciousness, fragility, rarity and sacredness, but most importantly, it becomes "untouchable" (Classen and Howes, 2006). Tom, a fellow volunteer within MOA's Archaeology School's programme, even called artefacts "belongings". What had made my blood really run cold was that *he had touched it.* A notable museum *faux-pas*, it felt almost criminal. I expected the shrill screech of a security guard, or at least an alarm, but neither happened. I could hear imaginary ones ringing piercingly in my head.

Unaware of its sanctity, his actions were impertinent. "They are alive!" Anne, an Indigenous curator had explained to me before. "They are inherently spiritual and dynamic, alive and breathing," she said, breathless herself. She explained how totem poles are meant to disintegrate into the ground, returning to the Earth naturally, to be reunited with the spirits of nature. It allowed them to grow again: "an endless cycle of regeneration and birth". It seemed strange and counter-intuitive to house the totem poles inside. I understood it was for protection and preservation. However, I did not understand the rhetoric of preserving something that was not meant to be preserved.

My research considers the moral and ethical questions relating to the way Indigenous artefacts are encountered in museums. I ask whether it is appropriate to display and represent spiritual artefacts, masks and ceremonies that are not for non-Indigenous people to see. I explore whether it is intrusive to let individuals create meanings in places and things that do not belong to them. Is this connection an extension of the colonial project, intruding in places that are not our own? Often this is justified for educative purposes as it produces knowledge, empathy and understanding. This calls into question the ownership of this knowledge. Is it right for a predominately White institution to control First Nation representations?

Figure 2: Another couple poses in the Great Hall, MOA. Photograph by author.

Early anthropological and museological collection practices emerged from colonial discourse. These influenced modes of collection, display and museum practice. Clifford (1988) shows that 18th century anthropology displayed scientific, naturalist modes of collection. Treating cultures as "complex wholes" (Tyler, 1871 in Clifford, 1988: 230) meant objects were considered as specimens to show "systemic categories" (Clifford, 1988: 227). These typologies – such as food, clothing, weaponary – were used to show different stages of development or "evolution" (Clifford, 1988: 227). Context and meanings behind artefacts were deemed unnecessary, which justified passive encounters through sight. This is due to sight's association

with reason, evidence and hard proof (Classen and Howes, 2006). Rendering any other sensory context unnecessary meant merely noticing aesthetic value. Effectively, Indigenous artefacts become "colonized by the gaze" (2006: 200).

As relativist anthropology emerged in the 19th century, classification changed to show different cultures as "ethnographic presents" (Clifford, 1988: 228). These claimed to represent present-day and, therefore, "authentic" contexts of artefacts. Boasian relativism aimed to reflect a multidimensionality of humanity, which portrayed ethnographic artefacts in more holistic contexts (Clifford, 1988). Despite this progression, Clifford (1988) argues that systems of collecting cannot ever appropriately separate cultures into distinct and static taxonomies. As cultures and their representations are intimately dynamic and fluid, it is contentious whether any system of classification will be sufficient. As long as museums display things, artefacts will endure classification, their contexts manipulated and re-represented.

Developing a post-colonial museum means that artefacts must be displayed in ways that are meaningful and respectful to Indigenous values, beliefs and cosmologies. Representations and curatorship must seek to give precedence to Indigenous voices and worldviews. Enabling this progression requires a high-degree of Indigenous collaboration within curatorial decisions. By creating a dialogue, Indigenous identities become "speaking subjects" (Ames, 1992: 6). Establishing this "reoriented point of view" (Duffek 1991: 20 in Ames, 1992: 6) creates inclusive spaces where multiple voices dismantle existing hegemonic, colonial ideologies. Phillips (2003: 159) argues that achieving a "fully collaborative approach" allows Indigenous peoples to reclaim their own artefacts, histories and most importantly, their own representations.

Largely, MOA attempts to facilitate these collaborative approaches. However, whether this is sufficient is contentious. Built itself on traditional, ancestral and unceded Musqueum territories, MOA emerged from colonial acquisition. The land was claimed by the Crown under public ownership in 1871 when British Columbia became part of what is today Canada (Shelton, 2007: 391). However, this land was never claimed or covered by a treaty (O'Bonsawin, 2010: 150). Land not covered by a treaty is described as unceded territory and can continue to have aspects of Aboriginal title in force (O'Bonsawin, 2010). Thus, MOA resides on unlawful land while it displays, controls and owns First Nation artefacts and

representations. This continued legacy of colonialism is perpetuated through MOA and other North-West Canadian hegemonic institutions: "it exists in the very foundations…and the imaginations that fuel their development and maintenance" (Todd, 1994: 303 in Shelton, 2007: 393).

This paper shows the different ways First Nation artefacts are encountered within MOA. I argue that MOA attempts to decolonise the museum sphere by shaping how visitors encounter artefacts. This is enabled through culturally-appropriate display choices and through systems of Visible Storage as seen in MOA's Multiversity Galleries (MVG). Here artefacts are deliberately "decontextualised" to remove prescribed representations. Further, I argue that the politics of display and curation attempts to decolonise museum spaces through Indigenous collaboration within the MVG.

This paper draws on six weeks of fieldwork within MOA's School's programme and "deep hanging out" (Geertz, 1998) in the MVG. This was supplemented through "go along" interviews, where I would interview curators as we walked through the MVG, allowing me to understand curatorial display choices and individual artefact biographies and histories. I conducted semi-structured interviews with nine individuals, including curators of the MVG, tour guides, museology professors, senior conservators, and volunteers from the handling sessions. Pseudonyms are used throughout to protect my informants' privacy.

Encountering the Multiversity Galleries

A silence fills the gallery space at MOA, with a faint sound of a generator humming in the background. It is an awkward stillness and I can feel myself cringe. I am "go along" interviewing one of the curators of the Multiversity Galleries (MVG). A museum visitor appears and interrupts her mid-speech: "Are we allowed to open these?" he barks, pointing at a drawer underneath the case. He is pointing to one of hundreds of drawers where the majority of artefacts are kept in the MVG. There are hundreds of drawers in the MVG which hold thousands of items not displayed in cases. Some visitors do not realise they can be accessed. This is disappointing as it removes more than half of the artefacts from their reach.

Sally stops and mock sighs. A pause. “Yes!” she cries, enthusiastically and a little too loud. “Yes! Absolutely!” Her exasperation is hidden by her enthusiasm: “Open them all up! Have fun! There's 500 of them!” She laughs, but I can see why it may feel upsetting.

After the visitor leaves, we are quiet for another moment, alone with our thoughts. “See, that’s another issue. If you put ‘Open me’ on one, it would imply you can't open them all. Then you can’t put ‘Open me’ on them all because... Well, that just looks crazy.”

The MVG is dimly lit (to protect artefacts) and extremely quiet. It features 11-foot tall glass cases along every wall, dividing sections of the room into corridors. Each section is assigned to an Indigenous group. The MVG is not strictly an exhibit, but a Visible Storage facility which displays over 16,000 Indigenous artefacts. This is when “collections are systematically presented in high density arrangements that lack interpretative labels but include access to the information available on each object” (Thistle, 1994: 207 in Dawes, 2016: 16). The layout is organised like a world map, with the North-West Coast collections on the left-hand side entrance. Maze-like, it is seemingly endless. The shelves are madly crammed with artefacts to a dizzying effect. I turn the corner and I am met with a giant five-foot Buddha statue. I turn again to a case filled with hundreds of Kwakwaka’wakw masks. I feel a hundred pairs of eyes glaring at me. As a researcher, this is even more unsettling. The analytical part of my mind is in overdrive, constantly unpicking and assessing all these display choices at once. I am sticking mental post-it notes all over the cases, papered so thickly that I can barely see underneath. It feels almost suffocating. I wonder if the artefacts feel this way too, confined in their upright glass coffins.

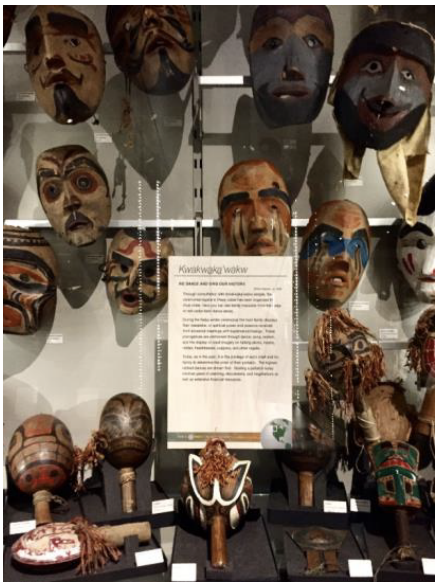

Figure 3: Kwakwaka'wakw masks. Photograph by author.

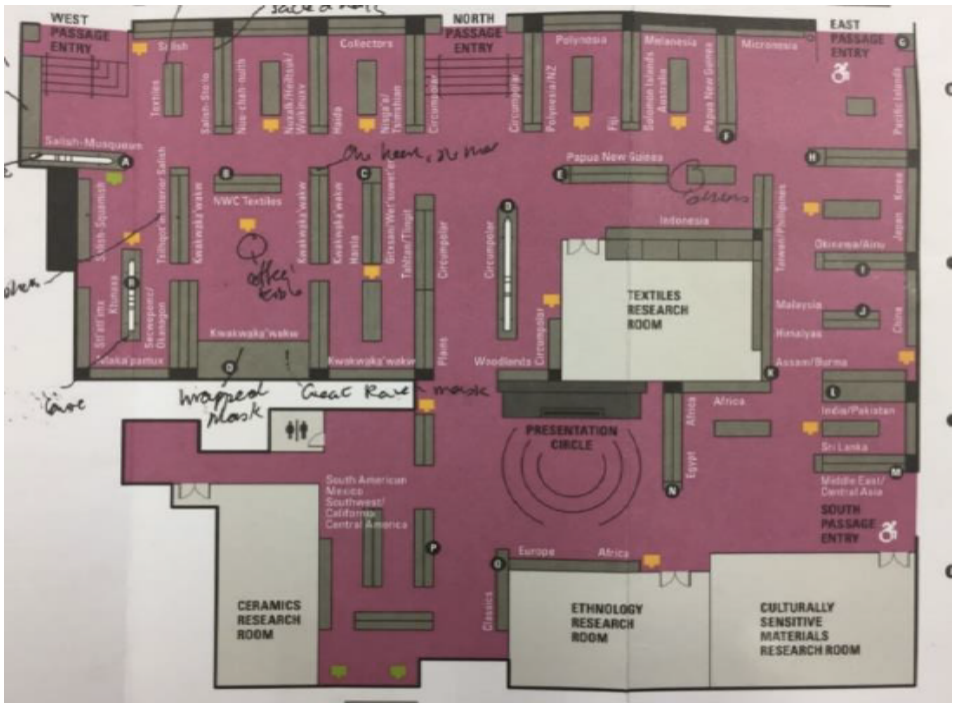

Figure 4: Floor plan of the MVG, MOA.

Outwardly, the MVG operates as a occularcentric depository where interpretation is based on sight. Artefacts are contained in glass cases, some accompanied with brief, didactic labels. Paris and Mercer (2002: 401) argue this encourages "passive reception" which removes the "thingyness of objects" (Dudley, 2012: 1). Their meaning is obscured as interpretation is based on limited text on labels, which creates a distance between the visitor and the thing. Having

the artefact objectified this way, with its context removed, makes it harder for visitors to procure emotional or affective responses. What chance is there for meaningful encounters when artefacts are contained in such abundance?

However, this interpretation is merely superficial. I argue that Indigenous presence within curation can justify MVG's politics of display by forming inconspicuous ways to critically engage visitors. This is claimed through "Mobius museology" practices (Kramer, 2015) where Indigenous communities operate and collaborate simultaneously alongside MOA curators. I argue that the MVG's philosophy, alongside its ability to offer visitors a choice about how to engage with these displays, can reinforce how we make meaning towards artefacts.

Sally takes me round the Galleries. She's a busy woman who talks and moves with a certain vibrancy; lanyard swinging, her waist-length grey hair worn loose. I am grateful because she speaks with such clarity and animation.

"As the title says, Multiversity, there isn't just one way, you know? The subtitle of MVG is 'Ways of Knowing'. There's no one way of being and knowing in the world. It's not a universe, it's a multiverse", she explains. She says this passionately, her eyes wide and gleaming. The plaque behind her echoes this, explaining the space "embodies different ways of seeing, knowing and expressing the world, which can widen our understanding of both ourselves and other cultures". It "endeavours to stimulate curiosity and wonder, encourage research, provoke questions and debates, promote tolerance...celebrating our common humanity".

This is consistent with a contemporary museum ideology of forwarding a multivocality of voices and interpretation. The MVG relies on a "making sense" (Classen and Howes 2006: 200) of the world. The MVG is exceptional in that it encourages individual "meaning-making". Silverman (1995) defines this as the "process of negotiation between two parties in which information is created rather than transmitted" (Derwin, 1981 in Silverman, 1995: 161). This is instead of a one-way, didactic and static learning process. By removing carefully curated labels, the MVG deconstructs traditional didactic displays that enforces a singular meaning or interpretation to visitors.

Despite most pieces being contained between a sheet of separating glass, in either cases or drawers, experiential encounters can be found, even if they are discreet. The drawers, for example, adorned with copper handles, offer a physical interaction with artefacts. Pulling them open is exciting - a chance to see what is hidden and uncover what is inside. I notice two five-year-old children running about the static space, giggling and earnestly peaking inside. Sally says she sometimes purposefully leaves a drawer half pulled out. I notice a half-open one on my next solo visit. The temptation to look is unbearable; the curiosity insatiable. I open it all the way to reveal a tiny matchstick-sized totem pole, barely the length of my thumb. Later, Sally informs me it is actually the world's smallest totem pole. It even had its very own raising ceremony. The cases may be crowded and the artefacts innumerable, but I still managed to have a meaningful encounter. It allowed me to not only realise this artefact existed, but gave me the opportunity for inquiry, to which I received a story. The tactility of the drawers offers physical opportunities to engage without directly touching artefacts. These experiences forged a pathway of knowledge that started with me wondering what was hiding inside the bottom drawer.

