

**GENDER &
ETHNIC STUDIES**

four pieces

HIDDEN HISTORY: STERILIZATION, CHILD REMOVAL AND THE GENOCIDE OF NATIVE PEOPLE

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The following is an excerpt from a longer piece. For full text, please visit www.honorsjournal.com

[...]

Native peoples have suffered disease, war, displacement, removal, broken treaties, deficient health care and education, cultural assimilation, child removal and eventually sterilization at the hands of the United States, but have received no justice. An apparent immunity has shielded the federal government from penalty, retribution, and ultimately, from having to acknowledge this historical genocide. Furthermore, their relatively small population, social invisibility (or condemnation), and lack of political power contributed to the position of Native communities as uniquely vulnerable populations subject to imperialism, capitalism, racism, and ethnocentrism and thus, domination... This paper will analyze the surge child removal and sterilization which took place in the 1960s as means to prevent future generations of resistance...

Since the early 1930s, government agents have removed an indiscriminate number of Native children from their homes. In what was dubbed "kid catching," men would flood the reservations, round up school age children, and force them into adoption and assimilation schools (Torpy 13)... As a method of assimilation, and in hopes to diminish tradition, children were... removed from the influence of their culture all together. The July 1977 issue of the Children's Rights Report, created by the American Civil Liberties Union...revealed that a substantial number—over thirty-five percent—of Native children were separated from their families and placed in foster homes, adoptive homes, and institutions. Furthermore, eighty-five percent of those children in foster care were placed in non-Native households, and ninety percent of adoptions were by non-Native couples

(Dillingham, "Conference and Report" 16).

The Northwest Ordinance of 1787 promised (among the rights to land, property, and liberty) suitable education to Native children (Glauner 12). Unfortunately, the policy led to the creation of many off-reservation boarding schools used to force the assimilation (and destruction) of future generations.... The intention was to remove these children from their families and "civilize" them for white America, a mission to "kill the Indian in [the student] and save the man" (Glauner 13)... In 1891, the Indian Appropriation Act further chipped away at the rights of parents by requiring Native children to attend school and withholding government rations from those families who refused (Glauner 13). In addition to English only policies which made the use of one's first language a punishable offense, these schools forced children to relinquish their given names and adhere to new mandated names. They were forced to cut long hair, and give up any traditional dress. Children were required to renounce their religion (and thus any religious artifacts), and were indoctrinated in Christianity. Neither visitation nor communication were allowed between students and their families, and no connection was left to their traditional tribal ways of life. Students who deviated from these requirements...were severely punished by beatings and confinement (Glauner 13, 18). The implementation of these schooling policies left parents and children in a constant state of fear and desperation.... Homesickness left these children broken and hopeless, and rates of suicide skyrocketed. Compared to the national average, Native children as young as ten years old, imprisoned in

these BIA boarding schools, were one-hundred times more likely to commit suicide. A single school near the Northern Cheyenne Reservation reported twelve attempted suicides (among two hundred enrolled students) over the span of eighteen months (Torpy 14).

There is an overwhelming disparity in the number of families impacted by government intrusion between Native and non-Native peoples.... In South Dakota, where Native peoples make up only seven percent of the population, forty percent of adoptions were of Native children, and foster care placements are twenty times greater for Native children....A survey of a single Navajo reservation indicates that ninety percent of its children live in BIA boarding schools (Dillingham, "Conference and Report" 16).... Whether due to economic incentive, eugenic ideals, or a drive toward assimilation (and extermination), a lack of due process and cultural understanding meant that women and families were in constant fear of losing their children without cause. Finally, in 1978, after over a century of torment, the Indian Child Welfare Act was enacted. After Congress determined "that an alarmingly high percentage of Indian families are broken up by the removal, often unwarranted, of their children from them by non-tribal public and private agencies and that an alarmingly high percentage of such children are placed in non-Indian foster and adoptive homes and institutions," they implemented procedures which promised to prevent future forced transfer of Native children into white families and boarding schools (Glauner 14).

In 1849 the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) adopted the responsibility for the health of Native peoples (Lawrence 2). Its earliest goal sought to increase dependence on Western medicine while rendering traditional healers obsolete.... The IHS claimed to provide an integrated health care system which would promote the quality of life for Native peoples (Torpy 10)....As of 1977, fifty-one hospitals, eighty-six health centers, and many health stations existed under IHS across the nation...(Torpy 10). Despite its

allegedly good intentions, however, these health programs fell tragically short. The quality of life did not improve.... Infant mortality was three times that of the national average, and tuberculosis (among other ailments) another eight times greater. The life expectancy was an astonishing forty-seven years compared to seventy years for the non-Native population (Torpy 11). But because of the growing influence Western medicine, and the lack of options in alternative care facilities (as most tribes were located in areas which lacked private and state care), the patients remained dependent on support from the IHS. And the IHS yielded its power viciously.

