Culture & Tradition

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Culture & Tradition

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Forward
AINJEL STEPHENS AND ROSHNI CAPUTO-NIMBARK

Culture is a circle of tradition. We are constantly conserving, discarding, renewing, and reviving traditional practices and customs within a cultural frame. When we speak of folklore, we are considering this push-and-pull between what has been preserved, what has been forgotten, and what is in the process of being reinvented. With reinvention, we, in the present moment, discover new value, new meanings, of traditional customs, and we creatively reinterpret them to suit our current needs and realities. Reinvention is where the magic of folklore happens: it's the place where tradition lives.

For our first issue after a six-year hiatus, Re[Invented] felt like the suitable theme for a journal called *Culture & Tradition*. Founded in 1976, the journal has seen a lot of change. The world now, in 2024, is quite different from the social, cultural, and political landscape of the mid-1970s, yet we are still dealing with issues of identity, belonging, conservancy, and becoming. We still seek to understand our place in the world, who we are and where we fit. We express both delight and discomfort at our technological advancements and the way they are used to shape our world. We use social media to both connect and argue across physical boundaries, creating bonds but also rupturing communities across political divides. While the world around us changes, folklore remains the tool of expression of these cultural anxieties, concerns, fears, and joys. As such, we celebrate change and the ability to reinvent ourselves, our world, and our traditions.

The articles in this issue all attempt to grapple with some of these concerns and joys of twenty first-century life as expressed through folklore. True to our theme, we also seek to reinvent understandings of knowledge, inviting for the first time in the journal's history creative art pieces, including visual and poetic. By including these art forms alongside our more "academic" articles, we hope to celebrate and highlight the value of creativity within folkloristics, and how we, as

individuals and as humanity, often turn to folk art forms in order to craft our understandings of the world and each other.

The first half of this issue considers reinventions of art and genre in contested spaces. While examining geographically disparate regions, the authors demonstrate the inseparability of folklore, identity, and nationalism. Roshni Caputo-Nimbark's paper explores how *dengbêjî*, a lyrical genre performed by Kurdish bards, is being reinvented to assert a Kurdish nation within the Turkish state. Encountering modern technologies and lifestyles that diverge from traditional performance contexts and long-running political efforts to silence Kurdish culture and tradition, the bards are adopting new techniques for shifting audiences, including a growing diaspora, spurring novel ideas about Kurdishness. In a similar vein, Udita Banerjee elucidates efforts by *Miyah* poets to bring visibility to the humanitarian and identity crises of the Miyah community in the Indian state of Assam. She demonstrates how, by experimenting with linguistic structures, modes of expression, and technological outlets, Miyah poets are building a poetic movement from the ground up, effectively subverting dominant narratives that perpetuate injustices among a subaltern population lacking a formal political platform.

Blending poetry, identity, and longing, "Stone Island" by Brandon M. Ward is an homage to a former fishing community in Newfoundland that was all but forgotten over the years by resettlement and fading memories. Evoking the sounds and images of fishers, themselves uprooted from a homeland in Europe, and retelling their physical hardships, informed in part by stories from his own rural Newfoundland upbringing, he invites us to revive the memory of bygone lives and celebrate their fortitude. Rebecca Horeth also evokes the ghosts of an ancestral past, but her paper uses material culture to explore the complexity of identity and the negotiation of migrant identity with Canadian identity. For her, the shifting contexts of the Transylvanian Saxon *Haube*, an embroidered folk costume traditionally presented to a new bride by her mother-in-law,

complicate singular notions of genre and identity. Merging history and autoethnography, these authors provide powerful justifications for why the reinvention of tradition matters.

En français, Fritz-Gerald Louis uses a material culture lens to consider museums as places where culture is not only preserved but also created. Through an interview process, Louis questions if "la communauté haïtienne montréalaise" are able to see themselves and their experiences as Haitian and Montréalers, as well as immigrants, within these museum spaces. Continuing with the theme of material culture and hybridity, Enzina Marrari's *Burn Your Lips* is an embroidered art piece combining textiles with a Russian proverb. Embroidered on a discarded piece of linen, the art reclaims and gives new life to the material while also considering the ways in which trauma causes us to reassess and, at times, reinvent ourselves and our identity.

The final section of this issue questions the relationship between technological advancements, popular culture, and folkloristics. In her contribution, Ainjel Stephens considers how a modern form of expression, the video game, reinvents the way we tell and think about traditional fairy tales. Through examining the intersection between tradition and modernity, Stephens suggests that fairy tales remain an important form of folk expression and provide valuable insights into contemporary issues, making us reconsider the meaning of the so-called original fairy tale itself. In a multimedia art piece, Lana Thorimbert combines images of nature with the powerful force of the stock market with *Organic Growth*. The different textures evoke feelings of hybridity and the conflicting nature of reinvention. On the cusp of either-neither, this piece forces us to ask ourselves: how will we reinvent tomorrow? Lastly, John E. Priegnitz II's contribution revisits the identity of folkloristics itself. As technology evolves, folklorists such as Tok Thompson have considered the role of the human in folklore. Continuing these discussions, Priegnitz questions if and how Artificial Intelligence can contribute to and create folklore.

Although diverse, these articles circle around questions and concerns of contemporary life: of finding our place in the world, of connecting with others across borders and boundaries, of the hybridity of living, and of the power of folklore to reimagine and reinvent the world we live in.

We welcome you to the [Re]invented *Culture & Tradition.*

Kurdish Bards Sing A Homeland: *Dengbêjî* and Conflicting
Nationalisms in the Turkish State
ROSHNI CAPUTO-NIMBARK

Introduction

I recall meeting a group of Kurds on two occasions, both in 2011:
once in a Turkish border town with Syria and another time in Lefkoşa,
the north end of Cyprus's capital. On the first occasion, I spent all day
bantering with four young Kurdish men, interspersed with their
impassioned outcries against alienation from mainstream Turkish
society. The second time, a group of young activists shared their love
and sorrow for their denigrated language and culture, taught me some
Kurdish expressions, and beseeched me to spread the word about their
plight. Since then, a fascination with the Rojava region of northern
Syria, particularly its achievement of de facto autonomy in 2012
founded on ideals of feminism, anarchism, universal human rights,
and ecological sustainability, has directed me toward its flourishing
revolutionary art scene focused heavily on the celebration of Kurdish
folklore, music, and language, all having been silenced by repressive
regimes (Hamid 2016).

One art form that continually surfaces is *dengbêjî*, a musical genre
characterized by *a cappella* singing of Kurdish romances or epic
battles featuring heroes and villains dating from past centuries to the
present revolutionary moment. In the context of conflicting
nationalisms in Turkey, dengbêjî has emerged as a political tool
deployed by various actors to contest, assert, negotiate, and
complicate ideas about Kurdish identity and autonomy. Whether via
censorship, curation, revision, or revival, political actors within and
outside of Turkey have managed to mobilize this oral tradition to
advance their agendas, armed with differential apprehensions of its
affective authority. Hence, while this paper does not take an
oppositional stance regarding political repression by the Turkish state
against Kurds per se, nor does it deny the struggles of Kurds living

outside of Turkey, hegemony is necessarily implicated in my discussion about the creative and historic uses of folklore in the context of Kurdish nationalism in Turkey.

After a review of the literature on folklore and nationalism, I introduce dengbêjî by assaying its idealized content, form, function, and context in performance. Next, I provide historical background to situate the present state of Kurdish folklore, describing the vicissitudes of nationalist discourse and the state's encounters with ethnic minorities, namely Kurds, from the Late Ottoman period to the contemporary Turkish Republic. I then examine the divergent trajectories of Kurdish nationalism among different segments of the population and the ways dengbêjî has been invoked to serve disparate political agendas. I conclude by way of speculation about possible futures for dengbêjî.

Folklore and nationalism

It is the confluence of power and communications that paved the way for the genesis of two deeply interrelated imaginaries, those of folklore and nationalism. The German scholar Johann Gottfried Herder (1744–1803), who is widely credited with spurring the age of Romantic nationalism, was himself greatly influenced by poetry collections that were circulating among elite European circles of his day (Wilson 2006a). Herder was fascinated, for instance, by MacPherson's *Poems of Ossian*, a collection inspired by earlier publications of oral ballads such as the *Hasaginica* of the Balkans (Leersen 2012). Likewise, he was inspired by philosophical discourses around such collections, particularly the musings of Giambattista Vico, whose groundbreaking work on continuity in history and independent cultural entities would prove to be of fundamental value to Herder's work on German nationalism (Wilson 2006a, 110–11).

According to Herder, members of a nation are responsible for delivering humanity through the discovery of their unique national character. By developing a "national soul" guided by laws peculiar to

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a shared *zeitgeist* and expressed through language, arts, beliefs, and customs, Herder saw each nation as strengthening its internal unity (Wilson 2006a, 113). Unlike his contemporary Enlightenment thinkers, who propounded a universal law guided by the rational sciences, Herder argued for the distinctness of each nation's innate abilities resulting from a specific environment and history. As I outline, Romantic notions of a primordial national soul have similarly justified political agendas among both Turkish and Kurdish nationals.

Herder's quest for Germany's national soul discoverable in its people's traditions was complicated by the encroachment of foreign influences, most notably France, into the fabric of everyday life. He saw the peasantry as an unspoiled and indispensable link between Germany's shared national past and her promising future and, in the spirit of the times, sought to collect and publish the most authentic "living voice of the nationalit[y]" (Wilson 2006a, 115): folk poetry. The notion of collecting and circulating folk materials of a premodern past in order to reignite the soul of a nation would gain traction around Europe and beyond very quickly, albeit with varying degrees of urgency based on the positionality of elite classes.

Victorian England was among those Western European countries whose elites' immense wealth and power did not compel them to galvanize national consciousness based on a mythical shared past, for which William Thoms, 1846 coiner of "folklore" and self-professed Grimmian, bemoaned its lack of archived folk material and undertook his own surveys of peasant lore (Roper 2012). It was not long before scholars such as Tylor and Lang were arguing persuasively that folklore materials were themselves remnants of man's savage past and that direct parallels could be drawn between cultural "survivals" and similar practices in more "primitive" societies (Dorson 1968, 194). As I will argue, elite Kurds have also promoted, and often discouraged, folklore collection and reproduction, their attitude contingent upon *du jour* opinions about progress, modernity, nationhood, and strategy.

Challenging the teleology of Romantic nationalists and folklorists regarding the taken-for-granted character of a nation and the evolutive nature of civilization, Benedict Anderson (1983) defines the nation as an imagined community that is both sovereign and limited, where the very notion of imagination forcefully conditions all that a nation is said to entail. He posits nationhood to be an outcrop of 18th century European Enlightenment principles, whereupon empires were replaced by nations as "the legitimate international norm" (113), spurring new notions of temporality, print capitalism, and creole solidarities overseas. For Anderson, official nationalisms were strategic responses by dynastic and aristocratic groups threatened by emerging popular vernacular nationalisms, and typically involved state-controlled education, propaganda, historiography, and militarism. Newspapers and novels, published by large capitalist enterprises, began circulating among a growing, increasingly literate middle class in popular languages, which ultimately superseded sacred, authoritative idioms such as Latin as well as "lesser" vernacular tongues spoken at empirical peripheries. Furthermore, the census, map, and museum imposed by colonial powers provide bureaucratic templates for future nationalisms. They impose quantifiable identities, geographical imaginaries, and historical heritage symbols on their subjects, who continue to use the models in the postcolonial era.

In all these points we find close parallels in the Ottoman, Turkish, and Kurdish contexts. Here, hegemonic nationalist agendas combine with new technologies and bureaucratic structures (Başgöz 1972; Zeydanlıoğlu 2008; Hamelink 2016) to repress autonomous efforts through violence, coercion, and auto-censorship (Scalbert-Yücel 2009; Foucault 2010). Anthony Smith (1998, 212) argues that "very few national states possess only one form of nationalism," pointing to the diverse and often contested terrain of multiple nationalisms in spite of a geopolitically-defined nation-state. In the next section, I introduce

dengbêjî, a central site of cultural production that has been and continues to be embroiled in diverse nationalist struggles.

The art of dengbêjî[1]

In a provocative study, Metin Yüksel (2019) compares two songs written by two well-known minstrels in the same era about the same episode and with reference to the same object: the rope with which two Kurdish leaders, Sheikh Said and Khalid Beg Cibrî, were hanged after the 1925 Sheikh Said rebellion[2]. In the first song, the Turkish minstrel Aşık Veysel's composition eulogizes Atatürk and the Turkish Republic, framing them as the embodiment of justice and progress, thus reflecting official ideological discourse persuasively "set to folk poetic meters and expression" (Yüksel 2019, 84). The second is a lament poem by Kurdish minstrel Dengbêj Reso, who uses free-verse narrative to communicate "a Kurdish nationalist and devout Islamic message to his Kurdish listeners" (88).

Yüksel's study demonstrates the significant role oral poets, and folklore more generally, play in the production and transmission of historical consciousness in Turkey, the radically divergent political messages of each song, and the serious implications of these historiographies with regard to the "Kurdish question" (Yüksel 2019, 72). Corroborating his conclusions, Kurdish studies scholar Martin van Bruinessen (1992, 308) argues that the Kurdish oral epics "serve the same ideological function as the history textbooks used in European primary schools." As we will see, the ideological efficacy of Kurdish folklore has resulted in hegemonic struggles between the Turkish state, dengbêjs, their traditional audiences, and radical Kurdish nationalists.

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[1] I use the term *dengbêjî* to refer to the art and *dengbêj* to refer to the artist. See Schäfers (2015) for a good discussion on the recent abstraction of the latter term in the production and popularization of the former.

[2] The rebellion, which cast 15,000 Kurdish tribal fighters against 52,000 Turkish soldier over one month, is considered the "first large-scale nationalist rebellion by the Kurds" (Olson 1989, 153).

Who is this authoritative purveyor of folkloric knowledge that governs such contentious political and historical consciousness? The word *dengbêj* derives from the Kurdish words *deng* and *bêj*, meaning "voice" and "tell," with one Kurdish-English dictionary broadly defining it as "reciter of romances and epics" (Chyet 2003). The terms bard and troubadour are sometimes used, indicating the long epics that are recited without musical accompaniment (Allison 2016). A prominent Los Angeles-based dengbêj interviewed by two Kurdish linguists in 2015 defines his occupation as "animator, musician, composer, performer, linguist, and historian of Kurdish life" (Sharifi & Barwari 2020, 136). A French scholar of Kurdish oral literature in the 1970s offers a more illustrative definition of dengbêj:

> These professional poets, who over the course of years furnished their memories as apprentices of certain old masters, assumed the task of conserving the traditions of the past and, if some new event were to occur, the celebration of the heroic deeds of the present. … They sometimes faced each other in competitions which were held regularly until quite recently. Every emir or chief of an important tribe maintained one or more of these bards, whose songs, because of the contemporary allusions they might contain, sometimes also had political connotations. Thanks to their unlimited repertoire and matchless gift of improvisation, these men transmitted, from the remotest centuries until today, poems with thousands of verses (Lescot 1977, 798, cited in Scalbert-Yücel 2009, 4).

The romantic overtones of this definition notwithstanding, Kurdish scholar Clémence Scalbert-Yücel (2009) affirms most of its descriptive elements. She cautions, however, that they are reflective of an earlier lived reality, the dengbêj having undergone major transformations since repressive measures against the practice by the Turkish state began in earnest in the mid-20th century. She also notes the geographical contingency of such measures: "As pressure was always greater in town, the village played an essential part in

preserving the *şevbihêrk* [evening gatherings] where dengbêjs used to sing, and the apprenticing of the *kilam* [song]" (5). Again, the romantic image belies a relationship of subservience between the apprentice singer, who was typically poor, orphaned, or forced into beggary, and his master, a feudal lord or slaveowner who trained his pupil in the art over several years leading up to the latter's requisite performances before large audiences (6).