Learning, in this way, becomes transformative. Paris and Mercer (2002: 401) argue that these encounters have the capacity to change the self. These experiences, or thought processes, can reform or manipulate visitor's ideas, beliefs and perceptions of what they experience. This leads to "confirming, disconfirming or elaborating understanding of their own identity" (2002: 402).

Reflecting on my first MVG visit, the space seemed entirely mad. However, gradually, time allowed me to unpick its messiness. Knowing the space over time transformed how I perceive museum displays. Why is it darker here? I understood it was to protect the weavings. Why are the raven masks' beaks tied shut? I learnt it was to quiet their "chattering". Although my inquiries were inspired by my research, I accumulated a critical awareness that has stuck with me. No longer blissfully unaware, I am attentive that there is more to museum displays than meets the eye. If this awareness could be expanded to visitors, even within their short visits, this could be a powerful, decolonising transformation.

Sally informs me that the MVG's layout is a deliberate "deep idea" to enable visitor transformation through different trajectories of knowledge. There is no one fixed path through the MVG. Allowing the choice of an individual, pedagogic pathway, visitors navigate through

infinite transformative, intellectual possibilities. Theorised as “free-choice learning”, the learner chooses “what, how, where and with whom to learn” (Falk 2007: 19 in Schultz, 2011: 8). No two people will stroll down the same sequential corridors or pause at the same things, each visitor’s experience will be unique. Their responses and thoughts will flourish independently, based on their encounters or previous knowledge and experiences. Learning in the MVG then becomes entirely processual. One’s transformation of perception depends on the drawers you open and the paths you choose.

Thus, the lack of contextualisation and interpretive material fulfils this purpose. A heavily curated space would mean there is less room for your own interpretation. “In normal exhibitions you are led on a pathway, a journey that is led by the curators – that’s not supposed to be what’s happening here,” Sally tells me firmly. These interpretations are not dictated or forced, but rather reliant on curiosity. Although some may not bother to look, those who do will more intimately understand the process than through passively reading an over-edited label. By manipulating these classifications, power is removed from the curator in controlling representation. Bequeathed to the visitor, they form this knowledge themselves: “you can't always lecture people, they kind of have to understand for themselves,” Sally says gently.

This removal of control over artefact contextualisation absolves curators of power and, by extension, dissolves MOA’s hegemonic structures. These written interpretations risk undermining the artefact itself, when “the actual, real work of communication is done mainly by words, not things” (Dudley, 2012: 3). Curating labels constructs artefact biographies (Dudley, 2012: 2). Mayer (2003) shows these can be aligned by “formalised objectives recognised by the museum as being appropriate and enduring”, creating an artificial “reality” of a particular past (2003: 43). Not prescribing these histories through meticulously-created labels gives the visitor more autonomy (Dudley, 2012: 2). However, this proposes a difficulty in delivering specific meanings in spaces like the MVG. How do we send the “right” meanings of Indigenous artefacts through "free choice” learning? How does one contextualise an artefact’s value without an entire textual history?

Here, Indigenous collaboration is most valuable. Indigenous input maintains the communication of appropriate, accurate messages. It positions Indigenous people to rightfully represent themselves (Witcomb, 2007). Museums should be critical of their positionality in

constructing artefact biographies, accepting it is not their knowledge to own (Witcomb, 2007: 44). MVG displays require substantial Indigenous (co)curation. Kramer (2015) describes these collaborative relationships as "Mobius museology" (2015: 490). This metaphor shows how these relationships should operate as one. These practices recognise that "blurred boundaries" exist in collections between curators and Indigenous peoples (2015: 506). A loop that circulates endlessly, it features "mutual entanglements" (2015: 506).

One way Mobius Museology is enacted is through adapting artefact display. For example, non-display acts as a statement to highlight an artefacts importance, sacredness and value. Manipulating this calls into question the visitor's own colonial gaze. Sally recalls that when ceremonial masks were previously displayed, Indigenous parents refused to bring their children to MOA as masks should only be seen in ceremony: "now they live wrapped up and put away, not for people to gawk at". Withdrawing ceremonial masks forces an analysis of this display choice. It elicits an awareness and respect of Coast Salish ritual practices. William, a Musqueum curator, expresses the difficulty of representing what is sacred. This challenge characterises a larger history of representing Coast Salish peoples at MOA where their ceremonies are closely protected. However, removing all mention of ceremony altogether would negate the importance, or existence of spiritual practice. Thus, a solution, or midpoint, is formed that acknowledges spiritual artefacts without explicit depiction.

Sally and I come to an empty case. A small plaque sits at the bottom detailing the sacredness of Coast Salish spirituality. I read it slowly, feeling Sally watch me. I look at the blank canvas. "Is the emptiness symbolic?" She smiles, stands back and points: "but it's not empty." Sure enough, a vague silhouette of two blurry figures appear; two people involved in a spiritual ceremony. "You can't actually see but you have a sense there's something there, something you're not invited to be part of." She looks at them contemplatively. "We took an image, blew it up big, coloured it black, softened it by putting it behind a Mylar sheet. It also does something really fascinating…" she elongates "really" as she briskly walks backwards. Confused, I stand dumbfounded, still processing the elaborateness of the curatorial decisions. "The neat thing is, the further you get away from it, the more you can see. The closer you get, the less you see."
I walk away and rightfully; the outlines of the figures are distinct and clearer. The closer you walk towards it, the more the outlines blend into the sheet. Standing right in front of the case, they would be unnoticeable. It signals that the further you intrude, the less you will be allowed

to view. The hidden figures represent a part of life where we cannot interfere. Still physically separated, yet acknowledging existence, a critical message is forwarded to visitors. By not showing it in full but by only hinting, we become aware of its cultural importance. As Sally explains this, a couple eavesdrop and cock their heads, squinting at the case. I watch the older woman smile in delight. Sally's human presence draws people in; the visitors learn and uncover something from overhearing this encounter.

There is something about the quietness of it all. Had Sally not shown me, I would have never noticed. Initially, I was overcome with the idea that everyone should know about this display. However, it is the secretiveness that becomes so fitting, especially given its content. It must be noticed, not shown. Perhaps, it is made for those who look, those who are open to learn. Whilst being respectful to Indigenous beliefs, it still includes non-Indigenous people (albeit the open-minded ones). Simultaneously questioning display politics, it illustrates the importance of appropriate cultural interpretation. Curiously, this recognition comes not from something being shown, but rather, withheld. Paradoxically, the absence of the artefact creates a presence, an impact.

Awareness of culturally-appropriate displays can be manipulated in more explicit examples. The Dzawada'enuxw wolf mask, another withheld artefact, is on display but completely wrapped in cloth. Odd and prominent, with no enclosed case, it catches your eye immediately as it sits unashamedly on a wooden case. The brown cloth maps out the shape and size of the mask but nothing else. Dzawada'enuxw elder Tom Dawson argues it should be displayed so young people have access to knowledge about the mask (Kramer, 2015: 495). In compromise, a mid-point is achieved where visitors understand these artefacts should by-pass aesthetic gazes. Instead, they are reminders of the continuation and connections between living Indigenous groups (2015: 495). A dialogue is created, showing that Indigenous people are active, animated and involved in protecting their spirituality. They are agents in curatorial decisions, not passive victims, and can choose how to be represented. The label concludes with "this is so that the public can understand that not everyone is meant to see these things" (Kramer, 2015: 496-7). The understandings go beyond cultural appropriateness, but act as a reminder of Indigenous involvement. Encompassed within the politics of display, the value of First Nation beliefs is upheld. These examples of withheld artefacts foregrounds not only the

spiritual significance of such practices but the proprietorial ownership First Nations people have of their living cultural heritage.

Figure 5: Wrapped wolf mask on display. Photograph by author.

Despite attempts to create a collaborative Mobius museology, the fundamental control over these spaces is not addressed. Attempts to represent "the Other" will remain shrouded in imperialist implications until ideas underpinning ownership are radicalised completely. This includes control of where artefacts are encountered. Doxtator (1996) explains "learning the principle of respect doesn't imply that you have to have all the knowledge" (1996: 57). Rather, respect comes from appreciating and situating artefacts in correct contexts.

Museums, in an attempt to be educative, informative and learning-based, can ignore or manipulate these contexts and ideas of ownership. Museums are challenged constantly through boundary-work between often marginalised Indigenous cultural groups. Museological literature situates this boundary-work through the idea of a "contact zone"- the "space of imperial encounters…in which peoples geographically and historically separated come into

contact with each other and establish ongoing relations...involving conditions of coercion, radical inequality and intractable conflict" (Pratt, 1992: 8). For example, MVG curators offered the Haida people their chance to choose which artefacts they wanted displayed (Shelton, 2011: 394). It was an inclusive act, but the offer remained in the curator's control.

Contact zones should denote exchanges of "ongoing, historical, political, moral relationships" (Clifford, 1997: 192) that show "a reciprocity of people and not just objects" (1997: 195). However, William, tells me Musqueum representatives within major exhibitions appear only as co-curators or guest curators. Contact zones boast of their ability to propose power-sharing but not a total surrendering. The oppressed and oppressor should operate in tandem: "not in terms of separateness but in…co-presence, interaction, interlocking understandings and practices" (Pratt, 1992: 8). Although contact zones work to establish collaborative relations, these will always be insufficient. It is paramount to remember these relations are asymmetric and weighted towards the agenda of the establishment (Clifford, 1997). The final decision to power-share lies solely with the institution. It is out of their will that a dialogue and an exchange emerge.

Concluding Thoughts

MOA may attempt to have culturally appropriate displays: the wrapped masks, the removal of sacred objects. It may organise consultation meetings with Musqueum elders and adapt displays. However, it still is in control of regulating and managing these decisions. The mere creation of a dialogue automatically presents institutions as culturally-inclusive, but less attention is garnered on its inherent inequality. Museums are inherently neo-colonial as they gather all means of control: of space, history but most importantly, representation. The moments in which this control is contested is when the museum is actively being decolonised. Therefore, complete decolonisation, if indeed possible, requires an entire revolution of authority structures and reclamation of ownership and control over artefacts. By this logic, MOA can only *attempt* to decolonise its space.

Therefore, if museums cannot decolonise outwardly, then perhaps the space for change lies with the visitors, the encountering parties. Decolonising the museum sphere and the renouncing of authority could happen if this intention was adopted ideologically. It is the potential for visitors to critically receive the space that gives scope for decolonisation. Aside from

decolonising the museum outwardly, which may be more or less impossible, if visitors are able to critique problematic museum practice, decolonisation could happen on the inside, within the mind. Decolonising the museum, can thus happen on an individual, and not an institutional basis. This can be facilitated through “free choice” philosophies of Visible Storage, meanings can form outside the curatorial sphere. It allows more room for individual interpretation and contemplative thought than an ordinary exhibit. This could be an effective decolonising method, handing the reigns to the visitors who enter, allowing people to “meaning-make” in the space.

Perhaps, for now, that is an appropriate goal. Mentioned previously, it is not necessarily the specificities of what you learn, but how you come to that conclusion. It is how you approach these contestations that matters. If you approach them with humility, uncertainty, critique, an acknowledgement that they are not wholly right and that they can continually be improved, a difference emerges. If curators, visitors, and museum directors acknowledge the inherent, inevitable and continual problems within museology and strive to make them more ethical, inclusive, and culturally appropriate, then they recognise a space for progress. Decolonisation can therefore emerge from those who encounter the spaces, by visitors becoming critically aware of their own colonial gaze.

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Who Needs a Man When You Got a Gun?

Women and their Firearms in the American Midwest

Jemma Davies

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Who Needs a Man When You Got a Gun?: Women and their Firearms in the American Midwest.

Jemma Davies

Abstract

Gun culture is an aspect of American life which has been neglected in anthropological literature. I examine how armed women feel that carrying guns 'empowers' them. Guns, a symbolically masculine object, are 'the equaliser' for women, making violence central to personal security, and as I argue, a marker of a responsible, American citizen. Firearms allow armed women to break culturally produced stereotypes concerning their capacity for violence, facilitating self-defence. The capacity to commit legitimate violence, which is gendered and racialised, is central to concepts of American gun ownership.

Keywords: gun culture, women, self-defence, United States

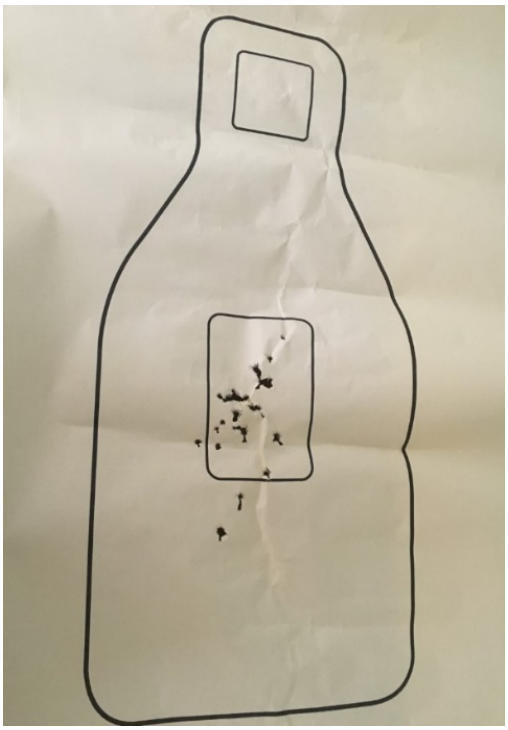

Figure 1. A Common Shooting Target (photo and bullet holes by author)

My first experience shooting a gun was in December of 2017 (Figure 1), although growing up in Winchester[1], I have been surrounded by guns all my life. Residing in this large city in the American Midwest, I have long seen firearms being sold in stores where I buy my work-out gear and have noticed them being carried on people's hips as I have walked around the city. During one shooting practice, one woman told me how, 'Winchester is saturated in firearms!'. Our city is one that is inundated within gun culture. I follow Kohn who posited gun culture as a culture which:

> '…places enormous social, historical, and political emphasis on guns…[and] uses common language about guns and shares a set of signs and symbols pertaining to them in everyday life' (2004: 4).