Reports on the conditions of these facilities from multiple agencies revealed substantial issues, which hindered their effectiveness. A 1975 investigation into IHS facilities by the Joint Committee on Accreditation of Hospitals deemed two-thirds of the hospitals obsolete and in need of replacement. Of all the antiquated hospitals, only twenty-four met the committee's standards (conditions of non-Native hospitals), and a measly twelve met basic fire and safety codes (Torpy 10).... Not only were they understaffed and inaccessible (facilities were often many miles from the reservations), but they also lacked necessary policy to solve problems of health, acceptable appropriations, mechanisms facilitating delivery of services, adequate responsiveness of state and local agencies toward patients, and oversight and accountability at all levels (Torpy 10). Rotating doctors (on military tours), underfunding, and a complete lack of responsibility or understanding among staff compounded issues of an already ignored population of people. Upon reviewing this information and conducting his own evaluation, Senator James Abourezk of South Dakota asserted that an additional forty million of federal funding was needed to bring these locations up to the national norm (Torpy 10). A lack of response persisted, however, and these hospitals continued to neglect the well-being of the communities they were built to serve.

The 1930s marked the beginning of a systematic attack on the reproductive future of Native women...After years of eugenic lore and patriarchal "guidance," medical advancements and new fertility laws allowed for a new method of population control, and sterilization (typically by the irreversible hysterectomy) became a common practice in Indian Health Service facilities. In 1970, the Hyde Amendment cut ninety-eight percent of all federal funding for abortions but maintained that the Department of Health, Education and Welfare would fund ninety percent of the costs to sterilize "poor" people (Torpy 4). This reallocation of reimbursements incentivized sterilization as a preferred method of birth control, and the IHS physicians followed suit. One Northern Cheyenne woman recounted her experience visiting a physician due to severe headaches. The physician suggested the headaches stemmed from a fear of pregnancy, and recommended sterilization as the cure. She later learned that her headaches were actually caused by a brain tumor (Carpio 7). Soon, Native women of all ages and for all reasons...were being sterilized in record highs....Not only did the physical act rob women of their choice to determine their own reproductive futures, but specific shame and fear of retribution silenced these Native women and thereby decreased the potential for backlash.

Consent, in these cases, was questionable at best. Whether intentionally deceptive or communicatively ill-equipped, physicians frequently preformed procedures without the knowledge or consent of their patients. Some performed under the guise of medical necessity and frivolous diagnosis, and some performed conveniently in conjunction to other procedures. In one case, a Lakota woman, Barbara Moore, woke up to news that her child was born dead and that she would no longer be able to reproduce as physicians had to sterilize her upon delivering her baby via caesarian in an IHS facility (Carpio 6). Others were performed under outright lies. Two fifteen-year-old Northern Cheyenne girls remembered being told that they were undergoing appendectomies, and later found out that

in addition, they had received tubal litigations (Lawrence 1). Consequently, both girls were forever unable to reproduce. Consent procedure was ambiguous, ignorant, and often disregarded entirely. A fundamental issue existed in the language barriers. Law and policy did not mandate a translator be present...(Torpy 13). Native women were not afforded the right to have the procedure explained to them in their own language, and the poor communication that resulted hindered these women from making any informed decision that could be considered consensual. However, much more sinister deception took place when physicians failed to explain the irreversibility of the procedure, or offer any alternative methods of family planning. Thus, even women who did seek pregnancy prevention and family planning were making permanent decisions based on partial and inaccurate information. "Consent" was also commonly gathered in times of high stress, deliriousness, or under duress. Many women claim they were badgered by physicians and nurses while vulnerable (and medicated) in the thralls of labor (Torpy 13). The absence of a waiting period and convenient access meant that a split-second delivery room decision made after hours of pain and badgering, could end in an irreversible, life changing decision.... In the most exploitative circumstances, consent was obtained on the basis of threats. Though federal law states that a woman must be told that her welfare benefits cannot be withdrawn or withheld if they refuse sterilization, some physicians used that specific dependency to coerce consent (Weston 60). They would threaten women with the withholding of government aid, or even with the removal of their existing children by government agencies.

The sterilization abuse of Native women had a devastating impact. Between 1970 and 1976, an estimated twenty-five to fifty percent of Native women of childbearing age underwent sterilization.... A mere 100,000 Native women of childbearing age were left to reproduce and continue their lineage. For every seven babies born, one Native woman was sterilized, and thus, a generation was almost prevented (Torpy

11)... One Navajo Reservation...found that between 1972 and 1978, the rate of sterilization as a percentage of female surgeries increased from fifteen percent, to nearly thirty-one percent (Rutecki 35). A study out of Northern Cheyenne reservation and Labre Mission grounds found that over a three-year period, fifty-six of the one-hundred-and-sixty-five women between the ages of thirty and forty-four were sterilized by the IHS or contracted physicians.... Some tribes and reservations were hit harder than others, but no tribe was left untouched. Over the next few generations, hundreds of children (that had the potential to maintain lineage, tradition, and culture) were missing due to the systemic sterilization that attacked their people.

In the early 1970s a Choctaw physician named Dr. Connie Pinkerton-Uri became aware of the abuse of sterilization against the people whom she served.... Alarmed at the clear patterns of misinformation, coercion, and concealment, Dr. Pinkerton-Uri reached out to South Dakota Senator James Abourezk insisting on a congressional investigation (Torpy 6). Abourezk...commissioned the General Accounting Office for investigation (Glauner 12).... The investigation neglected to interview victims, doctors, or staff associated with this abuse, and subsequently failed to consider multiple methods of coercion (Torpy 7). Their silencing of women's voices, particularly, led to an understatement of the issue of uninformed consent. What they did uncover, however, proves a clear negligence (at the very least) on the part of the IHS.