Performance of dengbêjî embodies what Richard Bauman describes as "the dual sense of the artistic action—the doing of folklore and artistic event" and may therefore be treated as a "symbolic and expressive art" (Bauman 1977, 4). With a vast repertoire comprising lyrical love poems, tales of intertribal conflict, heroic epics, and eulogies to historical figures confronting the Iranian and Turkish state (Sharifi & Barwari 2020, 143), rooted in personal and narrativized events, and due to a long history of repression and stigmatization of Kurdish art in Turkey and ensuing Kurdish diasporas, folkloric components of performances vary widely across time and space. For the remainder of this section, I consider the popular form, content, context, and function of dengbêjî performances over the course of recent history.

Once a free-verse lyrical narrative improvised to incorporate current events, in recent history dengbêjî has been entextualized through preservation in recordings, transcriptions, and translations, or incorporated into other types of performance or genre, each diverging from the ideal form that lives in collective memory. Nonetheless, scholars aver that a homogenizing form need not destroy dengbêjî, as its affective value remains largely unchallenged: "[Kurdish] oral traditions are not dying out altogether; they are changing in form and becoming less varied, but remain powerful and emotive… For the Kurds the heroic and often tragic world of life in the villages and nomad encampments of the past is very appealing." (Allison 2001, 209).

Linguists Amir Sharifi and Zuzan Barwari (2020), using literary analysis and personal experience narratives, offer a comprehensive examination of reported speech in performance. Their analysis reveals how "aesthetics and functions of common language, literary and artistic creativity, literary mastery, theatrical performance, imagery, and genre come together at the locus of what Bakhtin calls a 'plurality' found in 'the human voice'" (144). They articulate dengbêjî as a speech event that uses direct and indirect speech[3], polyphony, and intertextuality (Bakhtin 1981) across narrative genres to convey cultural information to Kurds. One informant, a dengbêj living in Germany, states that "historical awareness, showing and telling, extensive memory, familiarity with stories of the past, storytelling skills, quality of voice, and character all contribute to re-echoing competent telling" (Sharifi & Barwari 2020, 146). Depending on the character being animated by the dengbêj, prosodic and embodied features such as voice, pitch, and quality are engaged, as are gestures, facial expressions, and gaze. Paralleling Western ballad performances (Porter 1986), the dengbêj's audience plays a formal role by listening and responding to, participating in, and anticipating events as they unfold in performance.

As mentioned above, the kilams deal predominantly with themes of love and battle, the latter comprising either intertribal conflict or battles against other polities such as neighbouring tribes, Iran, or the Turkish state. According to cultural and political theorists Wendelmoet Hamelink and Hanifi Barış (2014), they are replete with images, such as caravans, horse riders, and tribal alliances, from an idealized social and political world of the past, typically casting the local leader as the protagonist, thereby suggesting a strong allegiance

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[3] Kurdish, like other Iranian languages, does not make a clear syntactic or morphological distinction between direct and indirect speech (Ebert 1986), which necessitates extensive skill on the part of the dengbêj to adopt multiple roles effectively in order to change his footing so as to produce and animate different voices (Goffman 1974).

to local political structures. Other recurring figures are the fugitive, the rebel, and the traitor, with the commoner conveying the prime vantage point. The narrative content wherein place names are continuously mentioned during performance also conjures and draws an imaginary map of a Kurdish-centred geography.

The sung narratives of dengbêjî performance, elaborately and imaginatively juxtaposing landscapes, characters, relations, and normative values that reflect the lived realities of many Kurds, nonetheless exemplify what Propp (1984) refers to as "historicity of folklore": Although the plots, characters, and struggles do represent aspects of a certain reality of a Kurdish past, it is often impossible to establish a direct link with a specific period in Kurdish history, so the historicity lies less in the correct depiction of real events and more in a group's expression of historical self-awareness, as well as its attitude toward past events, persons, and circumstances. Historical significance thus becomes an ideological phenomenon central to individual and group identification. Images and symbols are also used to decorate the sites of televised or live staged performances, so that furniture, stylized props, framed pictures of notable dengbêjs, costumes, and superimposed backdrops of iconic Kurdish landscapes such as highland pastures, remote villages, and high mountain passes serve to unite the audience in a shared, imaginary life-world.

There are multiple and complex dimensions to the changing context of dengbêjî, the most apparent being the physical space associated with performances. Whereas performances in earlier times were typically performed in private homes and guesthouses, or during weddings and competitions, today's performances are staged at festivals, on television, and at allotted dengbêj cafes. These new settings and associated audiences have a limiting effect on kilam lengths, where earlier it was not uncommon for a dengbêj to begin singing after supper and continue until dawn (Hamelink 2016). Scalbert-Yücel (2009) attributes shorter contemporary performances to memory loss due to their decades-long ban, diverse expectations of

contemporary audiences who may not appreciate or understand long epic stories, and constraints on recording and radio broadcasting, which began cutting songs as early as the 1950s (17).

The transmission context that was central to dengbêjî has also changed or disappeared. Previously, there was an "education" where pupils or servants would learn from a master, often a family member. The ongoing dialogue between teacher and apprentice consisting of practice, critique, omission of errors, recitation, repetition, and performance for large audiences served as a model for future teachers and apprentices, thereby ensuring an endless chain of transmission (Scalbert-Yücel 2009, 18). Today, many dengbêjs have learned not from masters but from tapes and advise the younger generations to do the same. However, it is also apparent that young people are losing an interest in learning the kilams, many preferring more modern musical genres or those with instrumental accompaniment. Nonetheless, dengbêjî continues to be significant as strenuous efforts are made to maintain the tradition "despite modernization and the supremacy of the written word over oral tradition" (Galip 2015, 71).

The Kurdish diaspora has furnished performers with different cultural and technological resources as well as new audiences that simultaneously broaden the imagined community of Kurds while sharpening differences between performers with varying political sensibilities. Interviews with diasporic singers lead Sharifi and Barwani (2020) to conclude that "*dengbêjî* produced in exile and disseminated through the media, drawing on the old expressive and aesthetic elements and folklore, has proven to be a powerfully imaginative aesthetic resource for preserving and promoting Kurdishness" (141). Hamelink (2016) suggests that since many Kurds feel they have "missed out on experiencing that Kurdish life world from within," due to language attrition or non-traditional local environment, they see dengbêjî as triggering and symbolizing "ideas about Kurdishness, origin, authenticity, and the past," which are conveyed "through the continuous repetition of figures and landscapes

of past times, the accompanying sounds of the voices, the use of Kurdish and common phrases, and the performance setting" (146). For young and old listeners alike, dengbêjî evokes nostalgia for an identity seen as stolen through forced assimilation, migration, resettlement, or persecution.

Finally, while the preservation of ethno-linguistic identity and authoritative narration of morals specific to the Kurdish experience have remained the overarching function of dengbêjî performance across the ages, political tensions over the past century have thrust the art into a complex arena of conflicting nationalisms. On the one hand, adherents to the Kurdish political movement, which I discuss below, tend to regard "strong and outspoken moral viewpoints on what Kurdish society should be and become as the only way to form a unitary front against the dominance and oppression of Turkey's politics regarding the Kurds" (Hamelink 2016, 339). Central to their strategy is the imposition of these new social narratives onto new and existing kilams and the omission of old narratives of tribal warfare and primitivism, which they see as counterproductive to the cause for liberation through nationhood.

On the other hand, less radical dengbêjs, who often subscribe to future ideals of the Kurdish nationalist movement, tend not to concur about the omission of supposedly problematic kilams. In interviews with dengbêjs in Turkey and abroad, Hamelink found that "most dengbêjs were primarily interested in the transmission and performance of their art. The bodily experience of singing the old kilams they had learned when they were young, but had to hide from public life for so many years, was in itself a rewarding experience for them" (Hamelink 2016, 339). Having suffered through decades of oppression, these traditional singers see their moral messages as imbued with a certain authority. Moreover, it is precisely the anonymity of their kilams from which they derive a sense of collective Kurdish ownership. Rather than heed the activists' call to develop a common Kurdish cause, nationalist mindset, and adaptation of

performances to contemporary norms, traditionalists express a strong desire to remain artistically autonomous and to retain links with ancestral values.

Ottoman and Turkish nationalisms

The challenge of reconciling divergent liberatory goals, including the adaptation of dengbêjî to political agendas, within the Kurdish community in Turkey and the diaspora necessitates an understanding of the roots of Kurdish nationalism. However, since the dawn of nationalism it has been made apparent that no nationalist movement occurs in a vacuum but rather always exists in relation to competing nationalisms. As this paper's focus is limited to Kurdish nationalism in present-day Turkey, other allegiances to consider are the various ethnic groups comprising the Ottoman Empire followed by the post-independence Turkish state. In this section, I take a brief tour through the authoritative attempts in the region to unify its subjects in the 19th and 20th centuries, first through Ottomanism, then Kemalism, and finally Kurdish nationalism. As with the European Romantic nationalists, folklore collection has played a prominent role throughout.

The Ottoman Empire, a great and influential expanse spanning North Africa, the Middle East, and Europe, exercised a policy of ethnic pluralism among its subjects, whose relative freedoms undoubtedly contributed to the empire's stability for over six centuries beginning in 1299 (Başgöz 1972). The Kurds saw themselves as a distinct ethnic group despite never having experienced political unity, in contrast to their neighbours, the Ottomans and the Persians, perhaps owing to their tribal organization and location as a buffer zone between rival empires. As such, they were nomadic or semi-nomadic peoples who expanded their territories on behalf of local leadership rather than a greater Kurdistan. Contact between Kurds and Ottomans allegedly dates from the early 16th century when an alliance was forged to stave off Safavid encroachments on Ottoman territory

(Strohmeier 2003, 10). By the late 19th century, Kurds "presented a picture of dissolution, fractionalization, and tribal conflict," with Islam as their only "transcendental" unifier, along perhaps with antagonisms toward Christians (16).

Tanzimāt was a period of intensive restructuring of the Ottoman Empire by bureaucratic elite members between 1839 and 1876, beginning with nationalist reforms by Abdulmejid I, the 31st Sultan of the Empire. He implemented Ottomanism, a nationalistic policy inspired by but also a reaction against European Romantic nationalism. Fearing dissolution of the empire owing to brazen nationalist sentiments among the Empire's disparate ethnicities, the reforms sought social cohesion via modernization and civil liberties that ensured lawful equality among all subjects. Tanzimāt writers inspired by European collectors of oral literature began to "discover" a true Turkish literature emanating from the folk and unspoiled by foreign influences or elite language (Başgöz 1972, 163). However, intelligentsia and ruling classes, who self-identified primarily as Ottomans and Muslims, did not share the budding movement's fascination with Turkish folk culture, which for them reeked of ignorance and poverty (164).

Nevertheless, the Empire was severely weakened and lost most of its territories in the years leading up to World War One, the final blow occurring in the aftermath of the war when the Allied Powers partitioned what was left of the Empire into several states. The Turkish War of Independence enlisted Kurdish assistance in exchange for promised autonomy (Zeydanlıoğlu 2008, 7), ultimately preventing Western powers from partitioning present-day Turkey, and the Republic of Turkey emerged in 1923 with Mustafa Kemal Atatürk as its founding father. Aided by the nationalistic principles of Turkish ideologue and folk collector Ziya Gökalp, the Republic of Turkey began co-opting folklore, along with shared history and language, into the nation-building project known as Atatürkism or Kemalism, which sought to create loyalties by the Turkish people around the modern

nation-state rather than the traditional religious and social circles that had commanded popular allegiance during Ottoman reign. Chief among Atatürk's projects were free education and state support of the sciences, parliamentary democracy, and denial of non-Turkish identities[4], specifically the "erroneous appellations" of "citizens and co-nationals who have been incited to think of themselves as Kurds[5], Circassians, Laz or Bosnians" (Atatürk cited in Mango 1999, 20).

The new Turkish state now found it necessary to dilute the nation's largest culturally and linguistically distinct minority, the Kurds, with the new constitution of 1924 denying them the autonomy they had been promised (Zeydanlıoğlu 2008, 7). It prohibited the use of the Kurdish language in public and enabled the expropriation of land from Kurdish landowners. The years that followed saw a series of rebellions by Kurds, frequently resulting in massacres where tens of thousands of Kurds perished (Yüksel 2019). These revolts fueled anti-Kurdish sentiment further and contributed to the national image of Kurds as backwards, tribal rabble rousers, leading to heightened efforts to destroy or assimilate them into mainstream Turkish culture. One such strategy was the 1934 resettlement law, a massive displacement programme that prevented any single district from retaining greater than a 10% Kurdish population (Sagnic 2010). Kurdish languages, dress, and customs were forbidden and families divided as children were sent to Turkish-medium boarding schools (Zeydanlıoğlu 2008, 10). Spatial Turkification involved the banning, fining, and replacement of any reference to Kurdistan or any Kurdish

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[4] An official Turkish dictionary in 1936 defined Kurd as: "Name given to a group or a member of this group of Turkish origin, many who have changed their language, speaking a broken form of Persian and lives in Turkey, Iraq, Iran" (Zeydanlıoğlu 2008, 9).

[5] The euphemism "Mountain Turks" was popularized in official discourse as a way to cancel Kurdish identity by claiming they were Turks who had "forgotten" their Turkishness or were in "denial" of their Turkish origins and needed the truth revealed to them. Similarly, their language was said to have degenerated due to proximity with Iran (Zeydanlıoğlu 2008, 7).

place names, symbols, or monuments with Turkish inscriptions and nationalist symbols[6].

   After a 1980 military coup, anti-Kurdish policies became increasingly violent amid eruption of the Kurdish-Turkish conflict, which saw a reactionary Kurdish guerrilla movement coalesce around the Kurdistan Workers' Party or PKK (Watts 2010). By the mid-1990s, thousands of villages were wiped from the map, with nearly 400,000 Kurdish villagers displaced or left homeless (Human Rights Watch 2005). In the 1980s and '90s, it was especially dangerous to speak Kurdish in public or be caught with Kurdish music, where even possession of a tape was a criminal offence. A substantial amount of music was destroyed or thrown in rivers as protective measures (Hamelink 2016, 203). Since the 1980 coup, many dengbêjs have been exiled, arrested, and tortured while others have fled Turkey, mostly to Europe (35). Since 2005, Article 301 of the Turkish Penal Code has made it illegal to "insult Turkishness" (Karaca 2011), which has led to the imprisonment of people who have dared to insult Atatürk, speak Kurdish in public, or acknowledge the Armenian genocide[7] (BBC 2007).

Shifting contexts of Kurdish nationalism

   Meanwhile, a strain of Kurdish nationalism was starting to take shape already at the end of the 19th century when Kurdish elites, influenced by the prevailing European and Slavic intellectual currents of the time, founded a newspaper, *Kurdistan*, in 1896 with the aim of modernizing what they saw as the backward Kurdish masses in order

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[6] See Güvenç (2011) on creative decolonizing efforts by Kurds in Diyarbakır to reappropriate urban space so as to construct counternarratives of Kurdish nationalism.

[7] The Armenian Genocide was an ethnic campaign against the Armenian people and identity by the ruling party of the Ottoman Empire during World War I. Roughly one million Armenians were killed in death marches to the Syrian Desert while up to 200,000 others underwent forced Islamization (Suny 2015).

to try their hand at nationhood (Allison 2016, 116). Political mobilization of folklore did not begin until 1919 with the publication of the Kurdish magazine *Jîn*. Here, Kurds publicly voiced complaints against Kemalist policies that excluded Kurds from public life as well as Turkish appropriation of Kurdish literary works, the collection and mapping of which were being commissioned by the newly founded Turkish Folklore Association so as to identify and assimilate non-standard linguistic and cultural forms (Allison 2016). Despite the threat posed by Kurdish music to the Kemalist agenda, collectors were tasked with appropriating, translating into Turkish, archiving, and broadcasting many forms of Kurdish cultural production (Hamelink 2016, 35). Some singers and poets were forced to sing Turkish nationalist songs; others were heavily monitored, specific records prohibited lest they incite Kurdish nationalism through their invocation of epic Kurdish heroes.