[1] I have anonymised the city, my informants' names and shooting ranges for privacy.

Firearms are legally allowed by the Second Amendment of the American constitution, which finishes with:

> 'A well-regulated Militia, being necessary to the security of a free state,
> the right of the people to keep and bear arms, shall not be infringed.' (Hall 2005: 111)

The Second Amendment's multiple interpretations have been a source of tragedy, vindication, and debate. Despite this, there continues to be few anthropological ethnographies concerning gun culture, with even fewer discussing its importance to women. In media, armed women are sexualised, and painted as a seductive fantasy. For example, Sigourney Weaver in *Alien*, and Lara Croft in *Tomb Raider* – they are both hyper-feminine women while brandishing a large weapon (King 2007: 92). In reality, gun ownership gives the armed women I met an easy and viable solution for their fears of victimisation. As one of my informants put it, 'guns give me a short-cut to protect myself'.

My informants were all self-defined 'armed women', women who enjoyed shooting regularly and who usually carried at least one gun on their person. I met these women by attending one national 'Ladies Only' shooting organisation at a local range once a month over the summer of 2018. At the time of conducting fieldwork, Winchester had five popular gun ranges, three of which have Ladies Only courses. I visited these ranges and talked to the gun instructors, and also attended a few lessons at one of the ranges. Knowing my intentions, armed women were happy to talk to me, so this paper is composed of casual and formal interviews with them. My informants tended to be enthusiastic about my research. One informant was happy that I was

‘giving a voice to the normal gun owning population, instead of those gun-nuts we see in the news all the time’.

My female informants believed that they were inserting themselves into a ‘man’s world’ by attending gun ranges and shooting firearms. In fact, a common motivator for joining Ladies Only classes was the large numbers of sexist attitudes and questions of legitimacy my informants encountered outside these classes within gun ranges. Many women explained to me how an inclusive, all-ladies space allowed them to target shoot more comfortably, while also introducing them to like-minded women, creating new friendships.

The ranges I visited were made up of white, middle class armed women. This absence of diversity cannot be ignored, as the gun industry positions whiteness as the ideal gun owner through their advertisements and publicity (Browder 2006: 212). My informants did not address this directly, but I want to make clear that racial and class inequalities exist within the gun ownership community. This implicates and reproduces ideas of who is a threat and who is legitimately allowed to wield a firearm and commit violence if necessary. Existing within a certain position of privilege, the armed women I met were more capable to facilitate gun ownership for empowerment and equality than poor white women or people of colour (Carlson 2014: 372). Although I appreciate gun ownership is an important facet of my informants’ identities, I note that the armed women who advocated to me that they genuinely benefited from carrying also fit into the gun industry’s ideal consumer: a white American.

The gun industry has given my informants a ‘short-cut’ for self-defence, reproducing a narration of American citizenship that supports white, cisgender, middle-class gun owners.

Like Diaz (1999) and Browder (2006), I use the term 'gun industry' to refer to gun ranges, gun manufactures, and the political gun lobby, the National Rifle Association (NRA), which yields massive influence over gun culture. By evoking the potential to be violent, my female informants viewed gun ownership as an 'empowering' act. When I inquired about this 'empowerment', informants would explain to me how guns allowed them to feel secure, safe, and powerful, permitting them to navigate society with more confidence. I argue that my informants dismantle culturally produced stereotypes of female weakness and non-aggression through this potential. They become an aggressive agent from a 'non-violent, patriarchal object' (McCaughey 1997: 12). By engaging in a potential for violence, the armed women that I met challenge and transgress the gendered assumptions of physicality and aggression.

However, I add that gun culture simultaneously reinforces female stereotypes and expectations, especially in terms of motherhood. I add to Kohn's definition of gun culture, arguing that gun culture reproduces 'frontier masculinity', which can be defined as core American, hegemonic male ideologies, associated with rugged individualism, a strong work ethic and self-sufficiency (Melzer 2009: 30). 'Frontier masculinity' is a term to describe hegemonic masculine traits originating from the era of the American frontier which is supported by the gun industry and further reproduced by gun owners (Melzer 2009: 30).

I argue that when armed women use firearms, they appropriate and reproduce this narration of American citizenship which mainly privileges 'frontier masculine' men, leading to an equality of violence, rather than an equality of safety. My informants use guns as a solution to their fears of victimisation and violence, which I argue naturalises violence, and makes my informants and other potential victims responsible for their own self-defense. One of my

informants, Taylor, explained to me how she was enthusiastic to speak to me specifically, as she believed more young women should own guns, as we should 'put our lives in our own hands'. She considered the ability to protect herself with a gun a key feature in how to become and act as a responsible, mature American citizen.

My female informants cited solely self-defence as their reason for gun ownership. 'Women want protection and guns give us that', one informant reassured me. One woman described to me that she carries a gun as, 'you can't carry a policeman in your bag!'. Women at gun ranges discussed with me how they began shooting and carrying after 'becoming victims', that is, rendered powerless against violence. 'My ex-husband started to stalk me' one woman explained to me, 'my home was broken into and I became scared' another said.

After experiencing very real attacks, their fear of violence transcended reality as an 'evil force'. All of my informants cited 'evil' for their reason for carrying. I argue that this evil can be seen as an 'ambivalent power' (Parkin 1985: 13) which is personified into 'bad guys'. My informants' explanations of 'bad guys' sometimes followed xenophobic caricatures, but 'bad guys' were always seen to be irresponsible gun owners, like a criminal or even a mass shooter. McKayla, one of my informants, described to me how she was protecting herself from 'evil', with this fear of attack manifesting into a fear of a male, usually non-white, attacker. This analysis lies outside the scope of this essay, but I mention it to show the ethical practice my informants worked within.

My Gun Makes Me Happy

I met Taylor, an armed woman I knew from the monthly meeting, at a fried chicken restaurant on a rainy afternoon in mid-June. Taylor is in her mid-60s, and lives outside Winchester on a five-acre farm. Like every Wednesday, she had driven into town to go to Bible Study. Taylor had advocated in the state's capital city to urge law-makers to lessen gun safety laws. She explained she 'loved' going to the legislature as she 'isn't the white, male shooter people expect'. She carries her gun by her appendix, proudly raising her shirt to show me the .9 mm Glock strapped to her trousers. 'Guns are the equaliser, letting me break down social expectations of being a girl!' she exclaimed. The gun for Taylor, and other women that I met, is an object of female resistance as it allows them to engage in masculine forms of violence. Taylor went on to tell me how carrying had enabled her to experience a complete change in her self-confidence:

> 'When I go into a restaurant with my husband and two sons, I am now the most dangerous person!! Me! In my wheelchair! I have the element of surprise…I am able to inflict the most damage. I never thought this way before I carried, I would be afraid to go into parking lots, but now? I carry my head high.'

No longer was she a victim, 'weak and powerless', as she described it, but she now had her 'fate in her hands'. Self-defence shows how gender is performative (Butler 1990) and my informants follow heteronormative constructions of femininity and masculinity. In 'traditional American gender frameworks', American men are expected to be 'protectors' (Kohn 2004: 107) while women are taught to be 'targets' (Silko 1995). This implies that men are inherently violent, while women are naturally weak, and are victims. My female informants fight this particular expectation by being armed American citizens, which facilitates empowerment for

them. By engaging in the potential for violence, the armed women that I met with challenge and transgress gendered assumptions of feminine physicality and aggression.

Taylor continued:

> 'Guns are for ladies too! I know more men have them, but that's just because that's what has always been. This is sad, 'cause women need guns more than men. It's more useful for us because we are attacked more, I am no match against a typical 6-foot-tall guy.'

Taylor saw her 'embodied vulnerability', her likeliness to be harassed or hurt, as the main motivator for arming herself (McCaughey 1997). This is where the paradox within gun ownership emerges. Gun ownership cites empowerment solely on women's potential to be violent through carrying a gun. However, when women appropriate the gun, they subscribe to 'hegemonic masculinity' (Connell 1995). I utilise 'hegemonic masculinity' to show how the gun industry maintains a particular type of masculinity that supports competitive, ruthless male domination over women (ibid). The gun, a symbolically masculine object associated with 'hegemonic, frontier masculine' traits, like aggression, facilitated Taylor's empowerment (Melzer 2009: 30).

McCaughey (1997) argues that when women participate in methods of self-defence, they rework considerations of their 'embodied vulnerability'. This can be understood as the misogynistic stereotype which is a part of compulsory heterosexuality concerning women's culturally connotated weakness and likelihood to be victimised (1997: 21, 98). Therefore,

McCaughey argues that self-defence confronts and dismantles embodied vulnerability, which has made women easy targets for victimisation. I argue that this understanding of self-defense does not apply to gun ownership, as a woman's embodied vulnerability is not negated, but merely suppressed through carrying a gun to prevent victimisation. While I acknowledge that physical violence at the hands of men is a lived reality for women, I position McCaughey's argument here to show the limits of female gun ownership; I argue that gun ownership does not address this culturally connotated female weakness, but instead masks it and provides an easy solution for women - hegemonic masculine violence.

'The Equaliser'

The gun industry supports 'vulnerability ideologies and the victimised female body' to further their political agenda and consumer market, which rests on women's real fears of victimisation (Carlson 2014: 371). Representations of armed women by the gun industry replicate their veneration of hegemonic masculinity as they emphasise female self-sufficiency, insinuating that women must be violent to be equal to men (Browder 2006: 212). I note that this continues to naturalise violence as hegemonically masculine.

During my interview with McKayla at a local Starbucks, she advocated to me how 'firearms are *the* equaliser'. McKayla had grown up around guns all her life, but she only began shooting once she began to live alone. She described how she enjoyed the safety she felt through gun use. When armed women use firearms, they appropriate and reproduce this narration of American citizenship which mainly privileges 'frontier masculine' men. This is reflected in the fact that the gun industry glosses over women's vulnerabilities to appeal to a rhetoric which fits with their conceptualisation of 'frontier masculinity'. For example, the gun industry actively promotes guns to women while assuming a 'masculine perspective on crime which

emphasises fast, warlike violence perpetrated by strangers', while in reality, women are more likely to be victimised by someone familiar to them (Carlson 2014b: 63).

The gun industry positions gun ownership as a form of protection, primarily to allow women to protect themselves and their family in the absence of a man (Carlson 2014b: 62). As McKayla conveyed to me:

> 'Guns are such *boys'* toys, so us women are totally breaking stereotypes by shooting. My generation was the first to feel that you don't need a man… such independence! That empowerment! Instead, of a man, we can use a gun for protection! It's real progress.'

McKayla saw a gun as replacing the need to rely on a husband to enact violence for self-protection. That is where the empowerment in gun ownership occurs. My informants reproduce women's embodied vulnerability and their likelihood of victimisation for their reasoning for gun ownership. They imply that the gun, a symbolically masculine object, is needed to empower her to prevent assault. Gun ownership 'essentialises women's frailty and sees their weakness as inevitable', suggesting that women are vulnerable and 'incomplete' without a gun (Carlson 2014: 371).

Armed women that I met would not view this reinforcement of embodied female vulnerability as problematic. McKayla views her ability to enact self-defense as 'progressive', and it is a rhetoric which many of my informants would agree with. For these women, gun ownership is necessary to their protection. They see the ability to protect themselves as a form of empowerment and feminine progress. From this, I have argued that gun ownership naturalises

violence as a key trait of a responsible, American citizen. While armed women in Winchester dismantle assumptions about their capacity for violence, they continue to reinforce hegemonic masculinity and the embodied vulnerability of women. This creates an equality of violence between men and women, positioning the responsibility of self-protection onto the victim, rather than of non-violence onto the perpetrator. The gun industry reproduces this as it suggests that the only way to protect one's self is through gun ownership (Carlson 2014: 371).

I am not implying that armed women are merely pawns of gun discourse. Taylor advocated to me that, 'guns make my life better' and give her a 'short-cut' to self-protection. I don't think that this genuine confidence and happiness cannot be reduced to exploitive propaganda. Armed women turned to firearms for self-protection as the gun industry supplies them with a genuine answer to their fears of victimisation. My female informants have welcomed the privileged discourse produced by the gun industry as it benefits them.

Conclusion

I have overviewed what guns signify for armed women that I met in Winchester, a large city in the Midwest. For my informants, carrying and shooting guns allow self-protection which facilitates empowerment. I have argued that gun ownership empowers them as it evokes the potential to be violent. While armed women are challenging masculine order and feminine norms based on their capacity for violent action, they reproduce their assumed, embodied vulnerability, which other methods of self-defence negates. My informants therefore suggest that the only method for equality is to be aggressive and carry a firearm. Guns are symbolically associated with hegemonic, 'frontier masculinity'. Therefore, I have argued that their

empowerment reproduces ideologies concerning masculine strength and female vulnerability, reflecting an equality of violence, rather than one of safety.