[...]

The total decimation of Native families, and the efforts to control populations by way of child displacement and forced sterilization takes place within a larger context of government intrusion. The Eugenics movement that shaped the early 1900s had covert influence well into the 1970s and later, and remained active in the minds of doctors and government officials. Though white, middle class women were celebrating their access to ster-

ilization in the late 1960s, many women of racial or ethnic minority status were victims of compulsory sterilizations.... From 1967 to 1973, federal support for sterilization procedures increased over thirteen-hundred percent (Rutecki 38). Reproduction was considered a privilege, and medicine was a tool of regulation. Studies show that physicians felt they were providing a service to society by controlling the reproduction of particular patients...(Rutecki 37).... Consistent with the reproductive valuation of women based on their age, other factors including race, and class had considerable effect on what was measured as appropriate. The optimal family size was relative to the social and cultural capital of the family, and were measured against the mainstream societal standards (white and middle class)....

...A rise in activism, resistance, and publicity compelled the Department of Health, Education and Welfare (HEW) to implement regulations to prevent coercion.... With a specific aim to avoid operating room consent, HEW mandated a thirty-day waiting period for all federally funded sterilizations. To further prevent uninformed or coerced consent, an effort to improve communication and transparency was made.... Additional clauses specifically addressed and regulated the sterilization of women under the age of twenty-one, and persons in penal and mental institutions (Carpio 43; Comptroller General 26). These long overdue regulations, though they may not have changed the minds of doctors or others in positions of power, helped Native women to make their own, informed decisions. In the years since 1979, there has been a consistent rise in the birth rates among Native peoples and a drastic decrease in the number of children removed from their homes and families (Torpy 18)....

The clear and repeated attacks against Native peoples have left a residue of fear and distrust passed down through generations. Tribes still live with the consequences of the past, and apprehension, understandably, has not subsided. The

loss of a generation by means of child removal and prevention and of assimilation has forever impacted the population, and therefore, the power of tribes across the nation. Though regulations have clarified penalties for an abuse of power, the lack of acknowledgment of past transgressions, as well as the dependent and complicated relationship between the federal government and Native communities maintains their vulnerable position. The apparent immunity granted to the United States for war crimes and genocide, and the lack of accountability within our own government, government agencies, and physicians, further perpetuates concern that this could happen again. Though bureaucratic secrecy wishes to conceal and minimize this history, resilient community leaders, scholars and activist groups continue to resist their oppression and fight for recognition.... The systematic prevention and destruction of thousands of families within a specific community is genocide.

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CYBORG MANIFESTO FOR THE NOT-YET COVEN

Selena Wellington

In our not too distant future, our categorical boundaries have disintegrated. We no longer perceive a distinction between realism and science fiction, human and animal, man and woman, self and other, myth and fact, past and present, sacred and profane, spirit and body.

MAN//WOMAN

We have seen an abundance of gender creations in our present times, including but not limited to cisgender woman, cis man, trans man, trans woman, non-binary, gender nonconforming, gender fluid, gender-queer, demiboy, demiboi, demigirl, anti-gender, agender, abimegender, androgyne, adamasgender, aerogender, cloudgender, colorgender, genderflux, heliogender, omnigender, to even genders associated with astral bodies-lunarian, solarian, and stellarian. The existence of a list such as this ideologically threatens the concepts of "cisgender man" and "cisgender woman," illuminating how all genders are socially constructed. The internet has expedited this process of gender creation, allowing for previously distanced people to find one another, communicate, and explore.

In the cyborg future, all categories of gender are recognized as legitimate and simultaneously irrelevant. People may identify with aspects of specific genders, or even take on labels of gender but admit that these labels are superfluous. We lend ourselves towards nonce taxonomy, identification that is transient, fluid, ephemeral, our genders in grasp the same way fragments of dreams are in grasp (Sedgwick).

Imagining queer futurity is fragmented at best. Perhaps in the cyborg future, gender identification is so fluid as to allow for anyone to wear dresses one day and suits the next day. Perhaps people are

wearing clothes we cannot yet imagine. This is the beauty of queerness and why its role is pivotal in the cyborg future. As José Esteban Muñoz argues in *Cruising Utopia*, queerness is "not yet here" (Muñoz 185). Instead, it is the imagining of a different future. The cyborg future is when queerness arrives. We cannot yet know what it will look like to live in the propulsion of queerness, to integrate nonce identification. In the cyborg future, we do not run from the edge of gender expansion; we surrender to the unknown.

SELF//OTHER

As Haraway identified, "Consciousness of exclusion through naming is acute. Identities seem contradictory, partial and strategic" (Haraway 295). Identity politics are sometimes used divisively, as a mechanism for arbitrary gatekeeping of various political movements. Presently, we use the various pieces of our identities to look at the intersecting systems of oppression. In the cyborg future, we acknowledge that there is no coherent vector labeled "queerness," no coherent vector labeled "black" or "brown" or "class." Norma Alarcón discusses "identity-in-difference" as a way of talking about how our identities in the catch and play game of intersectionality are always measured in their deferral. Our present construction of identity is understood by "not-yet," by "that's not it," by what we are not (Alarcón). These create identities that are always paradoxes, identities that are always moving away from themselves.