After the failed revolts of the 1920s and '30s, Kurdish intellectuals, who had been leading the nationalist movement, looked increasingly to the Kurdish peasantry as protectors of Kurdish heritage against the Turkish enemy. Oral tradition became a bridge between tribal and urban Kurdish society. Kurdish radio stations broadcast dengbêjs from Armenia, Iran, Iraq, and later Europe and were heard in Turkey beginning in the 1950s, thus keeping alive an interest in the singers and their songs even as modern communications, social change, and new music forms were transforming many oral traditions (Hamelink 2016). Underground markets circulated recordings and city cafes in Kurdish-dense cities hosted secret gatherings of dengbêjs. Yet, most "*dengbêj*s in Turkey were pushed to the margins, where they could only continue their art in the safety of the home and of smaller villages that were under less scrutiny than the larger towns and cities. Indeed, the *dengbêj* art was predominantly a village tradition, but as the consequence of modernity, rather than as something that preceded it" (198)

By the late 1950s, a radical strain of Kurdish nationalism saw traditional Kurdish society as hindering modernization, which was considered a prerequisite for nationhood, but it also drew heavily on Romantic nationalism. The PKK, wishing to be a popular movement, recruited heavily from the countryside and became the leading Kurdish political power in the 1980s and '90s. Primordialization discourse presented the Kurds as descendants of the first human beings from the Euphrates-Tigris basin and thus as a force that could improve humanity from within by first rediscovering their essence and ideology that has been degraded by foreign domination (Hamelink 2016, 40). Dengbêjs were seen as fundamental purveyors of that original, albeit corrupted, Kurdishness who thus needed to be "awakened" so their essence could be recovered. This era also witnessed new rhetoric around heritage, tradition, and authenticity[8], coinciding with a global discourse of multiculturalism, which positioned dengbêj as an essential marker of Kurdishness needing to be preserved and showcased (Scalbert-Yücel 2009, 11).

Major tensions surfaced in the 1980s between PKK ideologues, Kurdish traditionalists, and the Turkish state, all having different motivations and strategies for mobilizing dengbêjî (Hamelink 2016). The dominant Leftist ideology considered the themes of tribal warfare to be feudal, primitive, regressive, and contrary to the Kurds' struggle for national unity, preferring revolutionary themes reflecting their heroic national struggle for liberation. The Left has often indicted dengbêjs as treasonous conspirators working for the state and has

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[8] Schäfers (2015) points out that if heritage is to provide continuity between past and present, its object requires some sort of fixation, and the emergence of dengbêjî as an abstract noun in the late 1990s is one result of this anchoring through time. Other outcrops of heritagization are the evolving notion of "original" and "authentic" kilams, the standardization of a canon of recognized dengbêjs, repertoires, and styles, and the conflation of dengbêj to encompass nearly all Kurdish performers of sung poetry and prose, even though the term used only to refer to one Kurdish region's practice.

banned them from Kurdish festivals and media[9]. Traditionalists have seen an alternative vision of freedom reflected in the moral narratives of the old epics, where the desire to evade the state is valued more highly than political sovereignty under one united Kurdistan. Some express distaste for the replacement of traditional lyrics with revolutionary ones while retaining the original melody and intonation, seeing such alterations as disrespectful to their cultural heritage.

The Turkish state continues to crack down on dengbêj while also seeking to satisfy the European Union and international bodies, thus it engages in multicultural discourse by openly "tolerating" Kurdish expressive culture. However, tolerance is circumscribed within the boundaries set by the "tolerant majority" (Brown 2009), which is closely attentive to perceived threats to "the territorial integrity, and thus the sovereignty, of the Turkish state" (Karaca 2011, 156). It arbitrarily sanctions any artistic or cultural practice perceived as supporting terrorism, which can amount to any crime under Article 301. Thus, while dengbêjs are regularly invited to perform on state television and at public festivals, they are legally persecuted if their songs deal with political oppression. The tradition is thereby both formally depoliticized (Schäfers 2015, 6–9) out of fear of violent retaliation by the state and framed as authentic and natural, making it immune from questioning as to the historical, economic, and political conditions of its construction and allowing for the commercial and touristic heritage displays common today[10].

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[9] However, since the late 1990s, pro-Kurdish politicians have been permitted to head municipalities and participate in government institutions, which effectively furnishes "subversion with agency, vision and coordination" (Gambetti 2009, 100), achieved largely through "symbolic politics" or "the use of representation—narratives, symbols, and spectacle—to maintain or transform a power relationship" (Watts 2006, 136). Accordingly, mobilization of Kurdish cultural and linguistic forms such as public "multicultural" festivals has seen an uptick since the early 2000s.

[10] Such actions are reminiscent of the hegemonic struggle described by Bourdieu (1977), in which traditionalists and the Turkish state (and arguably bureaucratic institutions and PKK ideologues as well) vie for habitation at the

Additionally, due to a virtual absence of state funding for explicitly Kurdish arts and culture in Turkey, Kurds often depend on Western bureaucracies for financial support and end up perpetuating "the normative language of liberal multiculturalism promoted by funding bodies like the EU, which frame Kurdish culture mainly as a matter of the exercise of minority rights" (Schäfers 2015, 9) and as a marker of ethnic group identity rather than as individual artistic or political production. Thus, dengbêjs, who are widely considered the most iconic representatives and preservers of oral literature and Kurdish culture, are being increasingly institutionalized and "auto-censored" (Scalbert-Yücel 2009, 15), which enables the tradition to develop only within prescribed institutional limits. The symbolism and imagery used in staged performances inscribes the dengbêjs in the past and reinforces the process of patrimonialization, which grants them heritage status as part of the so-called cultural mosaic of Turkey (19).

Conclusion: The future of dengbêjî

Leersen's examination of the changing role of the oral poet in the age of Romantic nationalism in Europe has strong parallels to the situation in Kurdistan. He describes how *Hasaginica*, a little-known Balkan oral text, once "discovered" in the West at an opportune moment became entangled in European elites' fetishization of vernacular literatures as "national literatures" amidst the Romantic folklore collections that were in vogue in the 18th and 19th centuries. Similarly to how one anonymous oral poem-*cum*-epic ballad became a

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boundary between doxa and opinion, where agency is expressed. For Bourdieu, doxa is the condition in which a community continually reproduces a culturally constructed world "seen as a self-evident and natural order" (166), which in this case is the traditional art of the dengbêj that is now vulnerable to manipulation by hegemonic forces. Through coercion, omission, and auto-censorship, the dominant power seeks to primordialize "the naturalization of its own arbitrariness" (184).

symbol and validation of Serbian nationalism, with the oral poet now representing the "voice of the nation," the Kurdish dengbêj has come to be seen as the embodiment of Kurdish nationalism, his kilam invoked as the definitive symbol of Kurdishness.

Building on work by Begikhani, Hamelink, and Weiss (2018) and Karakuş (2022), more attention might be paid to creative ways in which female and queer Kurds are staking out a more visible public space by mobilizing PKK discourse in their assertion of the active participation of marginalized bodies in the struggle for self-determination. Such bodies are using party discourse to improve their own position in their local environments vis-à-vis their hetero-masculine counterparts and to take a more agency-centred approach as opposed to a victim-centred one. In general, a ripe field of inquiry exists regarding changing gender roles in performances of folklore and nationalism in Kurdistan. Particularly in the case of Rojava, where women are often sensationally portrayed in Western media as "badass" fighters combatting groups like ISIS, Gökalp (2010) remains cautious about conflating gender equality on the battlefield with the lived reality of civilians in an otherwise patriarchal society. Where PKK ideology is seen as driving the emancipation of women in Kurdistan, she reminds us of the numerous critics of this dominant political movement who do not wish to align with its aims and policies.

Similar tensions enliven dengbêjî, wherein Kurds vie for representation of an authentic Kurdish culture, each reflecting imaginings about an ideal, autonomous society. Indeed, recent scholarship has illuminated alternative longings of nationalism being voiced by members of the queer dengbêjî community, longings for a queer futurity that challenge "the trenchant heteronormative and homo/nationalist present" (Karakuş 2023, 126). Through their sung performance, these dengbêjs are queering oral histories by rendering queer desire not only visible, but legible—audible—within Kurish

soundscapes, shaping public identities while expanding ideas about Kurdishness.

Finally, rather than shun technological innovations, "non-traditional" forms of folklore, or the influences of new environments on old cultures, Wilson (2006b) implores us to consider the borrowing, adaptation, and generation of all traditions in response to changing circumstances, and focus on how and why such changes fulfill common human needs. Television, social media, revolution, diasporic performances, and queer longing are now integral to dengbêjî, and it is essential to discern why this genre perseveres in spite of these transformations. Clearly, dengbêjî speaks to a visceral part of the Kurdish experience. Like countless oppressed groups, Kurds have witnessed such atrocities as ethnic cleansing, warfare, and disenfranchisement. As soft powers are now encroaching on life-worlds via multiculturalist and pluralist bureaucracies, seeking to essentialize uniqueness under the monolithic banners of nationality and ethnicity, it is incumbent upon us to identify and bring visibility to marginalized cultural expressions in ways that promote dialogue around diversity and cultural difference while enhancing our common humanity.

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Reimagining Identities: Language, Form and Resistance
in Miyah Poetry from Assam
UDITA BANERJEE

"Neither charuwa,[11] nor pamua[12]
I am an Asomiya.
Of Assam's earth and air
I am an equal claimant."– Maulana Bande Ali

Miyah Poetry stands out as one of the most popular emancipatory poetic movements in Modern India. Providing a powerful response to the humanitarian and identity crises, fuelled by the majoritarian politics in Assam, the poetic movement attempts to understand and address the pressing issues, posed by the overwhelming ethno-linguistic conflict in the state and its various serious implications in the form of forced eviction, displacement, and 'doubtful' citizenship. Rooted in the age-old conflict between the East Bengal (now Bangladesh) immigrants and the Assamese indigenes, the poetic movement presents a nuanced and persuasive reevaluation of the migrant experiences through its experimental usage of forms, unique modes of expression, and unconventional linguistic structures. And, in doing so, it challenges the preconceived notions, disrupts the established narratives, and unveils the layers of complexities lying beneath the lived reality of the *Miyahs*, the peasant migrant community, who migrated from East Bengal (now Bangladesh) to the Indian state of Assam during the British Raj in India. Similar to many Modernist and Postmodernist writers who broke free from old forms

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[11] Charua: Bengali Muslims who migrated from Bangladesh in the British period and resided in the riverine islands known as *chars* of Brahmaputra in Assam.

[12] Pamua: Bengali Muslims who migrated from Bangladesh in the British period and resided in the riverine islands known as *chars* of Brahmaputra in Assam.

and techniques and abandoned traditional rhyme schemes to write in free verse, the Miyah poets use language, form, and words to bring into light different modes of representation and resistance shown by the migrant community from time to time. Challenging the dominant grand narratives of Assam, the poets put forth the voices of the marginalised 'other' and create a sense of increased visibility and individualism for those who were hitherto unseen and unheard. Their poetry celebrates the fragmented, subaltern imaginings (for example, by experimenting with words like *char-chapori*[13], *Miyah*[14] or the use of metonymy like *lungi*[15] that were originally directed as slang to the Muslim peasant migrants in Assam).

This article will make interrogations into this domain of Miyah poetry and emphasize how, through the use of multiple languages, contemporary technology, and unusual/deviant imagery, the literary representations effectively promote a sense of intellectual activism that works toward the emancipation of the *Miyah* identity in Assam. The article would take into account select poems and study them to understand how they create a counter-narrative to the existing anti-Muslim and anti-immigrant metanarrative in the state. In essence, the article would explore why such a poetic movement is all the more essential in the current political scenario of Assam and how this movement acts as a catalyst in restoring democratic rights and in reinforcing the individual right to expression.

To put things in perspective, the article is divided into three large sections, the first section elucidates upon the history of the ethnolinguistic conflict in Assam and the rise of Miyah Poetry; the second section talks about the use of language and form in the poetic movement and the third and final section deals with the analysis of

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[13] Char-chapori: Flood-prone riverine islands of Assam.
[14] Miyah: A slur used for Bengali Muslims settled in the riverine plains of Brahmaputra, in Assam.
[15] Lungi: a cloth wrapped around the waist with its two ends knotted together. This cloth is worn in different parts of India.

select poems that aims to understand the views, observations, and experiences of the community concerned.

I

The first section of this article throws light upon the history of conflict and marginalisation in Assam. It also defines who a *Miyah* is and describes the nuances in connection with the word while also elaborating on the rise of Miyah Poetry and its importance.

The word *Miyah* is derived from the fusion of the Bengali and Urdu languages. It originally meant a gentleman. Even in West Bengal and Bangladesh, *Miyah* is associated with gentleness and courtesy. The word *Miyah* was first used in a derogatory sense in British-ruled Assam, and later on, in independent Assam, it almost became a slang/slur. But who were these *Miyahs*? A large number of landless peasants had migrated from East Bengal (now Bangladesh) during the British period to the riverine plains of the Brahmaputra in Assam, known as the chars, to cultivate these plains. Later, these peasants started settling in the chars because the place brought them vast stretches of untouched, uncultivated land and, therefore, better earning opportunities. Despite the fact that they were initially welcomed by the Assamese natives for augmenting crop production, these people were always considered different from the educated and economically well-off Bengali Hindu and Assamese communities living in the state. The hostility of the native Assamese towards the Bengali language and culture became all the more intense during the years after partition and resulted in consequent conflicts like the *Bongal-Kheda*[16] movement, the *Bhasha Andolan*,[17] and the Assam movement. Given this prolonged history of conflict, the Bengali Muslim immigrants

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[16] Bongal-Kheda: A xenophobic movement that aimed at driving out Bengalis from Assam. It was a violent movement.

[17] Bhasha Andolan: An agitation against the imposition of Assamese in the Bengali- speaking Barak Valley of Assam in 1961.

living in the *char* areas were always on the receiving end of hate and discrimination. But they could neither identify with the natives of the state nor the educated Bengalis and because they lived in the 'chars,' they were often called *charuas*, and later on, they were called *Miyahs* to mark their identities as Muslims. After partition, however, these char dwellers were often tagged as illegal immigrants from Bangladesh. Nayan Moni Kumar argues:

> In Assam, the Hindutva ideology finds its 'other' in the Bengal-origin Muslims by aligning its anti-Muslim and anti-immigrant discourses. In recent times, the community has been systematically represented as the "cultural other" from which the "greater Axamiya identity" and culture must be protected and must be kept separated, negating the socio-historical processes of accommodation and assimilation of Bengal-origin Muslims. (Kumar 2022)

In the words of Selim. M. Hussain, "*Miyah* is a matrix within which fall descendants of people who migrated from Tangail, Pabna, Mymensingh, Dhaka and other districts of present-day Bangladesh" (Daniyal 2019). However, class politics plays an important role in this entire process of discrimination and othering. Hussain further states, "It becomes significant to acknowledge that an educated Bengal-origin Assamese Muslim, who also speaks Assamese, might be able to camouflage their 'Miyahness'" (Daniyal 2019), but someone from a lower socio-economic background might not be able to do the same. For them, the disparity would exist, especially in terms of the language/dialect they use. There have been multiple representations of *Miyahness,* but this genre of poetry started as early as 1939, with the poem "Charuar Katha" by Maulana Bande Ali, and it revolutionised into a movement in 2016, with Hafiz Ahmed's poem "Write Down I am a Miyah." The use of the word *Miyah* in Miyah Poetry involves a politics of subversion where the idea is to challenge the oppressor with the same derogatory word that is used for the oppressed by taking pride in it and using it as a symbol of resistance

and defiance.