This ability to commit legitimate and acceptable violence through self-defense is central to American gun ownership. The gun industry has given my informants a 'short-cut' for self-defence, which reproduces a narration of American citizenship which supports white, cisgender, middle-class gun owners. I want to conclude with re-iterating the point that female gun ownership adds another dimension to the complicated and seemingly unending gun debate troubling America. As I have conveyed, guns are a genuine source of confidence and empowerment for my informants, and their interest in firearms cannot be reduced as naïve pawns of gun discourse. Gun culture should be included within anthropological study, as it is an important and symbolic object for many Americans.

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The Leith Project: Industrial Ruins and Maritime Heritage

Hester Depel

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The Leith Project: Industrial Ruins and Maritime Heritage.

Hester Depel

Abstract

This essay reflects on the politics and poetics of abandoned buildings juxtaposed with memorials to a thriving industrial past whilst walking through Leith. In the manner of Benjamin's (1999[1982]) "flaneur", I employ autoethnography, drawing on my personal experience to show how the material topography of Leith reveals capitalism's inherent obsolescence and counteracts its teleological version of time. I turn to Ingold's proposition that the landscape is an embodiment of accumulated activities, to show how multiple temporalities are enfolded into the decaying structures I encountered on my perambulations through Leith. These ruins provide a canvas for contemporary political critique, presenting a counterpoint to the lieux de memoire (Nora 1989) of Leith that valorizes its industrial maritime past.

Keywords: ruins, memory, nostalgia, industrialization, Leith

"At the approach of his footsteps, the place has roused: speechlessly, mindlessly, its mere intimate nearness gives him hints and instructions," so Walter Benjamin writes of the sensuous engagement with material remains of the obsolete arcades of 19th century Paris in his "Passagen-Werk" (The Arcades Project). The ways we engage with the past, either in remembrance or forgetting, has been a vast subject of study for anthropologists, philosophers, cultural and literary critics alike. Some claim that there is no serious or authentic way to engage with the past, as it is all invented to suit the needs of the present. Others see this "presentism" as ignoring the ways in which traces of the past can disrupt and upset official narratives. In Benjamin's theorizing, the physical remains of the past have a primary agency of their own, that in communicative interaction with the perceptive observer, revealing much about the past lives and times that played a part in their formation. My own research on the

urban landscape of Leith is based heavily on this engagement with material remains, therefore a brief discussion of Benjamin seems like a good place to begin. Passagen-Werk is a collection of quotes, research notes and comments on mass industrial culture, that sought to explode the capitalist view of history as a series of events with the present as its apex. A central motif in Benjamin's Passagen-Werk is the flaneur, a stroller through the Arcades of Paris, simultaneously within the crowd and yet standing apart from it. Benjamin's flaneur is a historical figure of analysis; a metaphor, embodying the alienation wrought by capitalism in their wanderings through the long-defunct Arcades by Benjamin's time; and a methodological tool exemplifying Benjamin's intellectual practice of collecting seemingly disparate fragments and rubble of culture, drawing correlations and seeking truth in involuntary memories stimulated by direct engagement with material remains. Anthropologists have noted the similarities between "flanerie" and the practice of urban anthropologists. The flaneur, like the anthropologist, is a sort of detached participant observer, probing beneath the surface appearance of things. They deal in the traces and remnants of culture and their task is to "unite the fragmented views about the symbolic order…and thereby expose the soul of the city" (Nas 2012: 431).

It was with flanerie in mind that I set out upon a stroll through Leith. What follows are my impressions and suggestions on the effect of ruins in Leith where abandoned civic buildings and tenements evoke the spectre of working life that is almost beyond the bounds of living memory. Along my journey, I realised these ruins cannot be disentangled from official collective memory of Leith's thriving maritime past, evidenced by public artworks that glorify and commemorate this past. I particularly focus on one building, 165a Leith Walk, juxtaposing it to two examples of public art and sculpture near Leith Art School. By drawing together these seemingly unrelated edifices, I hope to show how the urban topography of Leith disrupts the narrative of progressive geometric time where we can somehow view the passage of time from an external vantage point. Instead, the ruins and lieux de memoire of Leith reveal "industrial ruination as a lived process" (Mah 2010: 399) where we feel and experience the remnants of the past erupting into the present.

DeSilvey and Edensor (2012: 466) define ruins as "site[s] where process is primary, and where agencies of decay and deterioration are still active and formative. These are

sites where the 'absence of order' … and maintenance leads to a state of continual transformation". Ruins often provoke a "sense of disarray" (Edensor 2005: 321); to our capitalist sensibilities they are chaotic "matter out of place". I found them difficult to come across in my immediate environment, perhaps due to living in a fairly sanitized and affluent area of Edinburgh close to the University. A friend helpfully directed me to the Buildings At Risk Register for Scotland, a website which "highlights properties of architectural or historic merit throughout the country that are considered to be at risk or under threat". In regards to the processes of forgetting and ruination the Register warrants some discussion. Ingold (1993) distinguishes between buildings and ruins, stating that buildings require the "regular input of maintenance and repair" (ibid: 170), whereas ruins manifest the lapse of human involvement, being left to the activities of other species and the vicissitudes of weather. Similarly, DeSilvey and Edensor (2012: 472) suggest that "the unstructured exploration of possible pasts, and the encounter with involuntary memories, can perhaps occur more readily in ruins that remain 'open' – *managed lightly, if at all*, still caught up in dynamic processes of decay and unmaking" [my emphasis]. I wondered if places listed on the Register could properly be classified as ruins, since clearly there was official interest in maintaining them. Moreover, DeSilvey and Edensor acknowledge that fully 'open' ruins are transient, their states of being dependent upon the political and economic context they inhabit. With little other recourse to locate ruins, I plotted a route through Leith stopping at six sites listed on the Register.

I do not claim to approach Leith without preconceptions, or what Crang and Travlou (2001) term memories "in absentia", in other words memories for a place in which I have never properly spent time. My expectations of Leith have been informed by popular culture, specifically the highly acclaimed novel *Trainspotting* by Irvine Welsh, and the film of the same name directed by Danny Boyle (1996), which notoriously painted Leith as the heroin and HIV hub of Scotland. However, I was also aware of increasing gentrification in Leith, notably the blooming of several Michelin starred restaurants and shore side redevelopment (Brooks 2015). Leith's strong community pride is also well known; the residents famously voted against incorporation into the City of Edinburgh in 1920, but undemocratically this vote was ignored. I did not want to participate in "dark tourism" (Strangleman 2013: 24) – a voyeuristic fetishization of industrial ruins or an aestheticization of poverty, known as

"ruin porn", that would elide Leith's current social reality or forget the years of prosperity. Simultaneously, I did not want to romanticize an industrial past that must have also contained hardship and suffering for many. The discussion of abandoned places and spaces that follows necessarily reflects my partial, personal experience of walking through Leith. Although I planned a route that stopped at several registered "ruins", I endeavoured to be receptive to conflicting narratives.

The first registered building I visited was 165a Leith Walk (Figure 1). I was disappointed to find it fully fenced in, but I was able to clamber through a gap in the fence to access a vast empty lot behind the building. It appeared to be in a half-finished state of (de)construction. A lurid yellow workman's container stood in the centre of the concrete square, heaps of leaves, empty crisp packets and concrete debris were neatly swept into piles in the centre and sides of the lot, whilst fluorescent traffic cones were placed haphazardly. One workman appeared to have forgotten his hard hat. I wondered if the re/deconstruction had also been abandoned. Or perhaps it was just because I visited on a Sunday. Even though there was little evidence of human habitation, there was evidence of human *attention* in the gates, fences and padlocks that keep people from exploring the innards of these abandoned places.

Figure 1. 165a Leith Walk from the back, where the trams were once housed. The figure of Ebenezer MaCcrae can be seen on the middle rear doorway

In addition to the negative enclosure of the space by way of steel fences, gates, locks and warning signs, this site demonstrated other productive and playful human interactions. The graffiti sprayed along the walls of the barren lot signals an appropriation of urban space and defies capitalist codes of spatial purification (Edensor 2005). Artwork was stamped upon the pebble-dashed walls of the building. Some of this art was decorative, some informative. For example, on a doorway on the rear was a drawing of the architect Ebenzer MaCrae

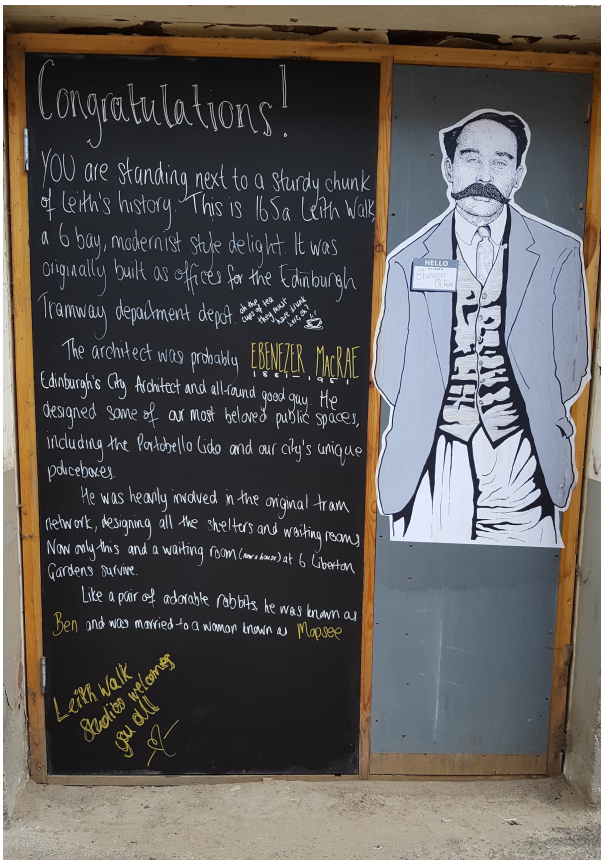

Figure 2. Ebenezer MaCrae (Yule 2016)

(Figure 2) next to text about 165's original function as the offices for the tram depot. All of a sudden the absence elicited by the empty lot was explained. It once housed the trams of Edinburgh's extensive tram network, created in 1871. Leith's trams were technologically innovative for their time, with the Leith Corporation Tramways pioneering the use of electric traction in 1905, allowing for a highly mobile workforce. The tram system was ended in 1956 when trams fell out of fashion (Mclean 2013). The drawing also related MaCrae's wider contributions to the city; he designed famous police boxes, linking the structure to other features of Edinburgh's cityscape. Subsequent online research led me to discover that this art was the work of a local artist, that 165a had been leased as creative space and used as an Edinburgh Fringe Festival venue in 2016. 165a is not merely an untouched relic of the past, but is being used in the (very) recent past and present as a mnemonic device to reflect on history that still resonates to this day.

Other drawings, such as the print of Margaret Thatcher (Figure 3), instantly recognisable from her characteristic coiffure and pearls, were more overtly political. My gaze was drawn to the blood red badge on her lapel that read "Keep Yer Laws Off My Body". The image of Thatcher deliberately connects this site to the politics of deindustrialization, a highly emotive issue in British society, which caused ruin to many communities. By the 1980s, Leith was suffering serious deprivation following the decline of shipping throughout the 1950s and '60s. Thatcher's neoliberal economic restructuring during the 1970s did nothing to alleviate this. The closure of Robb's shipyard in 1984 heralded the end of 600 years of shipbuilding in Leith and the loss of thousands of jobs (Mclean 2014).

Figure 3. Print of Margaret Thatcher

165a Leith Walk, here captured in a moment of renewal or abandonment, "draws

attention to the unprecedented material destruction wrought by accelerating capitalism" (Edensor 2005: 316) and its drive for endless innovation and recycling. The abandoned building offers a canvas for local artists to illustrate this political critique directly (see Figure 3). It demonstrates multiple temporalities in Ingold's (1993) metaphysical conception of the landscape as a "taskscape in embodied form". Ingold goes beyond the "naturalistic" and "culturalistic" binary that on the one hand sees the landscape as a neutral, external background to human activity, and on the other that sees it as a projection of the human mind. Instead, the landscape can be regarded as the physical expression of all the activity that has gone into its formation. Ingold does not limit the taskscape to solely human labour and general living practices, but includes the inanimate activity of weather, and the axial rotation of the earth. Drawing a comparison with music, he illustrates how our world is composed of different rhythms and cycles, for example the life cycle of a person compared with the cycle of a frog, or the cycle of a rock or a glacier. These cycles all interact and resonate with each other, albeit at different tempos. In prioritizing process over form Ingold blurs the ontological separation between landscape and temporality, demonstrating that every vista of our world is "suspended in movement" (ibid. 164). 165a Leith walk embodies this plethora of collapsed actions. The building is a "modernist style delight" overlooking the rubble of the now-demolished tram depot, the exposed walls of which are an easel for urban graffiti artists. In contrast to discourses of modernity that see the present as the apex of achievement, ruins show how "the landscape is never complete: neither 'built' nor 'unbuilt', it is perpetually under construction" (Ingold 1993: 162).