Eve Sedgwick similarly identifies our internal contradictions in her last axiom, stating we are different from other people but we are also different from ourselves. There is a space between me and you and you will never know me because I can never

know myself. There's a space between us. This space is the "irreducible difference," a difference that cannot be closed off (Alarcón).

Our present constructions of identity have not yet accounted for the ways in which we are always contradicting ourselves. It is a privilege to have a stable sense of self. The privileged may see identity as a thesis and antithesis-self and other, us and them. Intersectionality may encourage us to find the synthesis of these vectors, to plot our identities on two-dimensional planes as a means of engaging in discussion about the complications of our various contradictions. However, in the cyborg future, our concern with identity is more about the gap, the always-becoming, the ways in which we are simultaneously the same as everyone else and irrevocably different from everyone else.

In creating a synthesis, we assume thesis and antithesis are discrete, recognizable categories that can be bridged. However, in defining thesis and antithesis, we lose something. There is something that escapes in synthesis, that is left behind, that came from the essence of synthesis and antithesis. In the cyborg future, we understand "self" as the thing that is always escaping.

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You are Jeff 18 1/2 : : (inspired by Richard Siken)

You have a dream about two people named Jeff. They are standing on either side of a person with knit eyebrows earnestly trying to understand.

One Jeff is good-ole fashioned romance type, composing verse while realizing the praxis of a love that touches stars, transcends hunger.

The other Jeff is easily bought quick flit hell boy ghostwriter for the Devil in your eyes, all hair gel motorcycle, all striking the rumor of war.

Both weave the space with music. You can probably guess which song is more captivating.

Partway through the dream you realize you are both Jeffs - the third person is the space between you - the thesis antithesis of what always escapes in your

synthesis.

The music the discursive place that limits both
Jeffs.

You cannot unify. You are not here. You were never here. There is no place yet. There will never be a place. You are the thing that is always escaping.

~~

MYTH//FACT - PAST//PRESENT

In our future, myth is our fact. We make no distinctions between our stories and our biographies. We have accepted the ultimate absence of objective truth. Today, there is a backwards-looking narrative of our history (see :: not her story : : not theirstory) that attempts to explain why, often finding convenient explanations for the ultimate understanding of events. This backwards-looking narrative is similarly applied to autobiographies. We sift through our personal histories in an attempt to explain our identities, our circumstances, our trajectories.

Stop.

Perhaps there is already a part of you with the
Piper.

(All human consciousness is trance)

Trailing the edge of the woods, hearing the distant music

Unimaginable music

Reverent music

Divine music

the kind of childlike whimsy that brings you the nostalgia for something you have no tangible memory of -

that profanes the path,

that leads you astray

({ road turning animal } . . : :) >

Do you remember?

Do you remember enchantment?

What is it like to descend from many stories?

What is it like to be a cloak of pied?

{ ~ part light

~ part dark }

Our cyborg future acknowledges that truth is a river - constantly

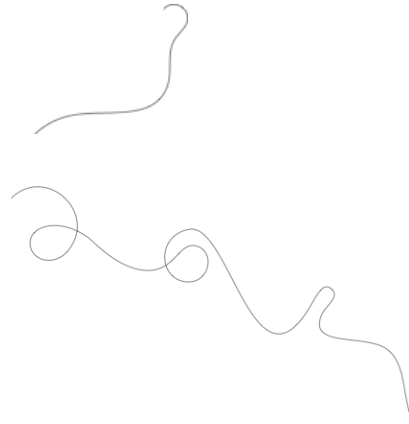
s h i f t i n g ,

constantly being

THROUGH AFFINITY

(re)-
imag-ined.

The cyborg future makes no distinction between "objective history" and myth. We take our myths and re-form them in our bodies. We look at the stories they teach, the threads



of truth,

the feelings that roam through them, that stalk us in the night, that look at us through shadowed forest, that invite us to take a drink from the wells of our remembrance.

There is no boundary between past // present // future in the cyborg future. Our consciousness has expanded to walk through the world on the path labeled "present" and simultaneously see the ways in which our steps affect the dimensions above us, through us :: simultaneously see how we are traversing the path of myth, the path of animals, the remembrance of geological layers, the magma of the Earth, the dust of the stars, and the fragments of our dream future.

BODY // SPIRIT

The boundary between body // spirit is malleable. Our myths spill into skill. Light encapsulates our bodies. We are astral bodies. We see from many vantage points. We sift and shift into sand. We rise. We are unattached. We are not limited by physical form.

This cyborg future is created by affinity, which Haraway describes as "related not by blood but by choice" (Haraway 295). This is perhaps a move towards coalition politics. It is a way of moving towards collective action. Affinity is identification through nonce taxonomy, the praxis of abstracting the boundaries.

The internet makes this possible. Sexuality becomes divine ways of traversing the dimensions. The protest is held in a

i
c r
e c
l

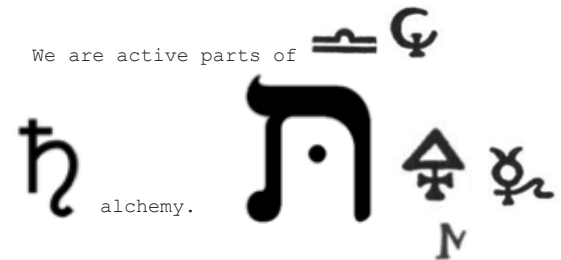
The circle now spans five continents and is cast for six months.