<center>**II**</center>

In connection with the above section which refers to the inter-ethnic and linguistic conflicts of Assam, as well as describes the rise of the Miyah narrative, the second section focuses on how the Miyah poetry movement intends to connect language and form with their revolution. This section delineates the significance of specific words in specific contexts, the cultural value they carry, and how the Miyah poets try to subvert and deconstruct age-old culturally laden ideas associated with their identities. This also describes the importance of digital platforms that assist in reaching out to the larger world and enquires into the use of varied languages and experimental styles used by the Miyah poets that aid in establishing, substantiating and revolutionising their narrative.

Words are more significant than they appear. Words often evoke specific contexts and also have the ability to alter perceptions about contexts or people. In her book *The Politics of Emotions* (2004), Sara Ahmed's reading of emotion emerges from a Derridean philosophy of language where words are repeated, and the effect of their repetition detaches the use of the word from the contexts in which the word originally emerged. The hidden material and historical contexts of emotions and the repetition of certain words that carry traces of them, Ahmed argues, allow signs, such as the word "Paki," to accumulate cultural meaning and value. Ahmed further states:

> The effect of their repetition is to generate bodily affects that carry the emotional value that emerges from their specific contexts. These signs stick to bodies, shaping them, generating the material effects that they name. As they are repeated, emotions accumulate value, producing affect through reiteration. And, it is the repetition of words that carry traces of context that prevents them from acquiring new meaning and value. (Ahmed 2004, 91-92)

The very word *miyah* is also laden with cultural value in the Assamese

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context, to the extent that the original meaning of the word, i.e. gentleman, is lost and is replaced by a completely opposite idea of a dangerous human who is filthy, despicable and disrespectable. In Assam, the word *Miyah* evokes the context of migration, demographic change and cultural conflict. The word *Miyah* thereby brings back memories of a history that is not very pleasant for the Assamese native, and it becomes associated with hatred and fear. So, the emotion of hate sticks to the word *Miyah* and the people representing the Miyah identity. The work of the Miyah Poets thereby remains significant on one hand and extremely difficult on the other hand because they are invested with the responsibility of not only bringing out their own stories before the world but also with the idea of changing the common perception towards the identity of a *miyah*.

An emancipatory movement like the Black Rights Movement, Miyah poetry intends to narrate the tale of grief and suffering by using language and form as tools or modes of resistance. In addition to that, it is important to understand that the Miya poets do not portray a desire for inclusion through assimilating with the majority. Their aim is to attain political plurality that would respect individual identities and value difference in cultural and ideological perspectives. In this regard, a pertinent aim of most of the poetic movement is to reconstruct and reimagine the very structures of democratic society.

Furthermore, there is an experimentation with form as there is no definite syntax, or rhyme scheme in these poems**.** The Miyah poets emphasise on matter over manner, their aim is to provide a cultural and social commentary through expanding the existing literary boundaries. The expression of innovation and individuality goes beyond the restrictions. It not only reflects the views of the self but also engages the other(s) [the indigenes] through a way of carefully crafted technique of representation and resistance, creating more memorable, deeper, and lasting impact. Their attempt is a psychic reconfiguration of the self and the other and they aim at subverting structures that perpetuate segregation rather than integration.

Some of these poems are constituted of unusual and powerful images as well as words, and some do not maintain a structure and the emphasis is entirely on the content of the poem. One of the major aims of the poems is to reach out to people and convey the stories of their suffering, dehumanization and empowerment. The Miyah Poets are also not restricted to a particular language, diction or stylistic form. The very essence of Miyah Poetry lies in the idea of their inclusivity, and therefore, there are both simple and complex poems in terms of style. While some poems might use specific objects as symbols of both marginalisation and protest that are grounded in the very cultural milieu of the place, others might take a more simplistic approach toward identification and resistance. Poets like Hussain Ahmed have emphasized the use of the *char chapori* dialect over any other language, to write these poems, primarily with the objective to write back to the oppressors. However there is a connection between identity politics and language in Assam, and the shift from Assamese to the *char-chapori* dialect in literature produced a lot of criticism and counteraction. Hiren Gohain, who is a well-known litterateur in the state, also criticised the poets for not using standard Assamese in their poems. Angshuman Choudhury and Suraj Gogoi argue that the criticism against Miyah poetry comes from a place of bias whereby the politics of majoritarianism and cultural superiority come into play. But what also becomes another major reason is the fear lurking in the psyche of the majority groups who want to keep their power intact by completely hegemonizing the linguistic and cultural spaces. Choudhury and Gogoi claim:

> So, it is the politicisation and the visibilisation of the Miyah language that the ethno- national majority in Assam fears. It is the act of giving the Miyah language prime agency in the "Assamese national discourse" that unsettles the dominant majority psyche of cultural hegemony. No wonder today's Assamese dailies are flushed with alarmist, and rather bizarre, headlines such as this: "'Miyah Poetry' is the blueprint for destruction of the Assamese language.

(Choudhury and Gogoi 2019)

Besides the local (*char chapori*) dialect, a handful of Miyah poems have been written in Assamese, Hindi, and English as well. The use of different languages for Miyah Poetry, however, has worked in their favour in some ways. The political pressure on the Miyah poets for not using the *char-chapori* dialect (which stands for their uniqueness or identity) might have been a challenge to the very idea and mode of resistance that was initially used as a weapon by them but at the same time when the poems were published in different languages, they became accessible and reached out to a large number of people, giving the movement national as well as global attention.

The Miyah poets have also extensively used technology, especially blog posts and social media platforms like Facebook, to reach out to wider audiences and make their causes known and heard. Their aim has been to establish their identities apart from what the media and dominant metanarratives of the state have tried to establish, calling them unclean/filthy, anti-social, and outsiders. These poems thereby challenge the dominant narratives that overwhelm the state and the nation. The popular blog Sunflower Collective, in their special feature on Miyah Poetry, curated and published specific poems which aided in catalysing the movement in different global quarters. Besides that, *Itamugur* is another Facebook page that is run by Miyah poets and it showcases the different issues related to the people living in the chars. It focuses on issues of migration as well as environmental concerns like floods that affect the landscape almost every day. The posts often look like individual tales of pain that also stand for the difficulties faced by the community collectively. In addition to this, there has been a collection of Miyah poems translated and published in Bengali called *Traster Shikar Bakor* edited by Abhishek Jha.

The use of digital and print media platforms has not only accelerated the process of reaching out to good numbers locally and globally but also aligns with the modern way of life where a large section of the world takes recourse to social media to tell their stories.

This also makes sure that the struggles of the Miyah community are not relegated to the background in light of other conflicts or political turbulence in the state, but the centre is consolidated around the voices of the Miyah people, making the social media page one of the most radical spaces of possibility and hope towards rebuilding and restoring Miyah identities.

III

There are a number of Miyah poems that touch upon the various issues as well as identify the struggles of the community, but what is intriguing is the diversity in the expressions, and the myriad ways in which the poets choose to write back to their oppressors. This section deals with select Miyah poems and analyses how these poems have depicted Miyah lives and their contributions to the state. In addition to that, this section, through the poems, highlights the ways in which the Miyah Poets have used various symbols that represent them and tried to divest these symbols of their negative connotations.

In a poem by Abdul Kalam Azad, called "Everyday on the Calendar is the day of Nellie," some of the most graphic images of the Nellie massacre are described. Some lines of the poem are as follows, "An unusual fear surrounds my existence/I can't sleep at nights/Blood oozes from the dates in the calendar. Blood is all I have seen in my life, still it shakes me to the core" (Azad 2019, 40). The poem is a first-person narration and describes the fear in the poet's psyche. The line, "Blood oozes from the dates of the calendar," consists of a deviant or fantastic image that has often been the tool for modernist artists like surrealists. It also suggests how fear has become an intrinsic part of the poet's identity as a Miyah, living in Assam, and there is no escape from it; these lines are characterised by the unstructured stream of verbalised thoughts.

In another poem by Abdur Rahim, translated as "Don't curse me anymore by calling me a *Miyah"* Rahim asserts, "I do not feel ashamed to be called a *Miyah* anymore!" (Rahim 2019, 30). He

reclaims his identity as a *Miyah*. In the same poem, he goes on to say that "he has not forgotten 83', 94', 2012' and 14. He thus attempts to also reclaim the history of oppression that the *Miyahs* had faced (83 is infamous for the Nellie Massacre, 94 for the Bodo-militant's attack over Muslim settlers, and 2014 for similar ethnic violence). The *Miyah* refuses to shut his mouth anymore. He refuses to be defined by the narratives of other people. He raises his voice against the violence and precarity that surrounds his existence in the state. The use of dates or numbers is important because these dates speak of the alternative history or narrative that the Miyah poets try to establish. Numbers become important pointers or symbols in this case, which hold onto a history of suffering and abuse.

Selim Hussain, a poet, performer and researcher at Jamia Milia University, in his poem, "No no, I am a *Miyah*: Dedicated the o Hafiz Ahmed" describes how he hopes to see *Miyahs* breaking stereotypes by going to universities and getting gold medals and wishes that they would be called by their individual names and not categorised under a common identity. The metonymic assertion, 'My lungi in space,' is made with the hope that someday there will be a *Miyah* astronaut. This, again, is an unusual, paradoxical image, a combination of intellect and emotion, that T.S Eliot would call "the association of sensibility" and is laden with a very powerful meaning. Expressions meet purpose in this case, and by talking about the lungi in space as a *Miyah* astronaut, Hussain frees the lungi of any sense of shame or derogatoriness that might be associated with it and uses the phrase to symbolise *Miyah* progress and achievements. Hussein himself states that the *Miyah* identity is built on self-identification, but the markers of this identity are not chosen. He asserts:

> For example, the lungi as a symbol of the Miyah community has been forced on us: we haven't chosen it. But as writers I believe it is our responsibility to take the lungi and other similar symbols, divest them of their negative connotations and give them new meanings. (Das 2016)

Through such assertions, Miyah Poetry evokes Patricia Collins' concept of intellectual activism coupled with artistic activism, whereby resistance equals affirmative action to subvert negative connotations or projections, which helps in the formation of a mini-narrative against the largely overwhelming metanarrative (Collins 2013). Through these lines and the use of such metonymic symbols, Hussain asserts his subaltern identity as a force/power through poetry. In a poem called 'Our Revolution' the poet Rezwan Hussain writes:

> Patiently we will continue to build/Your mansions, roads, bridges/Patiently we will keep pulling your tired, fat/Sweaty bodies in cycle rickshaws/We will polish your marble floors/Until they sparkle/Beat your dirty clothes/Until they are white/We will plump you up with fresh fruits and vegetables/And when you come visiting us in Tapajuli char/We will offer you not just milk/But also fresh cream. (Hossain 2017, 17)

These lines highlight the contribution of the *Miyahs* to the Assamese society. This is almost an appeal on their part to the readers that they be recognised by these efforts and not merely reduced to their religious identities. It also differentiates/particularizes them in a positive sense by elucidating their contributions to the history of the state. In the same poem, Rejwan Hussain further says, "Our revolution will not need guns/ it will not need dynamites/ It won't be televised/ It won't be published / No rallies will be walked/ But our revolution would burn you to ashes" (Hossain 2017, 17). In these extremely powerful lines that immediately evoke very strong emotions, Hussain talks about the revolution that this poetry movement would bring about. The revolution of Miyah poetry would burn away existing systems of oppression and discrimination that the *Miyahs* have been subjected to. It would, through a poetic rebellion, make known to the world that the Miyah identity has the power to fight back for their rights, and it would. The Miyah poets have often justified their

violence of language as used in this poem by stating that it is a counter through language to challenge the state's unethical mechanisms of violence through cruelty, oppression and genocide. The violent language, therefore, is essential to balance the violent injustice.

Women have had very less representation in Miyah Poetry. It might be attributed to a lot of reasons, including a lack of education among women in the Miyah community. Despite the limited representation, some women have come out and talked about their anxieties through poetry. It can be noticed, however, that these poems are not specific to female experiences but talk about the identity rights of the Miyah poets in general. In one such poem, "My Mother", by Rehana Sultana, the poet describes, "I was dropped on your lap my mother/Just as my father, grandfather, great-grandfather/And yet you detest me, my mother/For who I am/Yes, I was dropped on your lap as a cursed Miyah, my mother" (Sultana 2017, 16). In these lines, she asserts that in such circumstances of state-sanctioned oppression and violence, her identity itself becomes an act of violence; it is a curse; it is that which dehumanizes, subsequently justifying a denial of basic rights.

The Miyah Poems represent a variety of emotions and sensibilities. With the use of different languages, unconventional forms and techniques, and the use of multiple perspectives, the Miyah Poets continue fighting for a new, emancipated identity. Their attempt is to subvert the existing power structures so as to highlight their own histories and throw light upon their own contributions to the growth and development of the Assamese society. They write from an insider's perspective and are often perceived as outsiders. The fight of the Miyah Poets has had its own repercussions, but it is important to acknowledge the existence as well as the power of these subaltern voices that often have the capability to change the course of history. Like many other poetic movements, Miyah poetry has also faced criticism in certain quarters. The underrepresentation of women of the Miyah Community in their poetry and their experiences as doubly

subjugated individuals in a patriarchal social set-up needs more
attention and representation. The ethics of the use of violence in
language also becomes a contested issue in some of the poems.
Although Miyah poetry has faced its own share of criticism, it cannot
be denied that it is one of the most sustained poetic rebellion
movements in South Asia that has taken place in recent years.

Conclusion

A pertinent question that arises in connection with the Miyah
movement is why only poetry is chosen as the medium of resistance.
It can be argued that poetry is often a viable as well as radical way of
protest and it has significantly remained so in many years. Poems are
generally shorter than other literary forms, sometimes easier to read,
and often easily accessible to people through digital platforms like
Facebook, Instagram, and Personal Blogs. In addition to that, poetry
also evokes stronger emotions through its language and use of
rhetorical devices. But it becomes equally important to state that the
Miyah Movement is not anymore limited to written-word poetry and
has broadened its scope by the inclusion of oral and audio-visual
forms. In their article, Abdul Kalam Azad, Divya Nadkami and
Bunders-Aelen argue:

> Contributors of the Movement have made films, posters
> and postcards, and sometimes staged performances and
> oral recitals. The Movement has demonstrated the ways in
> which art can enable people to reflect critically on their
> communities and articulate the complex everyday
> socio-political realities that affect their lives. (Azad
> Nadkarni Bunders Aelen 2022, 4)

Through these various mediums, the Miyah poetry movement
creates solidarity between different oppressed and exploited groups.
The poems engage with emotional experiences of marginalisation,
othering, and violence, which are complex yet lucid and identifiable
in their expressions and ideas. The Miyah Movement is invested in

reconstructing a form of citizenship that respects and understands difference and does not discriminate on the basis of ethnic and religious affiliations. Since this movement is deeply invested in the context of the citizenship contestation issues, and in the light of the recent NRC and the CAA movements, the significance of Miyah Poetry in contemporary times is paramount. The Miyah poets position themselves at the junction of multiple social identities that are constructed through complex categorisation, locating them in hybrid positions of marginalisation, subjugation as well as empowerment. In connection with the same, the poet, Selim. M. Hussein talks about the identity of the Miyah poets. He asserts that:

> Our ancestors moved to Assam with little else but just clothes on their back. Even before the borders were drawn, we began losing touch with Bengal. We are not a diasporic community with a nostalgic attachment to our place of origin. We have no standing monuments, no venerable ancestors, nothing. This might sound bleak but I consider it quite liberating because minus the baggage of chauvinism and jingoism, we have the freedom to be as hybrid as we want to. (Das 2016)

It is important to read and understand such narratives that open avenues before us that were hitherto unknown and unexplored. Since the world is ruled by narratives, it has to be acknowledged that Miyah Poetry has the ability to bring about change in perspectives and ideologies. It has the ability to humanise the problem through its call for empathy. It opens up the space to think, locate, read and evaluate texts that represent the truth in its entirety and reconfigure history using different but equally important interpretations of plurality and multiplicity. Like other modernist writings, Miyah Poetry offers a way to cope with crisis by orienting the sense of loss into a productive and fruitful means of resistance.