Figure 3: Mural of Leith's maritime past

During my exploration of Leith I could not help but be struck by nostalgia for a maritime past. Like an *ars memoria*, the streets of Leith are "spatialized trips down memory lane" (Crang and Travlou 2001: 165), its nautical heritage directs the urban landscape, for example Maritime Road. Yet, shipbuilding in Leith ended almost 40 years ago after undergoing several decades of decline. Some of those shipbuilders and docks workers may still live in Leith however, this population is ageing and the increasing gentrification of the area has the potential to price out native residents. Leith's former docks and ports have been redeveloped into shopping centres and industrial estates. Nora (1989) uses the term lieux de memoire to describe the distance between those in the present and living memory of the past. He argues that our current era is so obsessed with forms of collective memory because we have no way of accessing actual memories: "we speak so much of memory because there is so little of it left" (ibid. 7). In our efforts to keep hold of the past, modern society selects parts of history to commemorate that are often incapable of representing the past in its entirety. These representations are "moments of history torn away from the movement of history" (ibid. 12). The titanic mural on the side of Leith Art School depicts industrious Leithers drawing up ship plans, fitting turbines, alongside collective social events such as the parade seen in the bottom left of Figure 3. These activities have not occurred here for decades. Furthermore, the image of idyllic industriousness shows a limited view of life in Leith during that time, hiding domestic activity and times of hardship. Closer to the docks I found strips of iron twisted into nautical sculptures of boats, nets, and anchors (Figure 4). Even these lieux de memoire are themselves in a state of ruination and decay, or in the case of Figure 4 overlook a car park practically hidden behind trees and in danger of being swallowed up by ivy. Nora's (ibid) metaphor of "shells on the shore when the sea of living memory has receded" could not be more apt.

In juxtaposing these decaying lieux de memoire and 165 Leith Walk, itself in the process of being remembered and redeveloped, I hope to have shown how the material and architectural topography of Leith reveals a dynamic, pluri-temporal landscape. Despite efforts to limit official collective memory of Leith to a single nautical narrative, there are concurrent efforts to remember other histories,

exemplified in the use of the ruins of the old tram depot. Furthermore, the stories told by the ruins and the lieux de memoire resonate together. The trams were opened as Leith ascended in importance as an international trading port. The closure of the trams occurred alongside the decline of shipping and concurrent social decline, the capitalist need for constant innovation and efficiency "keeps piling wreckage upon wreckage". Yet it is through this wreckage, ruins like 165a that we can glimpse, if only for a brief moment, the past that formed our lived present.

Figure 4: Sculptures showing Leith's maritime industry

All photographs are author's own, unless otherwise accredited

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'The Traveller Way': Imagined and Actual Mobility among Scottish Gypsy Travellers

Beth J. Gorrie

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‘The Traveller Way’: Imagined and Actual Mobility among Scottish Gypsy Travellers.

Beth J. Gorrie

Abstract

Although a population recognised externally for their itinerancy, the mobility of Gypsy Travellers in Scotland has been fundamentally misunderstood. Endowed with creative power, mobility exists for Gypsy Travellers not only in times of transit, but continuously through an imagined connection to the spirit of travel. The dominant settled population’s understanding of movement, which has informed past policy-making, has overlooked the significance of mobility in making meaning, resulting in a system in which the travel of Gypsy Travellers has been effectively illegitimated, and their community further marginalised. By challenging notions of place as fixed by necessity, we can see that ‘place’ can be created through movement, which occurs physically as well as through imagination and anticipation.

Keywords: Gypsy Travellers, mobility, place, Scotland

Introduction

‘While you’re shifting, you see places and things most people don’t see, because it’s a limited view you have, being just in one place. Even though I’ve been here for years I’m always thinking: I could move somewhere new. I’m not tied here. Travelling’s in my blood.’

(interview with an informant on site).

‘Is black coffee alright?’ Brenda asks.

I am sitting inside the trailer where she lives alone, situated on a council-run Gypsy Traveller site a short bus ride outside the city centre. Ten minutes ago, I arrived at Kirkleith for the first time and was met by Brenda, a friendly woman in her sixties, at the gate of her pitch, where she welcomed me into her trailer. Immaculately kept, the trailer could be mistaken for a show-

model; countertops sparkle, the sofa is covered in a protective plastic layer, and an array of family photographs are pinned by the door.

'Twenty years I've been here, on this site. I've moved around in that time, mind, but I first came to Kirkleith twenty years ago'.

'Where are you originally from?' I ask.

'My mother's from Glasgow, father's from Edinburgh, but we travelled so much when I was young'. Brenda's dog Scruffy, a terrier-cross (although crossed with what, she is not sure), lies beside me.

'I've been all over Britain, but I'm Scottish,' Brenda says. 'I've been here for a while but that's not to say I won't move again'.

Those who had worked with Gypsy Travellers before warned me to watch out for being given a chipped mug: 'it's a test', they told me, 'to see if you will mention it or not. That's taboo, for Travellers, to drink out a chipped mug. So, they'll have a wee laugh at you if you do'[1]. Brenda brings over my coffee, sitting down across from me. 'Gypsy Travellers, we're so misunderstood. So that's why I thought I should talk to you, so you can get an idea of our ways and how we live, why we travel'. Smiling, she hands me my coffee. In a perfectly intact mug.

My research plan was initially born out of an interest in how Gypsy Traveller identity was negotiated when travelling stopped. Kirkleith's council-run Gypsy Traveller site appeared to me as an intriguing location: somewhere at the intersection of the Gypsy Traveller movement and state bureaucracy, two phenomena which throughout history have been presented as incompatible (Shubin, 2011a: 502). Located in central Scotland, Kirkleith consists of twenty pitches, all of which were occupied during my fieldwork period. The provision of council-run Gypsy Traveller sites began in the 1960s (Hawes and Perez, 1996: 24) and while demand for places is high, it is, contentiously, not compulsory for councils to provide a Gypsy Traveller site.

It did not take long, however, for me to realise that my prior assumption of the Gypsy Traveller movement was flawed. Within my first few interviews I discovered that mobility was intrinsic

[1] Gypsy Traveller codes of purity and pollution are based on an inside/outside dichotomy, wherein the 'internal' and 'external body' must be kept separate. Drinking from chipped or cracked crockery is deemed *mochadi* (ritually unclean) and is seen to contaminate the internal body (Okely, 1983: 80-81).

to the lives of my informants in ways that I, as a settled person, had not fully grasped: travel was not a simply a cultural practice, but a way of living – indeed, a way of being. The centrality of movement was made apparent not just through direct questions on travelling, but from the presence of travel in conversations about seemingly unrelated topics. My informants spoke of mobility as something at the core of who they were: present in the mind, even when the body seemed settled, was the memory of past travel and the anticipation of future travel. The choice to live on the site was not a rejection of movement, rather one way to live a mobile life within a socio-political climate where movement is heavily regulated. Despite being recognised by the government as a community holding a marginalised position within Scotland (EHRC, 2018), the traditional itinerancy of Gypsy Travellers has been challenged by a series of harsh laws and penalties throughout Scottish History (Clark and Greenfields, 2006: 133-134).

I argue that past government efforts to regulate Gypsy Traveller movement have failed because of their grounding in sedentarist ideology – policies have been wrongly designed to accommodate the type of movement practiced by settled people, not the type of movement practiced by Gypsy Travellers. Attempts to regulate movement within a sedentary framework aspire more to assimilate than accommodate. By imposing essentialist understandings of movement and place upon Gypsy Travellers, we fail to understand the complex ways in which mobility comes to shape their mode of engagement with the world (Shubin, 2011b: 1938). Gypsy Traveller mobility exists on a continuum, which encompasses physical and non-physical movement. Shubin writes that 'movement as existence in passage generates spaces of rupture, animates cultural fields…and continuously reenergises mobile lives' (2011b: 1943) – the spirit of *shifting* (a Gypsy Traveller word for 'travelling'), which was central to the lives of Gypsy Travellers I met, emerges not from points of departure or destination, but from movement itself.

Methodology

My findings have emerged from my own observations, as well as semi-formal interviews and informal conversations. Interviews took place inside the trailers (caravans) of my informants, which I was kindly invited into. I did not take notes during interviews as some of my informants had informed me they were not literate. Although this meant I was unable to document conversations in real-time, I felt that note-taking or audio-recording would detract from the fluidity of conversation and, more pressingly, emphasise an imbalance in the 'familiar asymmetrical relationship' of the interviewer and the interviewee (Gubrium and Holstein, 2002: 3; Riley et al, 2003). Fieldnotes were instead written immediately after interviews, where

I would document conversations in as much detail as possible, also recording particularly memorable quotes.

In an attempt to minimise the aforementioned power disparity, I explained to my informants that they were free to redact statements which they were not happy with, to not answer questions and to end the interview at any time. My informants, of course, held the power to do these things regardless of my 'permission', yet I hope that my explicit expression reflected to them my acknowledgement of the history of misrepresentation Gypsy Travellers have faced (Clark and Greenfields, 2006: 237) and my gratitude that, in spite of this, they were willing to give up their time to speak to me.

I cannot claim to speak on the experience of all Scottish Gypsy Travellers as my findings emerge from localised research undertaken in a limited time-span, and of course there is no singular 'Gypsy Traveller experience'. Instead, I present the experiences of my informants as they were told to me and lived out in front of me and invite further analytical inquiry into the field. I believe the nature of ethnographic fieldwork places anthropologists in a uniquely privileged position from which to research the mobility of Gypsy Travellers, which should be understood for its heterogeneity, rather than through external attempts to discern pattern.

Background

Despite the recognition of Gypsy Travellers as itinerant people, the mobility which they practice is grossly misrepresented and misunderstood in popular imagination. The romanticised idea of the wandering nomad (Okely, 1983: 30) mistakenly views Gypsy Travellers as a socially and culturally isolated group, and throughout their history in Scotland negative stereotypes have presented the movement of Gypsy Travellers as threatening to the settled population (Cresswell, 2006: 25). Modern-day discrimination against Gypsy Travellers has been spurred on, in part, through dog-whistle politics, where 'Gypsy Travellers' are codified as a 'problem' to be solved (Clark and Greenfields, 2006: 1-2).

An increasing number of Gypsy Travellers within the UK are moving into bricks and mortar accommodation, a pattern in part caused by institutional and social constraints (Shubin, 2011b: 1931) which vilify movement as deviation. Yet, it should also be noted that many Gypsy Travellers live happily within bricks and mortar houses, retaining an emotional connection to mobility. Itinerancy does not have to be constant to be central to the lives of Gypsy Travellers: the imagined potential of travel also serves as an important mode of engagement with the world.

Drawing upon the work of Shubin, who has carried out extensive fieldwork with Gypsy Travellers in Scotland, I shall here adopt the notion of 'travelling as a way of being' (2011b: 1942) to consider how mobility is lived by Gypsy Travellers. Through exploring the ways in which practices of actual and imagined mobility were important to my informants, I shall argue that shifting is the primary mode through which they engaged with the world. I shall also explain how Gypsy Traveller mobility has been misunderstood due to the settled population's preoccupation with bounded definitions of 'punctual' movement. The success of policies to improve outcomes for Gypsy Travellers within Scotland is dependent upon engagement with mobility. A misunderstanding of mobility, namely that mobility only concerns actual movement, has been at the core of much anti-Gypsy sentiment (Hawes and Perez, 1996: 151-152).

Mobilities and Accommodation

Fixity is established, as in 'sedentarist' thinking, as the logical and moral alternative to mobility (Cresswell, 2006), informing the idea that housing is a viable solution for Gypsy Traveller issues. Mobility in 'the West' is coded as a threat within a system of 'sedentarist metaphysics'; 'a disorder in the system, a thing to control' (Cresswell, 2006: 25-26). Such ideas have led to state-regulation of mobility and nomadism, with government attempts to assimilate Gypsy Travellers into a 'settled' way of life (Hawes and Perez, 1996: 171-172). Historical government preference of bricks and mortar assimilation over accommodating mobility has resulted in a chronic shortage of council-run sites across Scotland, with many existing sites too small to meet local demand (Clark and Greenfields, 2006: 112-113). While these sites urgently need attention, Hilary Third, secretariat to the Scottish Government's Ministerial Working Group on Gypsy/Travellers, expressed to me the additional importance of a focus on accommodation provisions for those who are actively shifting, as, in her words, 'it is their cultural right to do so'.

While the fluidity which characterises Gypsy Traveller movement may seem incompatible with processes of bureaucratic policy making, the Scottish Government plans to re-open traditional Gypsy Traveller stopping places which will provide facilities for those in transit, although only accommodating a controlled mobility. A parliamentary motion for the re-opening of stopping places was passed in June 2018. Due to the oral nature of Gypsy Traveller society (Reith, 2008: 77) many stopping places are not officially documented. Government efforts to re-open

stopping places, therefore, will be undertaken collaboratively, with guidance sought from Gypsy Travellers.

Governing Mobility

Here I shall also draw upon Malkki's perspective on 'sedentarism': the dominant settled population's system of thought which prioritises territorial connection to the land and views mobility as a menace. Movement becomes a digression from the settled notion of a 'home' or 'place' which is controlled and controllable. Sedentarist ideas become codified as natural due to their inclusion in 'ordinary language, in nationalist discourses, and in scholarly studies of nations, nationalism, and refugees' (Malkki 1992: 25; Cresswell, 2006: 32). Dominant sedentary ideas have been 'adopted by every non-nomadic community' (Clark and Greenfields, 2006: 134) and the use of such discourse to inform law-making can be highly damaging for Gypsy Travellers and other nomadic groups as the moral preference for fixity (Malkki, 1992: 30) redefines mobility as atypical. These ideas serve as a means for the justification of discrimination against itinerant communities. Sedentarist notions of mobility are insufficient for understanding Gypsy Traveller mobility, which does not necessarily involve actual movement.