{{{ Do you **remember?** }}}}

This future is created through the ancestral remembrance of listening, when we catch each



other's stories, when we ((breathe)) through them. We thread between hearts.



We are active parts of

alchemy.

~As above, so below.~

We are the *hios* between ^{heaven} and **Earth**.

What happens b(e(t(w)e)e)n the worlds changes all the worlds.

We are prepared for the dangerous unknown.

We are the dangerous unknown.

What keeps you in the room of your life?

What if the thing you silence to stay in the room of your life is intoxicating

chaos?
<<<<[[Do not ask questions, Inanna -
there is only perfection in the under-
world]]>>>>

Though veiled, we glow.

We accept intoxicating **chaos**. We
learn in the **terror**.

We stand on the mighty shoulders of the
dead.

Our wounds lend us power, the power to
heal.

We are pathweavers.

We change consciousness at will.

We are sound and silence.

We are ritual enacted.

"Bright : fiery : fae
horizon myths,
stalking a hunger of some
: fluid future : we are
born in-to
and from
come seeking and sought
unknowable and sure
thanking you for your contribution of magic to
this cauldron of collective liberation taught
between these bodies."
So mote it be.

The circle is open but unbroken.

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BEHIND THE SCENES: OPPOSING MUSIC VIDEOS THROUGH CINEMA

Craig Lief

The following is an excerpt from a longer piece. For full text, please visit www.honorsjournal.com

[...]

II: INTRODUCTION

In our society, women often feel alienated inside a structure that was designed to keep men in power and women subservient to them. This structure often misrepresents women's true identities, and doesn't give them nearly as much agency as men in all aspects of life. The entertainment industry has, and continues, to perpetuate this problematic exclusion of women... I would like to focus on how the entertainment industry, and specifically "booty videos," a style of hip-hop/rap music video, contributes to this misrepresentation through objectification. Even before the entertainment industry, patriarchal values were the cornerstone of society. Unfortunately, this is still the case today, and the entertainment industry has a significant responsibility in perpetuating patriarchy. This is due to the entertainment industry's tremendous power to influence thought and thus shape cultural values and norms...

With the possible exception of pornography, no type of entertainment media has been more problematic in terms of its representations of women, especially the "booty videos." "Booty videos" is a term used by many media professionals and scholars to refer to music videos that rely on sexualized images of a woman's posterior in order to sell the song. In "booty videos," women almost always lack any sort of agency and are usually used solely as sex objects, catering to the male sexual gaze. "Booty videos" also appropriate many cultural art forms, as is the case with white artists copying

hip-hop culture, and with white dancers/choreographers cherry-picking and hypersexualizing certain aspects of hip-hop dances. The film I am making challenges viewers to reexamine the "booty video" by first showing a typical "booty video," then questioning problematic aspects of its production. It questions these problematic aspects through a narrative story about the cast/crew of the aforementioned video... My intention with this film is to use the influential power of moving images to question how they objectify women, and how this affects society...

IV: MUSIC VIDEOS

Music videos have been popular since their origin in the 1980s. Even then, the creators of these videos often objectified women, just as filmmakers and advertisers have and still do. Music videos are essentially stylized advertisements for a song. In the article, "From Busby Berkeley to Madonna: Music Video and Popular Dance" by Sherril Dodds, Dodds explains that "music video and advertising enjoy a reciprocal relationship in that they trade in shared visual ideas and techniques" (249). The people with agency in the creation of music videos are: the artist(s), the director(s), and the producer(s)... Rock music videos were the first to constantly use women as sex objects in their videos. Groups like Mötley Crüe often fragmented women's bodies in their music videos, such as in their 1987 song, "Girls, Girls, Girls," which was primarily shot in a strip club. The objectification of women wasn't contained to just inside the strip club. The band's only scene interacting with women outside of the strip club consists

of them catcalling a few women walking by, and prompting the women to join them. According to Jhally, over 90% of rock videos in the '80s and '90s were directed by men. These videos were not just sexualized, they were primarily influenced through the lens of male sexual fantasy. This fantasy was generally constructed with men being the only rational actors in the videos and women being objects for the men to enjoy in whatever fashion they saw fit. This sometimes resulted in violent sexual advances by the men in these music videos. As Jhally puts it, "men's violence against women takes on an erotic quality." These tropes were instantaneously adopted by hip-hop and rap music videos, and were pushed to new limits in what is now referred to as the "booty video."

The "booty video" formula is a trope in music videos primarily utilized by rappers to display their status. They display this status through the accumulation of wealth and property, of which women's buttocks are often included as signifiers of the rapper's status. Mako Fitts comments on this phenomenon in her article, "'Drop It like It's Hot': Culture Industry Laborers and Their Perspectives on Rap Music Video Production." According to Fitts, "The booty video reinforces the increasing use of an urban sensibility in music, television, and films that exploits a mediated understanding of black, urban aesthetics" (211). This is extremely problematic because these tropes further the hypersexualization of women by constantly robbing them of any subjectivity they might have had in some rock music videos because they are equated solely to material goods.