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Stone Island
BRANDON M. WARD

Courageous souls they called them
That landed on these shores
But nothing now remains
No houses, boats, nor oars

They must have rowed so fiercely
To break the steady waves
That tried their best to keep
Those fishermen at bay

No, not a soul is here now
But their ghosts, I'm sure, can hear
The whistling winds in the treetops
Above the ocean's blare

Like sentinels the trees stand tall,
Facing the mighty cold
Sheltering all around them
Like those men, forever bold

The river still runs through there
And the meadow echoes cries
Of sadness and of laughter
Of women and children by their side

How could they ever know
The struggles they would face
For they were only born here
With no recollection of this place

No master plan to go off
Just following elders in stride
With a constant rise each morning
In keeping with the tide

Was it courage or necessity
That tossed them on this coast
If we asked them could they tell us
What it was that drove them most?

Maybe faith and hope fueled them
No doubt an abundance they would need
To suffer through cold winters
With hungry mouths to feed

What sent them from their homeland
To make them end up here?
In this cold corner of the Atlantic,
An unforgiving sea of fear

It certainly makes one wonder
In these soft and easy times
When we need not rise at daylight
To commence the daily grind

Of scythe, of hook, of hammer
Of harvest, of hunt and gather
To carve a life so simple
From that island made of stone
That place in Caplin Bay
Now sadly stands alone.

Stone Island a été écrit à partir de la tristesse évoquée par une journée d'hiver fraîche, terne et venteuse en décembre. Le poème dépeint la tristesse pour quelque chose du passé qui a été perdu et presque oublié. L'ancien village de pêcheurs de Stone Island, à l'embouchure de Calvert (anciennement Caplin Bay), à Terre-Neuve, a disparu au fil du temps – un thème commun aux petits ports de Terre-Neuve. La mémoire des gens qui ont travaillé si dur pour gagner leur vie se perd également, car les fondations des maisons et des champs sont envahies par les épicéas et les sapins. Stone Island tente de capturer un sentiment de nostalgie pour un groupe de personnes qui ont quitté leurs maisons en Irlande au XVIIIe et au début du XIXe siècle pour s'établir sur la côte accidentée et souvent impitoyable de Terre-Neuve. Il tente également de préserver certains aspects de ce qui a été perdu à cause des écrits, de mon point de vue limité. Stone Island est une ode à la lutte de l'homme avec la nature pour survivre grâce à son courage et à sa persévérance.

Ma poésie tente de donner vie aux pensées et aux émotions que je ressens, principalement en immersion dans la nature. Ces poèmes explorent les thèmes de l'interconnexion des humains et du monde naturel. Je projette parfois une certaine qualité humaine sur des objets inanimés en fonction de ma réponse émotionnelle à ceux-ci. Certaines de mes œuvres utilisent des aspects de la nature comme métaphore de la condition humaine.

J'aime utiliser des mots simples et des rimes. Mon point de vue est qu'il y a de la beauté dans la simplicité. Admirer la simplicité me permet de réfléchir profondément et d'écrire librement sur ce que

certains considéreraient comme les aspects quotidiens ou banals de la vie. J'apprécie de partager ce qui me vient sur le moment, dans un court laps de temps, avec un minimum de changements. C'est ma tentative de capturer ce qui est éphémère.

Stone Island was written from sadness evoked by a cool, dull and windy winter day in December. The poem portrays sadness for something of the past that has been lost and near forgotten. The former fishing settlement of Stone Island at the mouth of Calvert (formally Caplin Bay), Newfoundland, has been lost to time – a common theme of Newfoundland outports. The memory of the people who worked so hard to make a living there is being lost as well, as the foundations of houses and fields are overgrown with spruce and fir. *Stone Island* attempts to capture a sense of nostalgia for a group of people who left their homes in Ireland in the 18th and early 19th centuries to settle the rugged and often unforgiving coast of Newfoundland. It also attempts to preserve some aspect of what has been lost through written word, from my own limited perspective. *Stone Island* is an ode to human's struggle with nature to survive through grit and perseverance.

My poetry attempts to bring to life the thoughts and emotions I experience, mostly while immersed in nature. These poems explore themes of the interconnectedness of humans and the natural world. I sometimes project a certain human quality on inanimate objects based on my emotional response to them. Some of my work uses aspects of nature as a metaphor for the human condition.

I like to use simple words and rhyming schemes. My perspective is that there is beauty in simplicity. Admiring simplicity allows me to think deeply and write freely about what some would consider the everyday or mundane aspects of life. I value sharing what comes to me in the moment, in a short period of time, with minimal changes. This is my attempt to capture what is fleeting.

Les Musées de Montréal:
La non-appropriation par la communauté haïtienne[18]
FRITZ-GERALD LOUIS

Parmi les nombreuses recherches qui se rapportent aux thématiques muséologiques, celles concernant l'évaluation muséale, et particulièrement la question des publics qui se rendent aux musées, sont au cœur du débat depuis plus d'une vingtaine d'années. À elle seule, la problématique de fréquentation intéresse plusieurs chercheurs, de pays différents. C'est le cas du professeur Bernard Schiele, dont je suis étudiant, selon qui un musée ne survit pas sans visiteurs et une exposition n'existe que si elle est visitée.

En poussant plus loin l'analyse en lien avec les propos de Schiele, il est pertinent de se demander : qui fréquentent les musées ? et qui ne les fréquentent pas? Une réponse simple serait de mettre de l'avant l'hypothèse que la non-fréquentation est le fait de personnes qui, selon le sociologue Pierre Bourdieu, n'ont pas le bagage culturel « savant » nécessaire parce qu'elles n'ont pas cultivé l'amour de l'art qu'il véhiculait (Bourdieu, 2011).

En ce qui me concerne, la réalisation du présent essai repose sur deux motivations. La première relève de mon intérêt tant à l'égard des institutions muséales qu'à celui de leurs publics, deux thématiques qui, comme déjà mentionné, se situent aujourd'hui au centre de la pratique et de la recherche muséologique (Eidelman, 2013). La seconde correspond à une préoccupation sociale, personnelle, soit l'accès aux pratiques muséales que la communauté haïtienne

montréalaise entretient avec les musées de cette ville, depuis plus de cinq décennies.

La rénovation ou la création de nombreux musées, l'essor des expositions culturelles et scientifiques et l'évolution des institutions muséales ont, ensemble, fait du Canada, et du Québec en particulier, l'un des lieux les plus culturels en Amérique francophone. Comment se fait-il que certains groupes de migrants, dont les Haïtiens, ne semblent pas bénéficier des référents culturels de la société d'accueil et particulièrement de ceux que recèlent les musées ? Pourquoi en est-il ainsi ?

Ces motivations tant sociales qu'académique ont aussi pour moi un fondement empirique. En ce sens, lors de mes fréquentations des différents musées montréalais, j'ai été à même de constater que certains groupes ou communautés ne fréquentent pas régulièrement les musées et que les Haïtiens montréalais sont de ceux-là.

À l'échelle planétaire, la transmission du savoir se fait de différentes manières, dont par voie orale, par l'écrit ou par la création artistique. L'histoire nous enseigne que l'homme a d'abord éprouvé le besoin de préserver le savoir, puis ensuite de le transmettre. De nos jours, le musée est l'une des institutions qui répond favorablement à cette logique. C'est un lieu de conservation d'objets anciens, culturels ou artistiques, d'un peuple ou d'un pays, en vue de la préservation, de la diffusion et de la transmission des connaissances qu'il véhicule. Le Conseil international des musées (ICOM) le définit comme une « institution permanente sans but lucratif, au service de la société et de son développement ouvert au public, et qui acquiert, conserve, étudie, expose et transmet le patrimoine matériel et immatériel de l'humanité et de son environnement à des fins d'études, d'éducation et de délectation[19] ».

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[19]

https://icom.museum/fr/news/the-challenge-of-revising-the-museum-definition/

Il s'avère que les musées sont devenus une institution publique incontournable dans les sociétés. Ils ont été créés dans le but de conserver la mémoire des peuples sous forme d'objets, d'artéfacts, ou de spécimens et, par la suite, de la transmettre au public. Bien que concernant les Haïtiens montréalais, la présente étude se concentre sur ceux habitant l'arrondissement Villeray- Saint-Michel-Parc-Extension. Ma démarche, à l'allure d'enquête, concerne deux vagues migratoires haïtiennes (la deuxième vague et la troisième vague) qui présentent des similitudes mais aussi des différences. L'étude comparée de chacune d'elles devrait permettre de faire ressortir la continuité de leurs comportements et attitudes face aux musées. De plus, à l'aide d'une expérience participative, l'étude vise aussi à analyser et à mettre en lumière les raisons qui font que la communauté haïtienne ne fréquente pas régulièrement les musées.

À cet effet, dans un premier temps, j'effectuerai, un survol historique de l'immigration haïtienne à Montréal. Par la suite, je comparerai deux des trois vagues d'immigrations des cinquante dernières années mentionnées ci-haut. Sur le plan des similitudes, l'une des hypothèses de la recherche est qu'en matière de migration, les migrants se déplacent en vagues et que chacune repose sur des causes et des motifs qui lui sont propres, en ayant en plus des bagages culturels spécifiques. Au niveau des différences, l'hypothèse est que les migrants ne partagent pas les mêmes référents culturels. Certains d'entre eux adoptent un code culturel sous le couvert de l'acculturation, alors que d'autres, non. Enfin, en troisième partie, je questionnerai les acteurs sociaux sur leur fréquentation ou non des musées.

Survol historique de la communauté haïtienne à Montréal

La communauté haïtienne vivant à Montréal ne date pas d'aujourd'hui. Elle s'est constituée au cours de trois décennies, de 1960 à 1990. Pour dire les choses plus simplement, l'histoire de l'immigration haïtienne au Canada, et plus précisément au Québec,

remonte à la fin des années cinquante, début des années soixante. Les premiers immigrants, ceux encore appelés de la « première vague », sont des intellectuels et des professionnels qualifiés. Aux yeux de l'historien Alain Saint-Victor, ils sont peu nombreux et se considèrent comme des exilés politiques qui fuient la dictature de François Duvalier[20] (1907-1971). Ils se voient comme des migrants de passage (Saint-Victor, 2018). Leur lutte est essentiellement politique et idéologique, et ils visent principalement le renversement du régime de Duvalier. L'on peut comprendre alors que l'idée de développer une communauté organisée qui puisse se positionner et défendre ses intérêts sociaux, culturels et économiques n'est pas à leur agenda.

La « deuxième vague », est celle d'ouvriers, de travailleurs « non qualifiés » issus pour la plupart de la campagne et de la paysannerie. Ces gens sont venus en grand nombre à Montréal au début des années soixante-dix, pour travailler principalement dans l'industrie textile. Toujours selon Saint-Victor, tant la réalité culturelle que la situation socio-économique de cette « deuxième vague » d'immigrés haïtiens comportaient d'importantes différences, en comparaison des migrants de la « première vague ». Ces différences étaient très criantes considérant que les nouveaux arrivants faisaient face au chômage, à la discrimination et à l'exclusion. Cette deuxième vague fut massive et occasionnée par deux facteurs, soit : le besoin de main d'œuvre au Québec et l'hostilité des Duvalier à toutes formes de libertés.

Survint par la suite, vers les années quatre-vingt, une « troisième vague » d'immigration haïtienne au Québec : celle d'immigrants parrainés, c'est-à-dire de toute personne qui en raison d'un lien, parental ou non, avec un citoyen canadien ou un résident permanent, devient par la suite elle-même résident permanent. Comme les deux précédentes, cette troisième vague aura des répercussions

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[20] Président de la République d'Haïti de 1957à 1964 et devenu président à vie de 1964 à sa mort. Il a dirigé le pays avec une main de fer.

sociologiques dans la constitution et dans l'évolution de la communauté haïtienne montréalaise.

Profil sociodémographique

Dans son écrit : *L'immigration Haïtienne au Québec* Jadotte Herard mentionne que l'arrondissement Villeray–Saint-Michel–Parc-Extension était le lieu d'accueil de tous les immigrants haïtiens. Le quartier Saint-Michel était considéré comme le port d'attache de tous les nouveaux arrivés et arrivants, car le coût du logement y était le moins élevé. Cependant, les conditions de vie des deuxième et troisième vagues d'immigrants diffèrent sur certains points essentiels de celles de la première. La « première vague » appartient à la classe moyenne aisée alors que la « deuxième », provient majoritairement de la classe ouvrière, constituée principalement de semi-prolétaires c'est-à-dire soit de personnes œuvrant dans des secteurs économiques informels, soit de personnes issues de la paysannerie. Pour ce qui est de la « troisième vague » elle héritera de cet ancrage territorial, « de ce point d'attache originel » forgé par les générations antérieures, d'où leur installation dans ce même arrondissement montréalais. Les sociologues de l'immigration Andrea Rea et Maryse Tripier voient en cet acte une sorte de parcours habituel de tout migrant (Rea, Tripier, 2003).

Aujourd'hui, à même ses études, l'Institut de la Statistique du Québec relève que 19,9% des personnes d'origine haïtienne se concentrent dans l'arrondissement de Villeray–Saint-Michel–Parc-Extension, 19,4% dans celui de Montréal-Nord et enfin 16,0 % à Rivière-des-Prairies–Pointe-aux-Trembles. Les 44,7 % sont éparpillés dans tout le Québec ainsi qu'Ontario.

L'imagerie haïtienne

Au cours des années 1965-1970, avec l'arrivée massive d'immigrants haïtiens, les besoin et désir de se regrouper se firent sentir. Cette émotion qui, à mon sens, apparaît universelle, est

analysée par trois chercheurs dans un ouvrage collectif dirigé par Serge Perrot. Pour Florence Bonnard, Aleksandra Habrat et Nicolas Jarry, l'appartenance à un groupe est un levier potentiellement puissant de mobilisation et de cohésion sociale (Bonnard, Habrat & Jarry; 2014). D'où la naissance des premières formes d'organisations communautaires haïtiennes montréalaises.

Le Bureau de la communauté chrétienne des Haïtiens de Montréal, créé en 1972, et La Maison d'Haïti, qui voit le jour en 1973, en furent les prémices. Ces organisations avaient et continuent d'avoir pour objectif de doter les nouveaux arrivés et arrivants d'outils de représentation, de défense et de maintien de liens avec Haïti et même de les doter d'« épistémè » au sens de Foucault (Foucault, 1966), dans le but pérenniser la culture haïtienne dans le territoire d'adoption. Dans ce cas de figure, la culture fait référence au style de vie (Fleury, 2011). C'est au cours de cette période que se forge la communauté haïtienne à proprement parler, en jetant les bases de son enracinement au Québec.

Les musées de Montréal et la communauté haïtienne

Il existe une pluralité de musées au Québec et particulièrement à Montréal. Dans *l'État des lieux du patrimoine des institutions muséales et des archives,* l'Institut de la Statistique du Québec en dénombre plus d'une vingtaine. Pour Yves Bergeron, les musées sont des lieux de conservation de la mémoire nationale. Ils habitent des objets iconographiques porteurs d'un processus de reconnaissance (Bergeron, 2010). Par ailleurs aux yeux de Bernard Schiele, ils sont un lieu de médiation et de négociation d'informations destinées au public (Schiele, 1997). En constante évolution, les musées se transforment en fonction des contextes sociaux, des politiques nationales et des nouvelles esthétiques qui apparaissent dans le milieu où ils sont implantés. Dans cette logique, bien qu'ils soient appelés à subir des transformations, à les refléter, à transmettre de nouvelles valeurs et à défendre les cultures dont ils sont porteurs, il semble

qu'ils n'atteignent pas l'attention de la communauté haïtienne, ce qui suscite des questions : quels sont les attraits des musées montréalais ? Quelle histoire y est exposée et communiquée ? Est-ce un problème de médiation qui fait que la communauté haïtienne montréalaise ne s'y retrouve pas ? Autant de questions qui peuvent nous mener vers des pistes de solutions, autant d'interrogations qui font appel à l'entendement tel que le définissait le philosophe allemand Emmanuel Kant (Kant, 1991).