A Mobile Temporality

Considered within a sedentarist ideology, travel is measured between clear points of departure and arrival from an equilibrium: leaving one's settled state and returning to one's settled state. This was not the case for my informants, who did not consider travelling in these terms of linear progression: the shift between periods of stillness and periods of movement can be planned, unplanned and interrupted, shaped by material and emotional circumstance (Shubin and Swanson, 2010: 923). When the start and finish points of travel are afforded prioritisation, the process of mobility itself is neglected and 'movement is entirely subordinated to the positions it connects' (Massumi, 2002: 3). Such 'punctual' definitions of movement do not allow for adequate understanding of what happens during periods of mobility (Massumi, 2002: 3-4). Shifting, for my informants, was not a means to an end, rather a specific mode of engaging with the world; meaning did not emerge from the start or end point of the journey, if indeed such movement can be considered to have a start or end point, rather emerging through the process of travelling itself. As one informant explained: 'You would leave in the morning and you didn't always know where you'd end up…every day a different view out the window, it's all about that freedom'. Sedentarist efforts to 'ground' movement with a 'bounded and fixed

framework' neglect the meaning which is made within 'performative practices of mobility' (Shubin, 2011a: 512), and therefore cannot fully understand the creative power of movement.

The anticipation of mobility informs behaviour and preferences, with many Gypsy Travellers who live in bricks and mortar housing also owning a caravan to retain a pragmatic connection to the potential to travel (Kenrick and Clark, 1999: 29). Mobility serves as a means through which Gypsy Travellers can connect to their heritage, or as my informants often put it: 'the Traveller way'. By challenging dominant sedentary understandings, we can see movement is not just a physical act, but a way of living. At the crux of government failure to accommodate Gypsy Travellers is a misunderstanding of mobility. The imposition of a punctual understanding of mobility upon Gypsy Traveller movement is problematic as Gypsy Travellers I met did not practice mobility in punctual terms.

'Travelling…well, we call it *shifting'*

Historically, the nomadism of Gypsy Travellers was facilitated by the mobile nature of the tents, trailers and wagons which they chose to live in, allowing for flexible travel (Okely, 1983: 53). My informants spoke of shifting as their 'history' and 'the Traveller way'. Shifting was a way to engage with family and friends, a point of departure from which they understood their identity and 'place' within the world. Gypsy Traveller identity was not lost during stationary periods as mobility could still be practiced emotionally and imaginatively. Through living in trailers my informants kept the potential to travel open.

Upon attending the Gypsy Roma Traveller History Month concert in Edinburgh this summer, I enjoyed a performance by Scottish Traveller Jess Smith, who sang a number of traditional Gypsy Traveller songs, including an acapella rendition of the well-known Yellow on the Broom; a song which expresses the treasured relationship Gypsy Travellers have traditionally had with the natural environment:

Oh, the scaldies call us tinker dirt and they sconce our bairns in school,
But who cares what a scaldy says, for scaldy's but a fool.
They never hear the yorlin's song, nor see the flax in bloom,
For they're aye cooped up in houses when the yellow's on the broom.

[Scaldy = settled person.]

The audience, made up largely of Gypsy Travellers, were visibly moved by the lyrical sentiment: taking to their feet they swayed together, gently singing along. By the time the song reached its final verse, the performance resembled more of a chorus, followed by rapturous applause.

Mobility exists in the lives of Gypsy Travellers, though, through more than the physical act of travelling: engagement with mobility can occur in an emotional sense. Travelling can be understood as a 'state of mind' which occurs symbolically and through imagination. Even for those who could be considered to have 'settled', the possibility to reconnect with travel remains important (Shubin, 2011b: 1931-1932). Connection to mobility crystallises Gypsy Traveller identity and allows for adaptability and freedom (Hawes and Perez, 1996: 8). Mobility can occur within the mind, or through conversations with family and friends; Claire smiled as she told me of the frequent phone-calls she had with family currently shifting, during which they would update her on their whereabouts; 'they're moving all over the place…when I phoned they said to me "we're in London" and when I phoned again, maybe one or two days later, they said "we're in Wales now, we're at the coast!"'. Although Claire did not move her trailer off Kirkleith this summer, she felt connected to mobility through the stories of her family, enjoying hearing that they had stopped at places she remembered from her childhood travels. While not physically moving with her family, the emotional potency of their telephone updates led her on her own imagined journey, reminding her of her shifting past and hinting at future travel.

Mobility as Place-making

Relph writes that it is essential to the human experience to form links with significant places. Without these links he sees the only future for humans as one where 'placelessness' takes over and places do not matter (1976: 147); 'to be human is to have and to know your place'. Place becomes an ontological starting point, an orientation from which one looks out on the world (1976: 38). Essentialist ideas construct a notion of place in opposition with mobility and see it as necessary for one's understanding of oneself and one's society that one has a situated and stationary perspective: worldly knowledge becomes validated by this fixed position (Ong 1969). The prioritisation of fixity and 'stationariness' (Rapport and Dawson, 1998: 21) is a problematic starting point for considering the ontology of itinerant groups. By awarding fixity moral primacy, the movement of nomads is seen as chaotic: they are assumed to be people who do not hold regional loyalties and therefore do not 'know their place socially or geographically' (Cresswell, 2006: 32).

Relph's argument neglects the experiences of nomadic communities. The misconception of Gypsy Travellers as disconnected from place emerges from the alignment of mobility with space, placing it in binary opposition with place (Kabachnik, 2012: 215). Moving away from such essentialist understandings of place is vital for understanding Gypsy Traveller itinerancy. Place should be conceptualised not as static and bounded, but rather as holding the capacity for fluidity and movement (Kabachnik, 2012: 213-214). The Gypsy Travellers I met were not placeless, instead place was conceptualised by them in relation to mobility. My informants were connected to Kirkleith, which can be essentially conceptualised as a bounded place, in that they lived on it, yet this connection can be better understood in relation to mobility. Living on the site allowed for the potential of movement but meant residents could avoid the constant evictions which occur during 'life on-the-road' due to strict anti-nomad policies (Clark and Greenfield, 2006: 71). In this way, the site facilitated movement: 'moorings enable movement' (Urry, 2003: 126), thus the potential for engagement with mobility exists even in presumably 'fixed' places.

Shifting in Action

Upon one of my visits to the site I was surprised to find it so empty. Brenda told me that many had left for the weekend, shifting together to attend a 'Church of Light and Life' event in the Scottish Borders. This Gypsy-led Evangelical Christian movement draws large numbers to its events, known to be highly social occasions. Brenda was not a member of the Church but told me she had previously travelled to their events to socialise. During another visit, a pitch near the back of the site was a hive of activity; cars and an extra trailer had appeared, children ran around, soaking wet after playing with a broken hose in the site playpark to cool off in the heatwave. 'Don't yous know there's a hose-pipe ban?' their grandad joked, before catching sight of his wife taking a plastic-wrapped fascinator out of her handbag - 'that's surely no another hat!'. 'We're in the middle of wedding-planning frenzy' he said, somewhat exasperated. Additional family members had arrived to help with preparations, and he told me they would soon be shifting down to the Borders for the wedding of his son to a Traveller girl - it was to be a big occasion. While group travel is often undertaken in celebration, large gatherings of Gypsy Travellers are frequently painted as menacing and subjected to threat of police eviction at the request of local residents (Clark and Greenfields, 2006: 66-67).

While travel is perceived within the sedentary population as a disruption to settled life, for my informants the nomadic way of life, as a lived practice or an aspiration, remained culturally

valuable (Shubin and Swanson, 2010: 921). Travel was not a disruption to their lives, rather they lived in such a way that travel was facilitated. I observed one conversation between three middle-aged female friends (all Kirkleith tenants) which occurred at a charity-event close to the site. Two of the women were pleasantly surprised to see the third attend, and began to discuss her travelling;

Brenda - *'Pat! How are you? Are you back for long?'*

Pat - *'I'm in Ayrshire just now with family, seeing the wee ones is nice. I'm singing tomorrow at the [Church of Light and Life] event in the Borders then back to Ayrshire then onto somewhere else.'*

Susan - *'Lovely, is that Kate's kids? We're going to the [Church event] as well and might start shifting from there.'*

This conversation illustrated some of the ways in which these women practiced shifting, whether planned or unplanned. Considered oppositional to being 'at home' (Dovey, 1985: 42) travel is planned by the settled population as an interruption to normal order. Yet the travel plans of these three women were not steadfast: in this case there were certain points of the journey which were mapped, seeing family and attending a religious event, yet movement was not discussed in terms of arrival and return, rather occurring on a continuum which was subject to temporal influence.

All of these women were currently engaged with mobility in different ways: Pat was absent from the site for the duration of my fieldwork, although she kept her pitch. Graham, the site manager, showed me the tenancy agreement, which emphasised that tenants were only permitted to spend up to 12 weeks off the site in any 12-month period to retain their pitch, yet explained that he did not enforce this rule stringently as he did not want to unnecessarily split families up or disrupt the site dynamic. He described Kirkleith as 'fairly settled', owing to the fact most tenants were related, thus even those who were very mobile would return for extended periods. Susan had two trailers on her pitch, one stayed for the summer and the other was used for shifting. Her family returned to the site at some points throughout June and July. Brenda was on the site for the majority of my fieldwork period, though she did travel by car to visit family often, leaving her trailer behind. Speaking about the future, Brenda did not express to me any concrete travel plans but said it was 'likely' she would move again.

When considering the salience of emotional and imagined connections to mobility, one can see that living on a site is not opposite to travelling. One can live on a site long-term yet still retain a strong connection to mobility. Choosing to live on the site, or in housing, does not mark the 'end' of travelling, nor the 'end' of being a Gypsy Traveller, and instead is part of a continuum of mobility which may lead to further travel, or may not.

Stationary Mobility

The connection to Gypsy Traveller identity is not lost if movement stops; an imagined and emotional connection to movement can be maintained even during relatively 'settled' periods, and mobility can be understood as 'a state of mind rather than a state of action' (Kenrick and Clark, 1999: 29). The connection to mobility is not dependent upon continuous movement, remaining steadfast in imagined and emotional ways. When I asked my informants if they saw themselves staying at Kirkleith long-term, none agreed with total certainty. Even those who had lived there for over ten years, whom one might expect to have an established connection, replied with the suggestion that they anticipated further travel, often adding that their mobility was linked to the mobilities of their family. Their answers indicated that a connection to travelling was more important than a connection to the site:

John - *'I do like [Kirkleith], it's not like some other sites because the location's good, so I could stay, or I could leave tomorrow.'*

Maureen - *'Well, you know I have family who are shifting, so I could go along with them for a bit…but my daughter has the bairn [child] so it also depends where she's going.'*

Kim, an older lady who had lived on the site for over twenty years, shifting during this time, explained that she found a great degree of 'freedom' in the knowledge that she could still remember how to 'tow', despite not having moved her trailer for a few years: 'I haven't done it for a while but I still know how to tow a trailer, so that's my freedom there, really…because I can tow, so then I can move'. Although Kim could be seen to be somewhat 'settled' at Kirkleith, her connection to mobility was evident. As Shubin explains: 'mobility covers an emotional as well as physical landscape for Scottish Gypsy Travellers' (2011b: 1935). Mobility exists to Gypsy Travellers as more than the act of movement itself, but as an emotional connection to the 'spirit' of travel - a connection which was at the core of my informants' identity.

Conclusion

Essentially misunderstood within sedentary discourse, mobility was central to the lives of my informants: occurring physically and through imagination. Shifting was spoken of in reference to their past, through personal histories of travel; their present, through their lived practice; and their future, through anticipation of movement. More than a cultural practice, shifting was their way of inhabiting the world: the foundational aspect of their identity.

A project initially intended to explore what happens when Gypsy Travellers stop travelling, I soon realised that any 'paradox' I expected was emergent from my own absorption in the dominant sedentary discourse on movement. When we recognise the existence of mobilities which are not 'punctual' (Massumi, 2002), we can see that Gypsy Traveller shifting is not an exclusively spatial phenomenon. First of all, my informants' physical mobility did not take a 'punctual' form – it was not circumscribed by travelling from one fixed place to another. Furthermore, mobility exists not only during times of physical movement, it is also present in the imagination during 'settled' periods as an aspiration (Shubin, 2011a: 498). This emotional connection is significant, valid whether physical movement materialises or not. When travelling is considered as a continuum, encompassing stationary and mobile periods, we can see that there is nothing contradictory about a 'settled' Gypsy Traveller. Experienced also through the imagination, travel is fundamentally misunderstood when it is restricted within sedentary definitions which subordinate the meaning-making which occurs along the way.

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Spectral Beings and Being Spectral: Ghostly Enchantment within Edinburgh's Ghost Tours

James Hanton

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James Hanton

Abstract

Ghost tourism is big business in Scotland and in Edinburgh specifically. This paper is based off ethnographic fieldwork conducted with a number of the Scottish capital's ghost tour companies. It is primarily concerned with the performance and embodiment of spectrality by ghost tour guides, which is achieved through the use of theatrical techniques meant to immerse tour-goers into the ghostly. It is this immersion that marks ghost tours out as enchantment; a more special experience than the mundane manner of everyday existence, which goes some way to explaining the popularity of ghost tourism.

Keywords: Spectrality, Ghosts, Performance, Theatre, Immersion

Introduction:

The dead sell. Ghost walks exist in multiple cities across the UK (Clanton 2007; Holloway 2010; Hanks 2011). Inglis and Holmes (2003: 61) argue that 'the ghost seems increasingly to walk in every nook and cranny the tourism industry can find for it.' Scottish tourism is worth approximately £11.6 billion and growing, and over 10% of Scotland's employment is within the tourism sector (Holzhauser 2015). Whatever the truth of the paranormal may be, Scotland's tourism sector is benefitting from it.