There are some less damaging ways to use the "booty video" formula in music videos. Amy Lam argues that Nicki Minaj's use of the "booty video" formula in the music video for "Anaconda" is acceptable in her article, "Nicki Minaj's Unapologetic Sexuality is Not a Crisis." Lam explains the contrast in reception of Minaj's video by quoting two people who have significantly differing opinions: "A writer called it the 'fiercest take on female sexuality of the year,' while others felt Minaj's hypersexualization

was a 'letdown.'" Overall, Minaj's use of suggestive dance moves and partial nudity is less problematic because she has agency to decide how to represent herself, unlike the backup dancers in most music videos (including in her own video) that lack this agency. Still, she is promoting the idea that women are sex objects and some may conclude from her putting herself in that position that she wants to be seen as a sex subject. If this is the case she shouldn't fear any sort of backlash for displaying her sexual subjectivity... Other pop stars like Miley Cyrus have also utilized tropes from the "booty video" formula, and I find this problematic for all the reasons previously stated, but also because she is appropriating a culture for her own financial gain.

[...]

V: APPROPRIATION OF RAP/HIP-HOP CULTURE

Appropriation is no recent trend in the music business. Appropriation, in terms of art, is the practice of reworking someone's, or a culture's, art or artistic style as one's own, without giving proper acknowledgement to the artist and/or culture in which it originated. Elvis Presley is one of the earliest and most successful white artists to use black music to heighten his position in society and become prosperous while simultaneously denying acknowledgement to those who clearly influenced him... The fact that Presley did not have direct access to black culture while growing up is not the problem. Complications emanate when one does not award acknowledgment to the culture whose art form they engage in, especially when they become exceptionally recognized and influential for doing so. Elvis, when once asked, "Who do you sound like?" replied, "I don't sound like nobody" (Wilson). This, however, is not true. He sounded like what was then called "race music," music made by people of color in the United States. He was not necessarily better than any alternative artists making "race music," but this was during a time where segregation was law

and not attributing his style and technique to people of color allowed him to market himself to white youth, and thus make millions of dollars.

This tendency continued with white musical artists appropriating blues and rock n' roll from musicians of color, and ultimately led to white rappers appropriating hip-hop and rap from musicians of color. Eminem, undoubtedly the most famous white rapper, even has a lyric commenting on this in reference to Elvis' appropriation. In the song "Without Me," Eminem raps, "I am the worst thing since Elvis Presley to do black music so selfishly/ And use it to get myself wealthy." Eminem, although white, grew up in a predominantly black part of Detroit and created this song with producer Dr. Dre, a person of color. Considering his history, acknowledgement of the genre created by musicians of color that he participates in, and his producer being a person of color, I conclude his use of rap is not appropriation. However, Eminem's music videos, such as the one for his song, "Ass Like That," contribute to problematic representations of women by fragmenting their bodies and using them in the video as sex objects, as well as appropriating hip hop dance styles. Appropriation is not the victimless crime it can appear to be. It is collective intellectual theft and all artists are morally obligated to make a considerable effort to not appropriate, just as writers make a considerable effort not to plagiarize.

VI: CHALLENGING THE ENTERTAINMENT INDUSTRY

Practically every subsection of the entertainment industry has problematic tropes within them, but I choose to make a film about music videos because I believe they are the most problematic "artistic" type of media produced by the entertainment industry. I say artistic because, although advertisements and pornography are created solely to sell a product or satisfy sexual cravings, music videos have a much greater potential to experi-

ment artistically and make social observations and criticisms than advertisements or pornography, and yet they seldom do... The general public isn't usually interested in watching short films or experimental films. Feature films and television shows are increasingly in demand. Music videos are one way in which "short films" become accessible to a mass audience. There are no prevailing guidelines like the three-act structure in music videos, like there are in feature films. Therefore, there is an opportunity within music videos to exhibit meaningful messages and/or artistic cinema to the mass public. However, the majority of music videos, and especially rap/hip-hop music videos, scarcely ever explore visual styles or take chances with profound messages, and often methodically abide by the "booty video" formula. The producers and record label owners will not alter this formula because music videos are essentially advertisements of a song, and these almost pornographic images are consistently lucrative in making them their money. Therefore, it is up to filmmakers to actualize a clashing narrative, pushing against this unimaginative magnitude of "booty videos."

My film is a remonstrance to the "booty video." "Booty videos" showcase a world in which women have one role: sex object. Sexuality is a part of everyone's identity and enjoying a sexual image is not in itself wrong. The problem arises when a type of media almost exclusively depicts a gender as nothing more than a sex object. This deprives women of many contradistinctive identities—including but not limited to their sexuality—by only showing them as sexual beings, thus perpetuating the idea that women are only good for one thing: sex. It also subversively conditions men to regard women solely as sex objects and even sex-crazed, thus sustaining the patriarchy and rape culture.