Les deuxième et troisième vague de migrants haïtiens face à l'intégration

La deuxième vague d'immigrants haïtiens dans la société québécoise a eu du mal à s'adapter dans cette dite société en raison d'un nouveau mode de vie, d'une culture différente à apprivoiser. C'est dans ce sens que Paul Dejan, dans son livre *Les Haïtiens au Québec,* parle de choc culturel (Dejean, 1978), alors que les psychologues Margalit Cohen-Emerique et Ariella Rothber parlent de heurt avec la culture de l'autre. En ce sens, les Haïtiens venant pour la grande majorité de la paysannerie faisaient maintenant face à une société qui prend en charge les dispositifs patrimoniaux et qui accorde de l'importance tant à la matérialité qu'à l'immatérialité, c'est-à-dire aux savoirs, aux savoir-faire, aux traditions, aux sites, aux objets, aux artéfacts et aux monuments.

Étant confrontés à de multiples problèmes, dont l'éducation, comment les nouveaux arrivés ont-ils pénétrer la sphère muséale qui, d'elle-même, demande un certain « entendement » pour l'apprivoiser ? À titre de rappel j'ai déjà indiqué que les musées sont un centre de diffusion du savoir. Ils peuvent même être considérés comme l'instance de médiation entre le savoir et le public. Cependant, la « Maison d'Haïti », dans son objectif de nouer des liens, propose la mise en place d'un service de loisir et de formation pour permettre aux immigrés haïtiens de cette deuxième vague, majoritairement composée de travailleurs, de se rencontrer et de se cohésionner. C'est

l'occasion pour eux de partager leurs expériences, d'exprimer leurs doléances et de se replonger dans leur culture d'origine à travers la musique et la danse.

La troisième vague de l'immigration, comme déjà mentionné, débute vers les années quatre-vingt. Les migrants arrivent soit par l'intermédiaire de leurs parents qui étaient déjà sur place, soit par parrainage depuis leur pays d'origine. La venue de ces nouveaux immigrants a suscité une autre perception du vécu des Haïtiens, particulièrement à Montréal. Leur éducation classique, dont l'essentiel du contenu est inspirée de celui de la France et du Canada, diffère de celle des arrivants de la deuxième vague. Certains se perçoivent comme étant chanceux. Chanceux d'avoir laissé Haïti pour entrer dans une nouvelle société avec des privilèges et des connaissances que leurs parents n'ont pas eus. Les problèmes liés à la discrimination, à l'exclusion, au racisme, au chômage, à l'identité, au décrochage scolaire, aux difficultés de l'intégration ne sont plus d'actualité. C'est « révolu tout ça » m'informe Jean-Pierre, courtier en immobilier installé à Montréal depuis quatorze ans.

D'autres en revanche, des professionnels, des étudiants, des personnes éclairées, selon les mots de l'informatrice Guylaine installée, elle aussi, à Montréal depuis onze ans, voient les migrants de la troisième vague comme étant plus aptes et ouverts à l'intégration de la société d'accueil. Il ne s'agit plus de se positionner uniquement en tant qu'employé du textile, mais de bénéficier de tous les avantages sociaux et culturels, qu'offre le pays d'accueil. Dans cette optique, Guylaine, âgée de trente-six ans, me raconte que l'art fait partie de sa vie. Déjà, en Haïti, « je m'adonnais aux manifestations culturelles qu'organisait l'École Nationale des Arts (ENARTS[21]). Ce n'est pas à Montréal que je vais changer de pratique ».

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[21] Fondée en juillet 1983, l'École nationale des arts est un établissement supérieur qui a pour vocation d'enseigner la musique, les arts plastiques, le théâtre, la danse, l'histoire de l'art et l'administration culturelle à la population haïtienne.

En conclusion, les deuxième et troisième vagues de l'immigration haïtienne qui se sont établies à Montréal comportent une différence essentielle. Il s'agit d'immigrés qui viennent de classes sociales différentes et qui ont intégré différemment la société d'accueil. La deuxième vague a répondu aux besoins du secteur mou de l'économie et a connu une intégration marquée par le chômage, le racisme et l'exclusion. En ce qui concerne les migrants de la troisième vague, leur intégration sociale et culturelle fut relativement aisée en raison du soutien qu'ont pu leur apporter certains parents ou amis qui y résidaient déjà.

Les pratiques culturelles haïtiennes à Montréal.

La migration n'est pas un phénomène contemporain. Elle existe depuis la nuit des temps, comme le souligne Yves Pélicier (Pélicier, 1966). Elle est utilisée par l'homme comme une stratégie de survie, ou comme un phénomène de changement pour répéter l'expression d'Hervé Beauchesne. En raison des conditions de déplacement et des ruptures qu'elle occasionne, le migrant amène avec lui ses propres mœurs et coutumes, qui constitueront le patrimoine immatériel qui viendra se greffer à la culture de la société d'adoption. Se référer aux Haïtiens, chercher à les connaître, à les définir, à les analyser nous renvoient à la mosaïque de leurs pratiques culturelles, à leurs traditions. Comme le faisait remarquer Gérard Lenclud, la tradition serait un « fait de permanence du passé dans le présent, une survivance à l'œuvre, le legs encore vivant d'une époque pourtant globalement révolue. Elle est une représentation culturelle et une continuité qui est due à une sorte de persévérance de ce qui est et de ce qui se fait » (Lenclud, 1987).

Les immigrants de la deuxième vague, qui occupaient des emplois sous-payés et précaires, qui travaillaient dans des conditions difficiles, se sentaient à la marge d'une société dont ils ne partageaient ni la culture ni les valeurs. « Visiter un musée n'était pas la nécessité sociale » s'exclame Charles, en raison et du coût et de l'offre muséale.

Par contre, « sortir entre hommes, organiser une soirée haïtienne, partager une bière, écouter de la musique et aller danser constituait la priorité, la meilleure pratique culturelle ». Dans cet état d'esprit, les pratiques culturelles, peu importe leurs formes, ont de grandes répercussions sur l'individu, sur la communauté et sur la société dans son ensemble.

Les enjeux méthodologiques de la non-fréquentation muséale

L'enquête associée à cette étude est à la fois qualitative et comparée. Elle s'est effectuée sur le terrain même des migrants, au moyen d'entretiens avec six personnes provenant de la deuxième vague d'immigration et toutes âgées, sauf une, de soixante-deux à soixante-dix ans, de même qu'avec sept personnes de la troisième vague, âgées entre vingt-huit et quarante-quatre ans. Elle a permis d'esquisser les éléments pour lesquels la majorité des Haïtiens vivant à Montréal fréquente peu ou pas les musées. Les entretiens ont été réalisés chez les personnes interviewées et ont duré plus d'une trentaine de minutes chacun. L'échantillon des personnes rencontrées dans cette étude était constitué de huit hommes et de cinq femmes et, pour fins d'anonymat, des noms d'emprunt ont été utilisés.

Ici, le contexte est important pour comprendre ce phénomène. Toutefois, il faut d'abord dire que fréquenter un musée est d'ordre éducationnel, communicationnel et relève du fait de s'y sentir comme y étant chez-soi. C'est un lieu d'appropriation de sens et de valeurs (Poulot : 2005). Aussi, à la question « pourquoi vous ne visitez pas les musées ? », les informateurs ont évoqué leurs raisons, toutes différentes et toutes aussi valables les unes qu'autres. Charles, par exemple, disposant d'un revenu peu élevé, trouve que « c'est ennuyeux! Pour cela, je ne visite pas les musées ». Pour ce répondant de soixante-six ans, issu du milieu de la paysannerie haïtienne, fréquenter un musée est d'ordre culturel et dépourvu de délectation. « Ma délectation, poursuit-il était d'aller courir les clubs de Montréal et de vider plusieurs bouteilles de bières ». On constate alors qu'il

fréquente peu souvent les lieux muséaux et a une affinité, par contre, pour la culture de la nuit.

Antoine né en 1964 à Port-au-Prince, évoque qu'il a l'amour pour l'art. Issu d'une famille relativement aisée et grandi dans la capitale haïtienne, il fréquenta les lieux culturels en Haïti dont le Centre d'art, mentionné plus haut. Cette fréquentation dénote très tôt chez lui son goût pour l'art; ainsi, il se qualifie comme un esthète en raison de son admiration pour le beau et de la multitude d'objets d'art qu'il a chez lui. Cependant, sa conjointe Marlie, âgée de cinquante ans et également originaire de Port-au-Prince, préfère qu'il l'amène au théâtre et au concert, plutôt qu'au musée. Pour elle, nous dit-il, « c'est plus divertissant que d'aller au musée ». De son côté Catherine, quarante et un ans, née à Montréal et fille de migrants de la deuxième vague, raconte qu'elle aimerait bien aller visiter des expositions, mais que les contraintes quotidiennes l'en empêchent. Toutefois, nous dit-elle, elle accorde une grande valeur affective aux objets d'art, ce dont témoignent les tableaux accrochés aux murs de son salon. Cependant, étant une mère célibataire de deux enfants, « je ne possède pas le temps libre pour aller au musée ». Quant à Jackson, né à Jérémie en 1988, mécanicien de formation, raconte que pour lui « aller au musée est l'affaire des gens riches ». La fréquentation muséale est, à ses yeux, réservée à une élite intellectuelle et/ou économique. Enfin Marianne, canadienne d'origine haïtienne, âgée de trente-deux ans, exprime le fait que les musées de Montréal n'entrent pas en communication avec la communauté haïtienne. Leurs expositions temporaires et/ou permanentes s'adressent à une catégorie sociale ciblée. « Est-ce que les musées montréalais s'intéressaient ou s'intéressent à nous, à notre histoire, à notre migration, à notre mémoire » se questionne cette dernière informatrice ?

Au-delà des leurs motifs et explications, ces migrants haïtiens de la deuxième vague, attirent mon attention sur un fait particulier, à savoir que leurs enfants et petits-enfants étaient et sont des publics muséaux captifs, compte tenu que leur parcours scolaire comprenait

des visites au musée, notamment au Musée des Beaux-arts de Montréal, tout en précisant que leur pratique muséale n'a pas duré longtemps, par manque d'intérêt.

L'enquête sur les migrants de la troisième vague a démontré que la représentation de la fréquentation muséale est perçue comme un instrument cognitif et laudatif. En effet, Maxo, cariste pour une entreprise à Montréal et se considérant comme une personne dépourvue d'esprit critique, confie : « je ne comprends rien à l'art, notamment pour ce qui est des œuvres surréalistes ». Pour lui, c'est du « n'importe quoi » exposé à la vue de tous. Il insiste en affirmant que « je trouve cela laid ». Quant à Jonathan, jeune haltérophile de vingt-neuf ans, protestant dans l'âme et éducateur sportif à une école de Montréal-Nord, précise que « trop d'homosexuels s'adonnent à l'art. Ces derniers vont au musée pour se rencontrer, pour s'afficher et pour se faire voir. Ainsi, fréquenter un endroit dédié à l'art, particulièrement un lieu muséal, équivaut à fréquenter l'homosexualité ». Pour corroborer ses idées, il avance cette maxime : « dis-moi qui tu fréquentes, je te dirai qui tu es ». Les propos de Jonathan sont un exemple original d'une forme d'homophobie haïtienne. Ils témoignent le refus de côtoyer cette identité. Plus loin, il nous a raconté avoir conscience de cette situation en observant les étudiant.es qui fréquentaient l'ENARTS. « C'est un lieu fort en population homosexuel », selon lui. C'est à ce moment-là, qu'il a perçu que ce type d'espace n'est pas pour lui. Fréquenter cet espace est contre sa foi chrétienne.

La récréologue Caroline, pour sa part, est née à Port-au-Prince en 1996 et a grandi dans le quartier de Thomassin. Enfant, elle pratiquait le ballet à l'Académie de danse Karol Ann Vilaire (KAV). Actuellement, elle est responsable en gestion et intervention en loisirs d'une commission scolaire à Montréal. De ce fait, Caroline se décrit comme une personne très sensible et être pratiquante de plusieurs activités culturelles, dont la littérature. Elle nous révèle, dans ce contexte, qu'elle se distingue des membres de sa famille puisque son

goût diffère des autres. Elle avoue qu'elle « préfère la compagnie des gens instruits, et que le musée est l'un des endroits que fréquente des gens éduqués avec une haute culture ». Elle m'informe que le Musée des Beaux-Arts de Montréal est son antre. « Je ne rate jamais une exposition, d'ailleurs, j'ai ma carte de membre » me brandit-elle. Elle assume son amour pour l'art, et les personnes de sa famille la considèrent comme une « zuzu[22] ». Elle se comporte dans la logique du professeur Patrice Bonnewitz qui affirme que « c'est par la culture que les dominants assurent leurs dominations » (Bonnewitz, 1997).

Francine, pour sa part, marche dans les traces de Caroline, toutes les deux ayant été éduquées chez les sœurs du Sacré-Cœur, en Haïti. Cependant, elle admet qu'en raison de ses études de médecine, et que faute de temps libre, elle n'est pas aussi régulière que son amie, ce que met en évidence le chercheur Gilles Pronovost (2015). Mais toutes deux partagent la même passion : l'amour pour l'art, pour les belles œuvres et pour les choses cognitives. Pierre et Jonas, âgés respectivement de trente-deux ans et de vingt-huit ans, nous indiquent qu'ils n'ont rien contre l'art, en affirmant qu'« aller au musée n'entre pas dans mes plans ». Ils avancent qu'ils n'ont pas de sensibilités artistiques ni de motivations pour visiter une exposition. Pour le préposé aux bénéficiaires et l'infirmier auxiliaire, c'est comme se rendre à l'église. Leurs préférences vont à la musique, au cinéma et aux festivals haïtiens, en premier lieu, considérant que leurs revenus sont faibles. En outre, ils n'ont pas beaucoup à se focaliser sur l'aspect cognitif. Par ailleurs, ils se sentent nettement plus satisfaits du montant alloué pour les troisième et septième art que de l'attribuer à la visite d'une exposition.

Les caractéristiques sociodémographiques des personnes interviewées diffèrent au niveau de la forme et se rencontrent sur celui du fond. Plusieurs parmi eux apparaissent comme des incultes.

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[22] Le nom Zuzu chez les Haïtiens est désigné comme une personne pointilleuse, ayant le sens de la minutie, qui aime se démarquer du commun et de l'ordinaire.

D'ailleurs, l'analyse révèle qu'ils préfèrent des activités plus dynamiques, plus chaleureuses que la visite de musées, du fait notamment de la charge de la transmission culturelle qui se véhicule au niveau des familles haïtiennes Bernard Lahire (2001). Dans son texte *Héritages sexués: incorporation des habitudes et des croyances,* l'auteur note qu'il existe trois formes de transmission culturelle qu'il nomme la socialisation silencieuse. Il la définit comme étant la socialisation par inculcation de croyances émanant du discours parental. Dans le cadre de cette étude, j'ai pu constater que cette socialisation est nettement présente dans la communauté haïtienne. C'est de ce point de vue qu'Olivier Donnat (2004) écrit : « les parents sont reconnus comme étant de véritables passeurs de culture ». Leurs progénitures suivent leurs traces en ne fréquentant que peu ou pas les musées. Ainsi et fort de ce qui précède, une question mérite d'être soulevée : peut-on parler d'intentionnalité kantienne d'intentionnalité à la façon de Kant dans ce cas de figure ?