Walking up the Royal Mile, Edinburgh's historic high street, it is easy to spot ghost tour guides amongst the crowds of people ordinarily found there during the summer months. Each

tour's representatives are a mixture of different ages, genders and nationalities, but they are all normally in costume. Some wear all black; a long velvet or leather trench coat with black boots and trousers. These can be complemented with a black hat or a walking cane depending on the guide's preference. Others attempt to replicate the clothing and appearance of those from the era that the tour guide's character is taken from. Some guides adopt the role of a locally famous historical figure. For example, City of Edinburgh tours have a guide that resembles the appearance of Major Weir, who in 1670 reportedly confessed to witchcraft and his ghost is rumoured to haunt his old home on West Bow (*The Scotsman* 2016).

Cohen (1985) divides a guide's role into leadership and mediation. The former includes guiding tour-goers around different planned routes, allowing them access to sites not open to the public, and maintaining group morale. The latter includes enabling interactions between visitors and points of interest (talking about landmarks, discussing significant events at different sites and such), the delivery of information, but also the selection and interpretation of this information. The guide, at a basic level, is one 'who leads the way through an environment in which his followers lack orientation or through a socially defined territory' (ibid.: 7). Edinburgh's ghost tour guides follow pre-planned routes which can involve access to otherwise inaccessible sites. Mercat Tours offer exclusive access to the Blair Street Underground Vaults, while City of the Dead are the only company allowed into the Black Mausoleum. Furthermore, they typically discuss locations such as the vaults, graveyards and houses of the Old Town in great detail, with a strong emphasis on 'how things were' or 'back then.' Primarily discussing historical sites and information means that Edinburgh's ghost tour guides do not only lead and guide their company through an unfamiliar space, but also through an unfamiliar time and specific historical setting.

This paper presents an ethnography of ghost tour guiding based on fieldwork carried out in the Scottish capital during the summer of 2018. I will investigate to what extent the tour guides are practitioners of hauntology; 'a concern with apparitions, visions and representations that mediate the sensuous and the non-sensuous, visibility and invisibility, presence and absence, reality and not-yet-reality, being and non-being' (Lincoln & Lincoln 2015: 192). Conceptualising hauntology for the first time, Jacques Derrida's *Specters of Marx* was careful to separate "spirits" from "spectres", as the latter 'undertake[s] a kind of incarnation, to become a body, that is, to take on a material shape' (McCallum 2007: 238) while spirits do not. I choose to collapse this opposition since, as I will illustrate, the blurring and incomplete manner of materiality and immateriality is what characterises ghosts as opposed to the full adoption of either state. This ethnography will reveal how embodied performances immerse tourists into enchanted and spectral experiences, with some guides adopting a semi-present state of both human and ghost, occupying a liminal state and space.

The Thing That Comes:

The first tour I went on was guided by a young woman called Roxanne, who had been leading her own group for Mercat Tours since March and was dressed head to foot in black. We (myself and other tour-goers) first gathered round in a circle by the Mercat Cross on the Royal Mile, the monument from which Mercat Tours draws its name. Roxanne led the tour around various points of interest around the Royal Mile, zig-zagging between different closes (narrow streets) on each side, telling the group historical vignettes or ghost tales at each stopping point. This journey took the group slowly towards the underground vault entrance, where we arrived half an hour later.

The vaults have been the subject of several studies over the years. Wiseman et al. (2005) conducted a rigorous paranormal investigation inside the Blair Street Vaults, concluding that people's expectations and beliefs in paranormal activity were secondary to environmental factors such as light and naturally occurring magnetic fields in determining behavioural responses within apparently haunted places. This study was referenced during the tour as we were taken through the rooms in ascending order, from least to most haunted. It is also discussed in Mercat's souvenir book, which proudly states that this remains 'the most systematic investigation of a haunted location in the world' (Geddes 2012: 40).

The tour is a walk around nine stone vaults connected by short archways. Other tour-goers would comment to me how 'stuffy' and sometimes 'claustrophobic' it felt. Roxanne did check with the group beforehand if anyone had breathing difficulties such as asthma, in case they would struggle with the air quality (or lack of it) once inside. Although structurally it is similar to what it would have been like during the 18th and 19th centuries, Roxanne explained that, to meet modern health and safety requirements, electricity had been installed so fire exits could be indicated and some low-level lighting had been introduced into some rooms. This proved necessary, as the cobbled ground was uneven at points and slippery from rainwater since the vaults were never waterproofed, so total darkness risked injuries to visitors. Rooms without lights were completely dark save for the dim candle the guide held in her hand.

Roxanne walked the group around each room, encouraging us to come close to her so we would hear what she was saying. She started in rooms that had occasional reports of ghost sightings, blending these reports with historical details about life in the vaults and facts about their construction. As the tour moved from room to room, the ghosts took a greater role in the

stories, until we were taken into what is known as the White Room – the most paranormally "active" room (Wiseman et al. 2005; Geddes 2012). Roxanne explained that this is the home of an evil spectre known as 'The Watcher', who reportedly causes watches or torches to stop working and even triggers physical pain in some visitors. She also told us, in a particularly malevolent and dramatic tone of voice, that The Watcher has a habit of blowing out candles… before blowing out her own candle and temporarily plunging the group into complete darkness. She waited, and then relit it a few moments later.

Talking to tour-goers afterwards, this moment of blowing out the candle was highlighted as a point where the 'obviously well-rehearsed' and 'theatrical' manner of the guide was clear to see. This moment of the tour, indeed the tour as a whole, parallels what Fischer-Lichte (1995: 86) means when she describes how avant-garde theatre movements 'claimed to close the gap between art and life and to fuse theatre and reality'. The understanding of theatre expanded beyond the traditional stage, so 'any kind of exhibitory, demonstrative or spectacular event' (ibid.: 86) could now be understood as such. More specifically, environmental theatre conceptually broadened to incorporate street parades and processions among other things (Biggin 2017), and ghost tours fall within this classification. It makes sense therefore that tours feature guides who it seems are performing a rehearsed role.

I was able to discuss Roxanne's job with her a couple of days later. She told me that she finds it very enjoyable and unlike her previous work. A history graduate, she had worked as a guide previously for another company, but Mercat Tours require her to bring a more 'theatrical element' to guiding which she was not experienced in before she started. She also recalled her first visit to the vaults:

> I went into the vaults for the first time on a tour with a very good guide, and she created a really spooky atmosphere. I remember feeling quite uneasy, because it was very authentically creepy especially because of the stories and candlelit rooms.

It is an atmosphere that Roxanne herself is now tasked with regularly creating for visitors, which she does through the use of performative actions and techniques such as tone, costume and use of props like the candle. Clements (2013: 26) concludes that theatre is a 'ghosted practice' and stresses the 'repetitions, disappearances and reappearance' that characterise performance art. Derrida (1994: 98) repeatedly talks of how 'specters… come on stage', words that emphasise the close connection of spectrality and performance. Seeing Roxanne put on a kind of performance is therefore unsurprising. Combined with detailed and entertaining storytelling, this showmanship generates an anticipation of ghosts such as The Watcher. Derrida (1994: 4) describes the anticipation as 'at once impatient, anxious and fascinated: this, the thing… will end up coming.' The nervousness of the group is testament to the successful creation of morbid anticipation.

Although the performative aspect emerges as a crucial part of the ghost tour guide's role and a method for building expectations, not all guides attempt to be incredibly performative. Roxanne mentioned that, despite her candle moment in the White Room, her style is not overly theatrical and it would feel 'unnatural' for her to attempt otherwise. She says that while other guides are given scope to be much more dramatically expressive, she is equally allowed by the tour company to come across as more naturalistic. While my group saw Roxanne as well practiced, and she too acknowledges the theatrical aspects of her work, she does not see herself as an especially elaborate performer.

Stalking, Wandering and Not Belonging:

Rather than viewing tour guides' performances purely in terms of typical acting techniques – such as the use of voice and interaction with props – it makes more sense to view the guiding itself as described by Cohen (1985) in terms of a 'show.' More specifically, it makes sense to view ghost tours as examples of immersive theatre. Biggin (2017) notes that several understandings of immersive theatre exist, but they all centre on the "actor" and their audience occupying the same space and the latter being directly involved in the spectacle, in a setting that dissolves the separation of the two amidst an interaction dictated largely by the environment. All the walking ghost tours in Edinburgh's old town are like this. Roxanne was just one of many guides who try to keep themselves close to the tour-goers and only project their voices as much as necessary. This was often for practical reasons so that everyone could hear them, but this closeness contributes to the erasure of the performer-audience distinction.

Approaches to this differed depending on the size of the group. The Cadies and Witchery Tour had a very small crowd when I visited – there was no more than five or six of us. This allowed the guide to get much closer to the group than he would otherwise be able to do, and not just in terms of physical proximity. Before the tour began, he told the group where he was from and asked the visitors where they had come from, and received a range of answers from Argentina to South East England. His expectations of my prior knowledge of Scottish history rocketed when I told him I was from the Highlands, expectations that I embarrassingly failed to meet. The guide was able to break down the distinctions between performer and audience not just in terms of the physical space between the two, as seen in instances of immersive theatre in London (Biggin 2017; Luckhurst 2017), but by making himself a familiar figure having once been unfamiliar. He brought visitors into the experience by doing so, instead of maintaining the separation between "him" and "his group."

Most groups I joined were considerably bigger, and tour guides have to take a different approach in these instances. The Double Dead Tour is the longest and most expensive tour that City of the Dead offer. Its name comes from the fact that the tour takes visitors into the Niddry Street Underground Vaults and into the Covenanters' Prison, which are normally offered as two separate tours. When the guide Bruce took us into the vaults, he had to gather the group of forty or so in a low-ceiling room to tell us about "the Hellfire Club" – a notorious drinking gang that was active when the vaults were still used for accommodation and commercial purposes in the 1700s and 1800s. To do so, he got the group to encircle him, and holding his candle began to walk around the circle so everyone could periodically see him up close. Other than his dim flickering candlelight, the room was pitch black. As the wax on his candle would melt, he would let it drip onto his hand, seemingly without flinching. Beneath his storytelling I could hear members of the crowd whispering that the hot wax apparently did not hurt him (he must have had 'asbestos hands', one visitor exclaimed). His story included an account of a ghost that has been reportedly seen in these vaults, a ghost believed to be one of the deceased, destitute members of the Hellfire Club.

Here the immersion takes a more ambiguous form that shares similarities with the London-based Punchdrunk theatre company. Formed in 2000, Punchdrunk take pride in allowing 'audiences [to] experience epic storytelling inside sensory theatrical worlds' (Punchdrunk 2018) in the style of immersive theatre. Luckhurst (2017) notes how Punchdrunk's performers often make use of low tones of voice, inconclusive narratives and different spaces as a means to draw their audience in. Similarly here, Bruce never raised his voice or changed the pace of his speech, gave no verbal indication as to whether he believed that the ghosts were real, and led us around a number of different "spooky" locations. Immersion here however goes beyond words. Bruce wore all black, often making him hard to see in the

darkness of the vault. As he discussed the spirits that allegedly ‘stalk’ and ‘wander’ in the vaults, he himself wandered around the group, never looking at anyone directly and paying no attention to the hot wax until we left the room, at which point he peeled the partly set wax off his hand. The intended effect was clear; Bruce was mimicking the behaviour of the spectres he was talking about, suggesting (perhaps playfully) that he himself was a ghost.

Members of my group that I spoke to found this to be an incredibly effective storytelling technique. Tracey, a postgraduate psychology student, later told me about the impression that it left with her:

> When he was telling the story in the underground vault room, and was walking around the circle holding a candle as the only light source, I thought it was dramatic but in a more understated way. Also, when he walked past you with the candle it disrupted your vision which made it feel like you might see something in the corner of your eye and freak yourself out.

Bruce’s method had the double effect of embodying a spectre and making visitors more cautious of what they might see, both of which depend heavily on Bruce’s control of lighting within the cramped room. It is a two-fold technique. The invoking of spectrality in the space is seen both in Bruce himself and the way that his movement, controlling the only light source in the vault, affected fields of vision and opened tour-goers up to the possibility of seeing ‘something’ beyond what is already present to them. Ghostliness is conjured both within and outside the performing body.

Casting the Spell:

To Lincoln and Lincoln (2015: 201), Bruce’s story would be an example of ‘secondary haunting’ as ‘they – and not the ghost – hail the audience and tell the story of sufferings past,

but they do so as a living subject who speaks on behalf of the dead, not as one caught on the border of life and death.' This may describe written historical accounts, but is less accurate here. Robert, a council worker from Edinburgh that I got talking to during the tour, commented that he liked this moment in the vaults because Bruce was 'able to best locate us as "visitors" to that place' and give a distinct impression to the group that they didn't belong there. Feeling like you do not belong in a place, but being there anyway, is one of the explorative and transgressive techniques used to build up excitement and anticipation within immersive experiences (Biggin 2017). Bruce deliberately constructed a situation where he was occasionally visible but also not visible, and where he seemed to look human but apparently showed no reaction to hot wax that would cause people pain. This embodiment of the spectral, the impression of being between life and death, projected the feeling that human visitors are 'guests.' Bruce 'evoked the spacing between the life and death of an event… a space we might call the tension of the present tense' (Thrift & Dewsbury 2000: 422) by speaking about (and as) someone who died long ago and who was involved in events that have long since become part of history. He performed an ambiguity that attempts to bring the spectral to the group. The guide makes what is immaterial material and what is absent present through this display.

When I got the opportunity to ask Bruce about why he adopts this approach, his answer was every bit as theatrical as his guiding:

> There is nothing worse in God's Green Earth than being responsible for a haunted story not having its desired effect. It will get you when you most don't want it to and you will rue the day you failed it. Theatricality is the best weapon against the story having reason to get you. Told well it will leave you be. The stories tell me torture would be even more effective but I have been encouraged towards theatricality.