My film will begin as a typical "booty video" for a rap song. It consists of many different smooth and cinematic shots, connected by both the fast cuts, and the rap song itself. Then the viewers will hear "Cut!" and see the inner workings

of the set between takes. This will be achieved by using a film within a film trope. This film within the "booty video" will have a much looser and almost documentary feel to it, in order to contrast with the "booty video" itself. The dialogue and action in this section will demonstrate the hindrances women face on set thanks to its patriarchal environment, and more broadly establish the unsound ways in which these women are treated, and the appropriation of rap/hip-hop culture in terms of societal influence and perception. These ideas will be communicated through representative dialogue and emotional reactions by the characters. Finally, we will see the same rap verse shot again, this time very static with occasional audible direction from the director in order to release the viewers from any unabridged attention they may have had when watching the stylized music video shown at the beginning of my film. In doing so, the viewers will have time to consider the information presented in the film within the "booty video" and by contextualizing the film within and the "booty video" together, they will hopefully understand why the "booty video" shown at the beginning of my film, and many others like it, are so problematic... This film is not an attempt to have the final word on any or all of the problems I have previously discussed. I am making it so that others can respond to it through film, written word, or even just with their own internal thoughts. Still, there are many academics and filmmakers who would have a problem with my reflexive look at "booty videos," regardless of the success of the film's message....

VII: REASONS A WHITE HETEROSEXUAL FILMMAKER SHOULDN'T MAKE A FILM LIKE THIS

There are many people like myself with unearned and undeserved privilege due to the circumstances of their birth. They might be good people, and may attempt to help those less privileged than themselves. Art can be a great way to do so.

However, in attempting to help through art, they sometimes do the opposite, and thus only further their privilege. Heather McLean writes about an example of this in her article, "Digging into the Creative City: A Feminist Critique." She explains how a group called Dupont Improvement Group (DIGIN) worked with the Toronto Free Gallery in an attempt to revitalize Bloordale, a struggling neighborhood in Toronto. However, their revitalization excluded certain members of the community; including the homeless, drug users, and sex workers (McLean 669). Without input from the whole community, this project, according to McLean, was "complicit in cultivating spaces of white privilege and heteronormativity" (670)... Her article demonstrates that helping those less privileged through art, or any other means, is only successful when those less fortunate are included in the process. If excluded, this type of "philanthropy" can further the privilege of the "philanthropists," while subsequently harming those whom they attempted to help...

I wouldn't say my film is an attempt to help those less privileged. Instead it is an attempt to use my knowledge of society and filmmaking to analyze societal problems that affect those who are less privileged than myself. Still, Mclean would probably believe that my film has good intentions behind it, but, like the revitalization of Bloordale, it could end up making the problems worse rather than working towards a solution through dialogue. Unlike the Bloordale project, I have talked to many people affected by the problems that the music video industry helps to perpetuate. However, due to the timeframe and scope of this endeavor, I did not have time to include as many opinions by those disadvantaged by music videos as I would have liked to. Only the film in its final version will tell if I was inclusive enough...

X: CONCLUSION

As a male citizen, I can do my part by supporting films that are either made by women or adhere to feminist ideals, supporting companies that use fair repre-

sentations of women in their advertisements, and by using my vote to support politicians who are allies to the feminist cause... Everyone has a different story and we can learn so much from each other, but so many stories... are significantly underrepresented... Inclusion and proper representation of as many groups with distinctive ideals is paramount to humanity's, and my own, moral development.

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FROM PUNISHMENT TO REQUIREMENT:

FEMALE SEXUALITY IN “IT FOLLOWS”

Alyssa Stephens

Female sexuality has been a topic of controversy for much of film history. Narratives detailing punishments for sex have been employed in many different groups as a way to control the female body and to maintain male control over this body. The horror film genre follows a similar pattern, which pivots around sexual subtexts and exploitations. Carol Clover, an influential film critic, commented on the sexual punishment of horror films, pointing out that “to the extent that the monster is constructed as feminine, the horror film thus expresses female desire only to show how monstrous it is” (Clover 80). A common trope in horror is that women who have sex die early and gruesomely. However, their male counterparts in these films rarely suffer the same fate; although many of them do still perish, they often manage to survive longer. Modern horror films are gradually changing this script in response to feminist movements and a continual desire for innovative, fresh storytelling in entertainment. *It Follows* (2015) reconstructs horror representations of female sexuality by placing the focus immediately on sex and giving the female control over her sexual destiny.

While early horror films almost always contained strong subtexts and expressions of sexuality, the conversation was always subdued or supplemental to the main narrative. Carol Clover also wrote about this sexual subtext of horror films in an analysis of female roles in horror. She argued that “[t]he killer’s phallic purpose, as he thrusts his drill or knife into the trembling bodies of young women, is unmistakable” (80). Clover indicates that the sexual implications of such methods of killing are obvious to

the viewer, yet they are never explicitly identified and named within the world of the film. For example, the famous shower scene in *Psycho*, one of the first horror films, depicts a naked, vulnerable woman who is repeatedly stabbed. The film is aware of the sexuality of the woman’s nakedness and the knife’s penetration, but it focuses more on the gore and punishment of death. The sexual nature of the scene goes unaddressed as a nod to the viewer’s assumed knowledge of sexual hierarchies; that is, that males exhibit control and power over females, both in their sexuality and their physical power.