L'alternative

Pour un grand nombre de migrants, le musée reste une institution de classes. Malgré tout le débat qui se fait autour de la question muséale à travers le monde, beaucoup d'Haïtiens ont une interprétation ennuyeuse de l'institution. Cette interprétation a des conséquences sur la question de la fréquentation du public, comme outil de légitimation sociale et identitaire du musée. Dans un tel contexte, il faut comprendre qu'une personne qui n'a pas été amenée à aimer quelque chose tôt dans sa vie, risque d'avoir plus de mal à l'apprécier plus tard. Les attitudes envisagées par les personnes interrogées et répondant à la question « pourquoi ne fréquentez-vous pas les musées ? », sont différentes. Pour les migrants de la deuxième vague, l'attitude majoritairement affichée est celle d'une affaire d'élite à la fois intellectuelle et/ou économique. Elle dénote une non-participation, un refus de l'espace muséal, parce que peu scolarisés et/ou ne disposant que d'un revenu de sous-traitant.

Chez la troisième vague, l'état d'esprit élogieux, eu égard aux musées et la dimension cognitive, qui domine. Les migrants de cette vague ciblent des actions culturelles en fonction de leurs intérêts. Fréquenter un musée, visiter régulièrement des expositions n'a probablement pas atteint tous ces migrants, en raison des différents dispositifs de création et de monstration artistiques qui ne permettant pas au spectateur une réception intime avec les choses exposées. C'est à l'encontre de cette attitude que Jacqueline Eidelman recommande d'y venir pour se distraire, par curiosité, pour découvrir et pour apprendre et que ce sont là les mobiles principaux d'une venue au musée.

Conclusion

Il est important de mentionner que ces idées portées sur la non-fréquentation des musées de Montréal par la communauté haïtienne constituent une étape dans une recherche doctorale en cours. L'enquête a mis en lumière, avec quelques variantes, selon la vague d'immigration en cause, que fréquenter les musées de Montréal rentrent peu dans la logique culturelle chez les migrants haïtiens. Il faut reconnaitre que tous les musées montréalais, qui sont à la portée de tous, sont aussi peu fréquentés par certains. Malgré leur statut d'institution mettant en valeur des savoirs, et des connaissances pour la diffusion et la transmission aux générations futures, ils sont nommément peu fréquentés par les migrants haïtiens. Ils sont plus fréquemment visités par des femmes, des touristes, des artistes, des étudiants, des personnes qui comprennent davantage les différentes valeurs que porte un musée dans une société.

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Annexe 1
Questionnaire

Dans cette étude exploratoire, je cherche à comprendre
pourquoi, en grande majorité, les Haïtiens installés à Montréal ne
fréquentent-ils pas les musées de la société d'accueil. À travers votre
expérience de vie et professionnelle, j'aimerais discuter avec vous sur
vos expériences personnelles et professionnelles ainsi que sur vos
lieux culturels de prédilection. Vous n'êtes en aucun cas obligé de
répondre à toutes les questions.

Avant d'y aller plus loin, j'aimerais en savoir un peu plus sur vous.
D'où venez-vous? Vos passions/ loisirs? Quel est votre parcours
académique et professionnel?

1. Depuis quand êtes-vous à Montréal?
2. Quelles sont vos pratiques culturelles à Montréal ?
3. Vous connaissez-vous les musées? Et en particulier, ceux de
   Montréal?
4. Les visiter-vous? Si oui, pourquoi? Si non, quelle est la
   raison?
5. Si vous avez répondu « oui » à la question 4, avec qui
   allez-vous le plus souvent au musée?
6. Si vous avez répondu « oui » à la question 4, quel est la
   dernière exposition que vous avez visitée?

7. Si vous avez répondu « non » à la question 4, d'après vous, quelles sont les personnes qui fréquentent les musées?
8. Si vous avez répondu « non » à la question 4, qu'est ce qui pourrait t'amener à visiter un musée à Montréal?
9. Comment étiez-vous en Haïti?
10. Pratiquiez-vous des activités culturelles?
11. Y-a-t-il un évènement marquant de votre vie en lien avec une pratique d'activités culturelles?

Annexe 2
Entrevue avec Caroline Bourguignon

Bonjour,
Je suis Caroline Bourguignon, je travaille pour une commission scolaire à Montréal.

1. Depuis quand êtes-vous à Montréal?

Je suis née à Port-au-Prince.

2. Quelles sont vos pratiques culturelles à Montréal ?

Musées- théâtre- Ballet- Drag show

3. Vous connaissez-vous les musées? Et en particulier, ceux de Montréal?

Oui, je connais les musées et en particulier ceux de ma ville natale. Ils sont très intéressants en termes de contenu.

4. Les visiter-vous? Si oui, pourquoi? Si non, quelle est la raison?

Oui, je visite énormément les musées de Montréal et ceux de l'extérieur de cette ville aussi. Je les fréquente pour satisfaire mon amour des arts ou de l'histoire et ou des sciences ainsi que pour ouvrir mon imagination à l'art contemporain.

5. Si vous avez répondu « oui » à la question 4, avec qui allez-vous le plus souvent au musée?

Le plus souvent, seule. Certaines fois, avec ma fille. D'autres fois, avec des amies.

6. Si vous avez répondu « oui » à la question 4, quel est la dernière exposition que vous avez visitée?

La dernière exposition que j'ai visitée remonte à deux mois, plus précisément le 14 octobre 2018. Il s'agit de « Reines d'Égypte » au Musée Pointe-à-Callière.

7. Comment étiez-vous en Haïti?

J'étais normale avec toujours un gout particulier pour les choses artistiques.

8. Pratiquiez-vous des activités culturelles?

Oui, je pratiquais le ballet à l'Académie de danse Karol Ann Vilaire (KAV).

Annexe 3
Entrevue avec Jonas Joseph

Bonjour,

Je suis Jonas Joseph. Je travaille en tant qu'infirmier auxiliaire pour un CIUSSS de Montréal.

1. Depuis quand êtes-vous à Montréal?

Comme vous le supposez, je suis né en Haïti et cela fait douze ans que mes parents m'ont fait venir ici.

2. Quelles sont vos pratiques culturelles à Montréal ?

Bal- clubs- bars- cinema- basket-ball

3. Vous connaissez-vous les musées? Et en particulier, ceux de Montréal?

Oui, j'ai entendu parler des institutions muséales et j'ai vu les bâtiments.

4. Les visiter-vous? Si oui, pourquoi? Si non, quelle est la raison?

Non, je ne visite pas les musées.

5. Si vous avez répondu « oui » à la question 4, avec qui allez-vous le plus souvent au musée?

6. Si vous avez répondu « oui » à la question 4, quel est la dernière exposition que vous avez visitée?

7. Si vous avez répondu « non » à la question 4, d'après vous, quelles sont les personnes qui fréquentent les musées?

D'après moi, ce sont les personnes de race blanche, les enfants et les vieux.

8. Si vous avez répondu « non » à la question 4, qu'est-ce qui pourrait t'amener à visiter un musée à Montréal?

Je ne sais pas. Sans doute, un évènement propre à la culture haïtienne dont tout le monde parle qui se réalise à l'intérieur d'un musée.

9. Comment étiez-vous en Haïti?

J'étais relativement bien.

10. Pratiquiez-vous des activités culturelles?

Je me rendais souvent à des soirées à la fois musicales et dansantes.

11. Y-a-t-il un évènement marquant de votre vie en lien avec une pratique d'activités culturelles?

Non, je n'en ai pas. Désolé.

Annexe 4
Liste des participant.es à l'entrevue

1- Caroline, Bourguignon
2- Jonathan, Janvier
3- Pierre, Joseph
4- Jonas, Joseph
5- Maxo, Murat
6- Francine, Hélas
7- Marianne, Desrosiers
8- Jackson, Petit-Frère
9- Antoine, Muscadin
10- Marlie, Muscadin
11- Charles, Léon
12- Jean-Pierre, Eventz
13- Guylaine, Jean

Wearing My Ancestors: At the Crossroads of Genre
REBECCA HORETH

    Formerly presented by a new mother-in-law to a young bride after
her wedding, the Transylvanian Saxon *Haube,* or embroidered velvet
costume hood or bonnet, from *Nösnerland* in northern Transylvania
appears on the surface to be folk costume, but its intersecting elements
of folk art, rite of passage, and even folk belief prove that one
category is not sufficient to understand the significance of this
example of folklore text as I use it in the present. I apply Alan
Dundes' concept of "Text, Texture, and Context" (1980) while
examining the *Haube* I own, possible methods of its construction and
the material from which it is made. I use autoethnography to extract
the messages I portray when wearing it in comparison to what is
communicated through variants on display. The *Haube* is no longer
worn by many married women in Canada, yet through examination of
the one that was passed on to me after my wedding, I study the
nuances of wearing, in comparison to displaying, this piece of folk
clothing in order to discuss how folklorists might begin to categorize
it. Finally, I consider how I transpose the personal significance of a
tradition that was not designed for contemporary use through
present-day donning and display, from its use in Transylvania to its
showcase in Canada today.
    Nösnerland is the region around Bistritz in Northern Transylvania,
currently within the borders of present-day Romania. Horst Klusch, a
Transylvanian Saxon ethnographer and collector, gives context about
the changes in *Nösner* costume traditions. He explains that costumes
in *Nösnerland* were less impacted by economic factors–such as the
Kleiderordnungen, the dress codes which designated who could and
could not wear the folk costume and impacted a costume's design and
development–than neighbouring populations in southern Transylvania

(Klusch 2002, 138).[23] As examples of dynamism in northern costume pieces, Klusch presents both the adoption of decorative techniques, like Romanian reverse stitch embroidery, which was integrated into the Transylvanian Saxon costume heritage and the clothing exchanges between Saxons and Romanians (Klusch 2002, 138). Of the Transylvanian Saxons who reside in southwestern Ontario today, many have roots in *Nösnerland*.

Although migration to Canada began prior to the 1950s, as described in *Transylvanian Saxons: Historical Highlights*, the majority of Transylvanian Saxons who participate in cultural activities and continue to wear the regional ethnic costume have ethnic German ancestors from Northern Transylvania who arrived in the 1950s (Wagner et al. 1982, 123).[24] This is significant because it begins to allude to reasons why the descendants of this particular group remain active today. German-speaking immigrants who arrived in Canada prior to World War II felt discouraged from practicing their culture in the 1930s. Gross and Intscher suggest that the right of assembly of German-speaking ethnic groups was revoked (Wagner et al. 1982, 123) but do not provide much detail as to why. Canadian historian Patrick H. Brennan provides additional context that German Canadians who had immigrated after 1922 had to register with municipal authorities in 1939, and while some organizations specifically linked with the National Socialist German Workers' Party were banned outright, other German organizations and Lutheran churches (of which the Transylvanian Saxons were members) made

[23] I use the German regional names as Klusch and Wagner, Schneider, Gross, and Intscher have done in their work on Transylvanian Saxon costume and region.
[24] Ernst Wagner was a Transylvanian regional historian in Austria and Edward R. Schneider was the President of the Alliance of Transylvanian Saxons in the United States at the time of publication. Max Gross, who was the News Representative and Martin Intscher, President and former pastor and teacher in Transylvania, both represented the Canadian Alliance, the *Landsmannschaft der Siebenbürger Sachsen in Kanada*.

the decision at the time to suspend operations (Brennan 2005, 209). Only after the arrival of compatriots in the 1950s did this small community begin to revive their traditions more purposefully, with the intent of preserving the heritage of their lost homeland (Wagner et al. 1982, 124). Such concentrated efforts resulted in customs and traditions from *Nösnerland* in Transylvania being continued in Canada today, including that of some married women wearing the *Haube*.

The *Haube* is a form of head covering worn by married Transylvanian Saxon women. Its appearance varies regionally and with the age of the women – younger women wore more decorative *Hauben* until the age of 50, for example (Klusch 2002, 139). In *Nösnerland* particularly, the *Haube* was typically made of black velvet and decorated with embroidered floral motifs, sequins, and pearls or other beadwork. It was worn as part of the Transylvanian Saxon *Festtracht* or *Sontagstracht*, ethnic costumes meant for special occasions in the church calendar or for Sunday church services. The *Tracht*, as many Transylvanian Saxons in Canada, including myself, refer to their costumes today, is a significant component of the continuity of the group's traditions in their contemporary setting. This is no coincidence. When I interviewed my Aunt Rosemary Horeth by telephone in November 2022, she was in Tillsonburg, Ontario, and I was in St. John's, Newfoundland and Labrador.[25] Her explanation of how my *Haube* came to Canada demonstrated the significance of folk costume as a connection to one's homeland, as folklorist and body art scholar Pravina Shukla describes one of the functions of folk costume (Shukla 2015, 15). Recalling stories from her grandmother, Rosemary said, "She made the costume here. The only thing she brought [from the Old Country] was this *Häuf* that she had because they were limited in bringing items over to Canada." Rosemary referred to the *Haube* as

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[25] Throughout this text, all direct quotations from Rosemary Horeth are taken from our interview in November 2022.

a "Häuf" (Zehner 1990, 91)[26] –a word she explained she learned from her grandmother who only spoke Saxon, a dialect of German from the village, Groß Schogen, where she lived in Transylvania. Her grandmother, my great-grandmother, intentionally selected the *Haube* as a meaningful memento of the area and the traditions she was leaving behind.

Figure 1. The "red" *Haube* passed from Rosemary's grandmother Rosina Wolf to her mother, to her, and finally to her niece (me, Rebecca). Photo by Reilly Ragot, November 2022. **Figure 2.** Rosemary's mother Rosina Horeth, my grandmother, wearing the *Haube* and dancing with her husband in Aylmer, Ontario. Photo from my family photo album, year unknown.

This *Haube*, brought to Canada by my great-grandmother Rosina Wolf, is made of black velvet and adorned with uniquely red and pink flowers. The colour choices are unique in comparison to other *Hauben* I have seen on display in homes and museums, which most often involve coral thread for the flowers. Both of my aunts refer to my *Haube* as "the red one," illustrating that red embroidery on the hood is

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[26] Zehner uses the term *Häuf* in brackets following the word *Haube*, as he does with all parts of the *Festtracht* while describing it in German, to designate that it is the Saxon term.

unusual, at least in Canadian settings. Seemingly symmetrical in design, upon closer inspection, one can see slight differences from side to side, indicating perfection was not the maker's main priority for this meticulous handwork. The pattern is almost, but also not quite, a mirror image of itself, with floral motifs balanced but not aligned.

During our conversation, Rosemary and I guessed that her grandmother Rosina Wolf might have received this *Haube* from her mother-in-law because that is whom we had understood was the traditional maker of *Hauben*–one's mother-in-law. Neither of us knows the origin of this *Haube* exactly and there is no written record of it. Rosemary provided another hypothesis, then, that her mother received this *Haube* directly from her own mother (as opposed to her mother-in-law) in part because, perhaps, the tradition was somewhat different in her grandmother's village than in other parts of *Nösnerland*. Like Rosemary, I was curious about what prompted Rosina to pass her *Haube* to her daughter instead of her daughter-in-law. Transylvanian Saxon Historian Hanspeter Zehner provides a clue to support Rosemary's hypothesis, explaining that red silk thread was used for the floral motifs on *Hauben* embroidered by a bride's mother while pink was used for the *Hauben* made by a mother-in-law (Zehner 1990, 91). Thus, the "red *Haube*" was likely designed by Rosina Wolf's mother. This version of passing on the *Haube* appears to be a version of the tradition that is seemingly lost today, as most Transylvanian Saxons (in Canada and around the world) that I have spoken with only understand the *Haube* to be a gift from the bride's mother-in-law. Regardless, the tradition of passing from mother or mother-in-law to new bride has continued to shift, at least within the context of Rosemary and my family's experiences in Canada.