In Bruce's account, the rationale behind his work is that the stories have the agentic capacity to bring an unpleasant reckoning in his direction if he fails to do their content justice. Telling a ghost story means a lot more than adopting a scary voice in a dark room. Bruce performed these stories, and theatre is a ghosted practice. In a sense, Bruce transcended metaphor and became a ghost.

Crucial to this point is that there is more than one kind of ghost. Ghosts are typically imagined as tied down to specific locations and as a core characteristic of haunted historical places (Bell 1997). By contrast, the ghost that Bruce – and indeed the entire tour group, myself included – became is an invader, an alien, an unwelcome guest. Punchdrunk's spectators become ghosts through 'a sensation of not quite belonging' (Biggin 2017: 181) and by helping to form 'the constructed scenography and performance, or the ghost, that which is temporarily brought to the site' (Pearson 2012: 70). Narratives of Edinburgh's ghosts talk about active spirits showing hostility towards intruders. The Watcher in the Blair Street Vaults, Roxanne told us, once reportedly screamed at a woman to 'get out' multiple times. In the Black Mausoleum, Bruce told us that a psychic brought in by the tour company sensed a number of spirits and that, while it was unclear exactly what they were saying, they clearly wanted to be left alone. The group are where they do not belong – the guide's role as a leader of the group through an unfamiliar space is a testament to this. The Mausoleum 'let itself be inhabited in its inside, that is, haunted by a foreign guest' (Derrida 1994: 4), as do other haunted locations. Visitors begin to tread on the same boundaries of ambiguity as these 'resident' ghosts; they inhabit the temporal present yet find themselves in a spatial, historical past as told to them by their guide. They are visible to each other and are yet 'underground' or in exclusively accessible spaces that are invisible to the rest of the world. The spectral is not only brought out of these spaces on tours, but an invasive spectrality is brought into them

and acted out. As Bruce demonstrated with his storytelling, the boundaries between human and spirit become blurred.

Ghost tourism, through conjuring the spectral qualities of places and bodies, represent a special type of living history that uses the spectral to 'lure visitors and re-enchant, or in some cases, enchant, them with the past' (Clanton 2007: 11). Holloway (2010: 625) describes ghost tours as enchantment, which occurs when 'we are simultaneously excited and made to feel uneasy as the world we know, [and] the mundane… is suspended and affects us in unforeseen ways.' Edinburgh's ghost tourism 'engineers - through a relatively consistent performative infrastructure… affective charges of possibility and speculation' (ibid.: 618). The past is brought into the present for the purposes of entertainment and (to a lesser extent) education, taunting tour-goers with the ghostly. Ghost tourism however 'delights but does not delude' (Saler 2006: 702), and visitors are aware that what they are seeing is not an authentic retelling of history in the most idealised sense, but an enchanted history meant to entertain visitors with the spooky and subvert more everyday experiences.

Authentic experiences of enchanted history as seen in ghost tourism take a specific form. Handler and Saxton (1988: 245) highlight that authentic experiences refer to a life that is planned or authored, and encapsulates the 'magic' or 'special' moments during re-enactments when it feels as real as it possibly can. These remarkable moments are understood in contrast to the lesser experiences of ordinary life. Carl - a 22 year-old student from Mexico City who came with me to the Blair Street Vaults - described ghost stories in this way, as 'legends' specifically:

> For me, legends are filled with fantastic things that somehow are true. That's the definition of a legend. So, all these legends… they are true somehow for me.

Carl understood the apparent impossibility of ghosts and yet, in ways he could not express, they remain at least partially true for him. Another visitor added to this by saying that a legend like a ghost 'could be true but is not necessarily.' This kind of impact, leaving visitors wondering about the truth behind legends, is achieved through theatrical techniques (Holloway 2010). The theatrical and immersive nature of most tours 'encourages audience members to get lost… in the "real" (highly detailed, tactile etc.) fictional world' (Biggin 2017: 197), an example of how haunting sucks people into a version of reality (Gordon 2008). The bringing forth of spectrality by the tour guides means that visitors are enchanted and left grappling with what just might be the case.

Handler and Saxton (1988) do not bring spectrality into their discussion of authentic experiences. Making this step, one could argue that the dichotomy between authentic and inauthentic experiences echoes the Durkheimian binary between the sacred, the 'superior, powerful, forbidden to normal contact, and deserving of great respect' understood with direct reference to the supernatural, and the profane, 'the ordinary, uneventful, and practical routine of everyday life' (Pals 2006: 96). The spectral can be seen as supernatural and sacred; it is that which is not only forbidden but foreclosed to typical modes of perception, requiring a specific rendering of place and bodies in order for it to become even partly intelligible. It is this process that characterises ghost tours, the attempt to 'mould enchanted affectual registers in conjunction with different materialities that have the capacity to affect and act on tourists' bodies through the multiple modulation of intensity and enchantment' (Holloway 2010: 634). Through the planned medium of the tour, the experience has the plotted and theatrical ingredients it requires to magically bring the "long gone" back into the present day in a fantastical manner designed to entertain or spook. It is the enchantment of a ghostly past as realised through performance.

Conclusion:

To sum up, ghost tour guides take their audience through the spectral, present ghosts as ambiguous beings, and become ambiguous themselves. To do this, they use performative techniques to create immersive environments that trigger 'high engagement, emotional investment, rapt attention, sensory stimulation, emotion, empathy or make-believe' (Biggin 2017: 179). Furthermore, they make themselves and their group part of the spectral. They seem able to abandon the human and become ghosts themselves, occupying a liminal state and space as they immerse the group into haunted places. The performance of the guides is a way that tours become examples of enchantment, assuring their popularity through their ability to entertain and permit an escape from the mundanity of the everyday.

The ghostly is popular in Scottish tourism, but this does not simply stem from factual curiosity. Instead, ghosts present an opportunity for visitors to become part of something both new and old, both there and not there, and to lose themselves in the unique sensation of the spectral. Tour guides, through their skilful performances, are central in bringing visitors into these special places and in making the experience one worth having. The dead sell, but the living are the ones who profit in more ways than one.

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Ruination and the Affective Presence of the Past in relation to the Beit Beirut in Lebanon

Liam Thorne

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Liam Thorne

Abstract

The following short article is based on fieldnotes I took during my dissertation fieldwork in Beirut, Lebanon. It focuses on Beit Beirut, a building used by snipers during the height of the Lebanese Civil War, that has now been repurposed as a museum and symbol of remembrance. The essay highlights that this renovated building, which purposefully still bears the scars of war on its walls, results in a tension between moving forward whilst making sure future generations remember the past. This is made all the more uncomfortable as for some this is a reminder of a past that is impossible to forget.

Keywords: Beirut, Ruination, Memory

I was going home from work in a 'service' (a Lebanese share taxi) and was talking to the driver. Bursting with pride, he was telling me that his daughter had just started primary school and that every morning he looked forward to dropping her off at school before his day as a service driver started. We had stopped at the red light of a junction on the corner of which was a big building, seemingly crumbling - its off-white walls riddled with bullet holes - yet visibly restored with modern double-glazed grey windows, and grey pillars and beams holding the structure up. I had often driven past it and been puzzled by this juxtaposition. Waiting for the light to change, I asked him what it was. "That?" he asked, tutting quietly whilst shaking his head and creasing his

eyebrows, "It's Beit [house] Beirut". I waited a bit, expecting him to go on. In a slightly sarcastic tone he said, "It is a symbol of Lebanon's past!". "Ohhh" I replied somewhat surprised. "A big company from France rebuilt it, to keep it looking like this" he said, waving his hand at the building, his face turning into a scowl. I asked him what he thought of this project. "You think they would like this? If I come to their country and I make a building like this, about their war with all the bullet holes still in it, and say it is for a symbol, for remembering, you think they like this?" he asked. "No, I don't think they would" I replied. He turned his head to look at me and said, "So why do they think it is different for us? We are all the same. Everywhere… We can never forget the war". The lights had turned green and we drove off.

This conversation is an extract of the fieldnotes I kept during my dissertation fieldwork in Lebanon. Whilst I do not wish to present this *service* driver's view of Beit Beirut as representative of all Lebanese people's opinions of this building, it is a helpful way of problematising the way ruins and ruination are used as a way of remembering and reminding people of the past. This essay explores the way in which Beit Beirut, an object of 'ruination', repurposed as a museum and monument of remembrance, highlights the complexity of bringing the past to the present. The first half of the paper focuses on why this remembering is seen as necessary by some, touching on the notion of 'collective memory' (Sontag, 2003: 85), but how on the other hand, this remembering may cause harm to others who are thereby forced to remember events that are indelible. In the second half of the paper, I argue that Beit Beirut is both a 'lieux [and] milieux de mémoire' (Nora 1989: 7) in itself and within wider Beirut, thereby reducing the effectiveness of the symbol of remembrance.

Beit Beirut (see photo 1), also known as the 'Barakat Building' after the family who owned it, was built in 1924 (The Economist, 2017; Beitbeirut.org, 2018). During the Lebanese Civil war - starting in 1975 and lasting 15 years (Najem, 2012: 34) - it became 'a forward control post and sniper base' (Beitbeirut.org, 2018). The intersection it is on used to be known as the 'intersection of death' (The Economist, 2017). In 2003, the building was 'expropriated by the Beirut municipality [...] and renovated with over $18m of public funds' (ibid., 2017). It now stands as a museum, a 'living cultural centre' (Beitbeirut.org, 2018), and a symbol of 'remembrance and reconciliation' for Lebanon's civil war (Loveluck & Haidamous, 2018).

Photo 1 of "Beit Beirut" by Sanchez (2018) for the Washington Post (Loveluck & Haidamous, 2018).

Whilst this building could not be considered an 'authentic ruin' in Huyssen's (2010) definition of the term, as it is a relatively recent structure that has been substantially renovated. It does, however, fit Naravo-Yashin's (2009) 'ruination'. She defines this as 'the material remains or artefacts of destruction and violation, [and] the subjectivities and residual affects that linger

[...], in the aftermath of war and violence' (ibid.: 5). The architect who oversaw the renovations to Beit Beirut explains that the installations within the museum are not needed to make people notice, feel, and remember, as 'the collection is the building. [...] Look at the monstrousness of what we did. Look at the war. [Its] traces are there' (The Economist, 2017). We can see that Beit Beirut is itself a remnant of the war and violence, which generates affect in passers-by, as was clear from my conversation with the *service* driver.

Valorising, and displaying this ruination reinforces the 'commemorative function of the monument: made to enshrine the knowledge of the cultural past for the sake of future generations' (Kuchler, 1993: 53). This perceived need to preserve or bring to present the past, 'for the sake of future generations', implies that there is a tendency to forget the past and that efforts need to be made to stop this from happening. This need was expressed by a passer-by interviewed about Beit Beirut, 'the Lebanese need to see this every day, because they need to remember what they did' (Loveluck & Haidamous, 2018). Zena El-Khalil, one of the curators at Beit Beirut, explained that 'when the civil war ended, we went back to life as quickly as possible and now, 20 years later, we have a dysfunctional community. A lack of apology has created a lack of respect' (in Rose, 2017). From this perspective, the effort to bring the past to the present is, therefore, not simply an effort to remind people and future generations of the past, but also a way of processing and coping as a society. This process attempts to generate a 'collective memory', not in 'remembering but [in] stipulating that this is important' (Sontag, 2003: 85-6, qtd. In Assman, 2008: 59) and should be remembered. However, attaching 'memory' to sites of 'shared narratives of the past' (Bourke, 2004: 473) is highly problematic as 'individuals "remember", "repress", "forget" and "are traumatized", not societies' (ibid.: 473). This is furthered when considering that 'ruins are not found, they are made' (Abu El-Haj, 2005, qtd. in Stoler, 2008: 201). Therefore, sites such as these, whilst important in 're-

examin[ing] and recast[ing]' some people's relationships with the past (DeSilvey & Edensor, 2012: 471) thereby influencing their present and future, may to others simply be 'painful reminders of loss' (ibid.: 468). A loss that, from the perspective of the *service* driver, can never be forgotten anyway.

With this in mind, I suggest that Beirut itself is in many ways a 'milieux de mémoire' (Nora, 1989: 7). Nora explains that there are 'lieux de mémoire, sites of memory, because there are no longer milieux de mémoire, real environments of memory'. However, walking around the downtown and outskirts of Beirut, the visual impact of war is clear to see. Be it in the high number of seemingly abandoned and damaged buildings peppered with bullet holes, or the vacant stores and empty streets in the high-end downtown (Naylor, 2015), all of these are reminders of the impact of the civil war both on the economy and the architecture - thereby forming a 'milieux de mémoire'. Within this context, Beit Beirut can be both a 'lieux' and 'milieux de mémoire'. The exterior of the building, renovated so as to stay standing and functional yet not to the point that the impact of war has been erased from view, is there for all passers-by to see and is an example of a 'moment[...] of history torn away from the movement of history' (Nora, 1989: 12) - a 'lieux de mémoire'. As a 'symbol of remembrance and reconciliation' it is a 'freezing' of temporality designed to make people feel and reflect about the past in the present and for the future. Yet, as this is visible to all, this also results in it being part of Beirut's wider 'milieux de mémoire'. On the other hand, its inside, a 'living cultural centre', is designed as a space where people are brought to reflect on this war, thereby making that space a 'milieux de mémoire'. However, not all passers-by would be inclined to enter this 'milieux de memoire' and therefore I suggest that having this building designed to be 'symbols of remembrance and reconciliation' may have a hollow echo in city that already reminds its inhabitants of events that cannot be forgotten in the first place.

In conclusion, this essay has argued that whilst the past is crucial to remember, creating a symbol of remembrance from an object of ruination, it is problematic as it can unnecessarily reinforce the pain this past holds. When this loss is already visible in day to day life, a demarcated site consecrated to symbolising this might ring hollow.

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