In *It Follows*, this sexual focus takes center stage as the main conflict of the film. The demon that is haunting the characters is passed through sexual activity; therefore, sex itself becomes the medium for the curse to be passed, and it cannot be overlooked or avoided. Instead of a sexual subtext permeating the violence, sex *is* the violence, or at least it brings about the violence in the film. After main characters Jay and Greg have sex in order to transfer the demon away from Jay, the rest of their friends do not tiptoe around the issue. Although they still refrain from asking about the sex itself, they are not shy to demand whether or not Greg has seen the demon, and by association they are also asking about the completeness of his and Jay’s sexual encounter. By focusing on conversations of sex, including how, where, why, and with whom it happens, *It Follows* subverts traditional horror film scripts, and indeed, most film scripts in general, which prefer to keep these conversations out of focus. The film does not shy away from or avoid such a commonly taboo subject, but instead invites and even demands conversations

about it not only to promote a forward thinking culture, but as a requirement for survival in the world of this film.

It Follows not only places sex at the center of the discussion, but it also gives the female control over the conversation about her sexuality. Women are often portrayed in media, including film, as submissive and powerless subjects. They participate in sex not because they fully desire to, but because there is a societal standard and a male need that they are expected to fulfill. However, this film challenges that notion by giving the main female character, Jay, complete control over her sexual destiny. Although she is not given much choice in whether she should have sex again or not, since repeating this act is the only way to banish the demon that is hunting her, this decision happens on her own terms. Jay is not forced by any of her friends to have sex again, but is allowed to make this decision in her own time over the course of the film. In addition, she is able to choose her sexual partner, whereas in most other forms of media the woman is pursued by a man and is made to feel like he is her only option. While one of her good friends, Paul, spends the whole movie begging Jay to sleep with him in order for him to save her, she is not easily swayed by his valiant offer. Instead, Jay carefully considers her options and takes time to make her decision on when to have sex, and with whom. By giving her this opportunity, *It Follows* changes the narrative around female sexuality. The woman is allowed to choose when it happens and where she is most comfortable, instead of being coerced by a man to have sex whenever he wants and in his preferred location. While other movies may use the pressure of the demon to rationalize a hasty sexual decision, this film uses it as a platform to promote female autonomy.

It Follows also breaks typical horror tropes by killing a male character first. Although the opening scene of the movie shows a girl being stalked and eventually killed by the supernatural demon, this serves more as exposure to the film's mythology than as a warning or punishment

to women. The scene feels like an homage to the past, alluding to the history of horror films as portraying the punishment of women. When she is killed, the scene is completely dark, but when morning comes and shines light on her death, the new light also symbolizes an entrance to the modern era of film. In this new era, the initial helpless girl is seen as a thing of the past, and the women in the movie are given full control over their destiny from that point on. Unlike popular horror movies of the past, death is not the source of fear, but instead the uncertainty of when death will occur is what drives the characters. When the demon finally catches up with the characters, it does not seek out the female first, as most horror antagonists would. Instead, the demon hunts its current prey, which is Greg, attacking him ruthlessly as Jay watches. This is a reversal of the typical horror structure, in which the female is stalked and violently killed as the male watches. The manner of his death is interesting as well, as it is incredibly sexualized; the viewer gets the indication that the demon is essentially sucking the life out of the boy through his genitals. This explicitly sexualized form of punishment completely upends traditional horror movie scripts in regards to who gets punished and how. Even when females are punished for being sexually active in this genre of film, the sexual nature of the punishment is always symbolic; in *It Follows*, the film not only punishes male sexuality, but also uses sex itself as the conduit for death.

By focusing on sex and giving the female character control over her sexuality, *It Follows* reworks the typical horror stereotypes surrounding female sexuality. The film stands in opposition to and reconstructs narratives of traditional punishments of sex, as well as its place in the horror genre. Leslie Jamison, in her review of the film, writes that the necessity of sex in the film "feels less about culpability, the sexual engine of so many horror stories, and more about powerlessness." This change is not only progressive for women's rights and acknowledgement

of them as capable human beings, but also presents a horror that is arguably more terrifying than death. By breaking the rules surrounding female sexuality, *It Follows* helps to usher in a new era of horror filmmaking in which the rules have been thrown out the window, and anything is fair game. This results in more creative storytelling, since the genre is no longer centered on displaying the punishment of female sexuality. Fear no longer solely comes from the dangers of sex, but now can be located in many other aspects of our society, including loneliness and loss, as demonstrated in the film.

This change is sorely necessary not only in reflecting the successful women's rights movement, but also in keeping film fresh and new. If horror films continue to follow the example of *It Follows* and its forward-thinking portrayal of women, the genre will no longer rely on the sexual exploitation of women and the reliance on punishment of sexuality as a basis for plot. Since sexuality is becoming more and more accepted and even encouraged in modern day society, horror filmmakers need to turn their focus to other kinds of fears, bringing them to attention and examining them independent of sexual exploitation and punishment to reconstruct what is truly terrifying. Although horror has always been viewed as a lesser genre in the film world, hopefully the example set by the changing portrayal of women in these films will resonate with other filmmakers. Combined with social pressure to give women more autonomy and control, especially in relation to sexuality, the film industry will eventually have to change in accordance with society's changing ideals. *It Follows* is merely the first in hopefully many films that will reconstruct what it means to be a woman in film and in society.

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