Rosemary and I continued reflecting on how the Transylvanian tradition of *Haube* transmission between women changed over time and within our family. It is a good example of folklorist Barre Toelken's multilateral learning – the tradition does not die, it continues

despite being only through partial recollection or partial manifestation of tradition (Toelken 1996, 195). However, Rosemary's grandmother received the *Haube*, it was next passed on to Rosemary's mother after her wedding in Canada. We speculated that Rosemary's mother, also named Rosina, received her only *Haube* from her mother because her mother-in-law had passed away before she even met her husband. When the *Haube* did not fit Rosemary's sister, the first daughter to be married in the family, the *Haube* was kept at their parents' home. Rosemary never married and, after her mother passed away, as the eldest daughter, it was decided that the *Haube* would pass to her. Rosemary eventually gave me the red *Haube* after my wedding, before my husband and I attended a Transylvanian Saxon event. While I spoke with Rosemary over the phone, we talked about her decision to eventually pass on the red *Haube* to me:

> The reason why I decided to pass it on to you was I knew you were interested in the culture and traditions. Now that you were married and the *Trachtenball* was coming up, I figured this would be appropriate, and your grandmother, my mother, would have been happy that I passed it on as a tradition and to think of them, that it was theirs. Why keep it in storage when I know someone who would be honoured to wear it and understand the tradition and the importance of passing it down?

This reasoning, in addition to the choice made by Rosemary and her sister after their mother's death, reflects again how passing on costume, whether the ensemble or simply one part, connects the significance of the piece to family and heritage as well as to place (Shukla 2015, 75). Yet the connection is not necessarily something being showcased or communicated to observers – rarely have I been asked whose *Haube* I am wearing. Wearing the *Haube* today results in familiar and heritage ties being sensed by the wearer and, at times, the wearer's family members, who know more about the piece itself and its place within the family.

While connecting to one's ancestors, specifically the women who donned the *Haube* before I did, wearing the *Haube*, even in contemporary southwestern Ontario, also continues to define marital status. In February 2018 when I first wore my *Haube*, several members in the Transylvanian Saxon community would have known that I was married, yet they approached me in confusion when they saw my new accessory. Their confusion, it was quickly revealed, was about my name – that I was a Horeth, but I was wearing the *Haube* which meant I must be married and no longer a Horeth because they knew my husband's last name is not Horeth. I clarified that I had chosen not to take my husband's last name when we married and lightly joked that "I'm a modern Saxon!" Their understanding of my position and family status was further complicated by the fact that my husband and I had led a short dance with our club's children's group: suddenly members in our community also concluded that these must be our own children, all in costume and dancing. We looked like, at the same time, a traditional Transylvanian Saxon married husband and wife, and a modern couple. Rosemary, in our conversation, recalled that she had only ever seen her mother wearing the *Haube* when she was accompanied by her husband, but if her mother was on her own, she did not wear it. This demonstrates again that the past and present contexts of the *Haube* are not only that it is given to a married woman but that it designates a woman as a wife, mother, and family member.

In contrast to family ties, both ancestral and current, the *Haube* can be appreciated as art when it is being displayed rather than worn. Rosemary contemplated this, saying, "I think if it's worn, whoever wears it would think about how they received it; you would be carrying on the culture and the ties and traditions and passing it on to your family and future generations. On display, you would just look at it and appreciate what it is, but it's just a piece of art, like how you appreciate art when it's on the wall." How the *Haube*, or any Transylvanian Saxon *Tracht* for that matter, is displayed also contributes to how it is perceived as folk art or folk costume. For

example, I visited a friend, Dietmar, in Austria in June 2022. His private collection of *Hauben*, received from community members who no longer were willing or able to be caretakers
of the items, looked like costume pieces on display. They were stuffed or placed on hat holders or mannequin heads to demonstrate what the piece looks like when worn. Contrariwise, in his foyer, he had a set of framed close-up photos of another costume piece, and the emphasis was on the detailed craftsmanship of the costume. These seemed to better fit the definition of the kind of "art" Rosemary described. The perception of the viewer of a *Haube* being worn versus being displayed demonstrates the community values of cultural expression and appreciation (Toelken 1996, 223). While worn, the *Haube* is costume and demonstrates ties to ancestors, heritage, and homeland. Between events, I store the red *Haube* in a hat box, stuffed like the *Hauben* on display in Dietmar's home. However, when these folk costume headpieces are on display, the *Hauben* become folk art.

Figure 3. Dietmar's private collection of nine different *Hauben*, mostly with pink embroidery in Austria. They are stuffed to appear round, as if being worn on the head. Photo by Rebecca Horeth, June 19, 2022. **Figure 4.** One *Haube* is displayed on a mannequin head. Photo by Rebecca Horeth, June 19, 2022.

Aligning with this artistic lens, Rosemary and I considered how the red *Haube* was made. Since we are not able to determine its original maker exactly, we pondered together the choices and inspiration for the *Haube*'s design. First, Rosemary explained that

women would have had to travel to the largest city of the region, Bistritz, to purchase the velvet material. Remembering how her grandmother would use a bowl to create a pattern for a hat, Rosemary surmised that the maker also might have placed a bowl on the recipient's head to size, then sketched out the three main shapes of the *Haube*. The pattern, once created, then would have been put together with the linen lining pieces so the maker could verify the sizing. If all was well, Rosemary suggested that the pattern would be transferred to a short-pile black velvet fabric during the initial steps of the creation process.
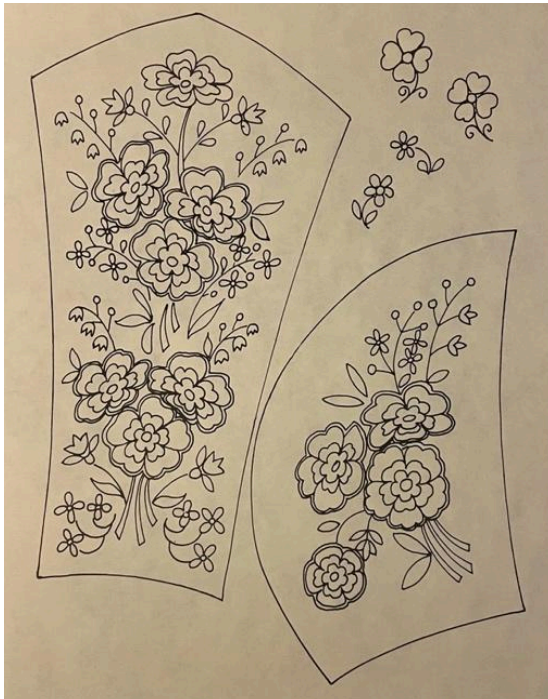

Figure 5. Embroidery pattern for the centre and side pieces to create the three main shapes of the *Haube*. (Fleisher 1982)

Although she had never seen her grandmother make a *Haube*, Rosemary recounted how her grandmother traced an embroidery

pattern onto a velvet tie (part of the men's costume), under the
assumption that the process was the same for the hood. She thought
that the maker would either have a replicated pattern or be inspired by
local flora. Upon further reflection, she also suggested that inspiration
from regional Romanian costumes may have influenced Transylvanian
Saxon design choices. Klusch confirms her suspicion, stating that
costumes were often inspired by neighbouring cultural groups in
Nösnerland (Klusch 2002, 138). The first step in the process is tracing
the pattern onto wax paper. Then, using a sharp pencil or a needle, the
maker poked holes along the lines of the pattern. Next, she made a
paste of flour and water and, laying the wax paper over the velvet, she
spread the paste across the pattern and through the holes, resulting in
small dots on the material. At this point, she could start embroidering.
English literature scholars Pristash, Schaechterle, and Wood present
an interesting observation that applies in the context of my
conversation with Rosemary about the creation of the *Haube*. They
note that women doing needlework described feeling connected to
their own mothers, grandmothers, and great-grandmothers (Pristash et
al. 2009, 13). Furthermore, Segalo, who specializes in community
psychology, visual arts and gender studies, asserts:

> As a form of narrative, embroideries lend themselves to
> multiple interpretations, moving away from the universal idea
> of understanding the world and ways in which people make
> meaning of it. History, the present and anticipated future, can
> be weaved together in this form of art, thereby showing the
> interconnectedness of existence (Segalo 2018, 299).

Embroidery in the red *Haube* is part of a process of a family tradition
that honours its past members as a means of making sense of our
present and future (Glassie 2003). This is especially true because we
refer to the unique red embroidery of this particular *Haube*. In this
sense, it is not only the costume piece itself but also the process of
making it, which demonstrates the importance within our family, at

least, of this item as a link to our ancestors who either made or wore it.

Connection to our ancestors was a recurring theme when Rosemary and I considered what it would mean to make a new *Haube*, as I have been learning some sewing and embroidery techniques over the past few years. Rosemary said, "If you do make one, I guess it doesn't mean the same thing anymore. To me, the *Häuf* that you're talking about came from the Old Country, so it has more memories attached to it. When I look at that *Häuf*, I think of my mother wearing it and, even though I never saw my grandmother wearing it, I think about her wearing it in the Old Country." Through a folkloric lens, one might correctly conclude that the *Haube* is folk costume. However, defining its genre in more than one way provides further clarity about its function and message to a *Haube*'s current owner and caretaker.

I have demonstrated how the *Haube* presents as folk costume, aligning with Shukla's definition of extraordinary attire for special occasions, with ties to heritage, ancestors, and land. Supporting this notion, Czech language and identity scholar Lida Dutkova-Cope presents a news article about the Westfest Czech folk festival as evidence to outline that costume tradition connects to one's personal history – by wearing the costume, descendants contribute to the survival of their heritage (Dutkova-Cope 2003, 660). Apparel scholars French and Reddy-Best describe their research with descendants of Czech immigrants who wear folk costumes in the United States. They call attention to their participants' connections, not only to their family history and ethnic origins but also as a symbol to commemorate their ancestors' immigration experiences (French and Reddy-Best 2021, 7-9). Material culture specialist Lizette Gradén expands on the connection to immigration. She writes that "costume provides a concrete avenue for understanding how folklore interlaces with emigrations and immigrations, and perhaps also with transitions in life" (Gradén 2014, 343-344). The red *Haube* embodies such a concrete tie with Rosemary's and my family, especially because

Rosina Wolf selected it as the sole folk costume item that she carried with her from Transylvania to Canada as an immigrant. However, other *Hauben*, like in Dietmar's collection, might be better understood and interpreted as folk art rather than costume.

Folklorists Barre Toelken and Henry Glassie study the context of items considered to be folk art, and I use their interpretation to similarly examine the *Haube* when it is on display. For example, Toelken describes that folk art "tends to reinforce past group aesthetic" (Toelken 1996, 221). The *Haube* not only emphasizes a past aesthetic, but also traditional family values of marriage. On display, these values and practices are remembered and reinforced, but a connection to an exact family or location is lacking. Collectors I have spoken with in museums and private homes will acknowledge their *Hauben* are from *Nösnerland,* but only owners of *Hauben* passed down by family members can identify a precise village or family name. Using Glassie's explanation of folk art supports the emphasis on traditional values that is demonstrated through display of folk art. Like Glassie, I recognize the symbolism of a *Haube* on display demonstrating that it "is a part of the experience of life" (Glassie 2003, 273-274), at least for Transylvanian Saxon women who will be or are married.

With this in mind, I analyzed the *Haube* as folk costume and folk art but also as rite of passage, and folk belief to learn its main purpose to me, as its owner. Presenting the crossroads of genre at which the *Haube* finds itself, folklorist Dan Ben-Amos states that "because ethnic genre is a part of a whole folkloric system, it must relate to other forms in the same network of communication" (Ben-Amos 1975, 23). These analyses also help decipher the *Haube*'s meaning within the context of Rosemary's and my family, and in comparison to other *Hauben* I have viewed on display in private homes and in museum collections. The two dominating genres tend to be either folk costume or folk art – and typically not both. It is either displayed and never worn or it is worn and stored safely away from dust and pests

between uses. The classification of folk art or folk costume i, therefore dependent on the context of the owner displaying or wearing the headpiece, as Rosemary noted. Regardless, in such instances, the *Haube* is communicating a similar message of connectivity to heritage and immigrant identity, a message which is less present in its rite of passage and folk belief contexts.

The *Haube* may align somewhat with additional genres, again dependent on the context in which it is being worn, displayed, or given. For example, I examined the *Haube* as part of the marriage rite of passage. There is separation from the bride's family followed by transition, incorporation, and acceptance into the groom's family, all illustrated through the passing on and wearing of a *Haube* after one's wedding day (van Gennep 1999, 101-103). However, today, this classification does not play a central role in interpreting the *Haube*'s function and meaning within my family or through my own personal use because it is not so closely aligned with the ceremonial aspects of contemporary Transylvanian Saxon weddings – even I did not receive my *Haube* until after over two years since my own wedding had passed.

Additionally, Rosemary shared a folk belief about this *Haube*, as a potential explanation for not being married herself. Neither of us has heard others repeat this belief about other *Hauben*. She said, remembering upsetting her grandmother when she had declared wanting to try on the *Haube*. Rosemary's grandmother admonished her, saying, "Single women shouldn't be wearing this hat, through an old superstition that if you put it on, then you'll never get married." Hand describes such secular folk beliefs and superstitions related to marriage customs as "love, courtship, and marriage," a category of folk belief (Hand 1973). Nevertheless, as Toelken notes, understanding the cross-referenced genres of a text does not reveal how relevant each type of genre is and we cannot overlook the other expressions such other genres and their relationship to the "central" genre represent (Toelken 1996, 185). While it is fascinating to know

there exist beliefs tied to the rite of passage and the people who can and cannot wear this accessory, the particular genre of folk belief, like rites of passage, does not strongly pull the red *Haube* into its purview because, as discussed, it seems this *Haube* is more about to whom it connects its owner and not from whom it separates her.

Despite the seemingly deep ancestral and place-connecting messages of the *Haube*, I have only worn it on three special occasions: in February 2018, in May 2021, and in November 2022. At those times, my apparent reasoning to select this costume piece was because it was new (to me) and belonged to my grandmother (2018), because I wanted to demonstrate a variety of costumes from Northern Transylvania as worn in Canada for a video my dance group sent to Transylvanian Saxons in Germany (2021), and because the first Canadian event after several COVID-19-related cancellations felt significantly more important in cultural preservation and continuity (2022). Examining these three instances through a folklore filter, I sift them through Shukla's assertion that "costumes grant their wearers a chance to be social and an opportunity to make public statements" (Shukla 2015, 10), especially in exceptional circumstances. For me, these statements express that I seek to maintain ties to my ancestors, strengthen connections between my community's homeland and host region, and promote my heritage within my community.

It is important to note that in wearing the *Haube* with my usual velvet *Tracht*, I am choosing to demonstrate a "proper way of doing things," in terms of how the costume should be worn, as Toelken points out (1996, 231). This approach is a type of display, where the *Haube* becomes both costume and art. I do this even though my *Haube* is, in fact, extremely uncomfortable and even though the *Haube* is not actually worn by most Transylvanian Saxon women in Canada today (Shukla 2015, 80). It was not made for me, so it is too tight (I can't even drink water when it is fastened), and my hair does not fit inside the hood. Shukla describes costume as extraordinary, explaining that "it is generally more extravagant in cost, materials,

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embellishments, structure, and mode of wearing (with a corset or an apron, for example)" and that most people describe costume as "uncomfortable," which, she says, further proves the costume's significance (Shukla 2015, 14). I disagree; to me, the discomfort is something more than "specialness;" it is discomfort with a tradition that was not designed for contemporary application. Rosemary mentioned that her mother would wear the *Haube* unbuckled because it was too hot and too tight in the summertime. She also said her sister opted not to wear it because it did not fit comfortably. So, what does dealing with the discomfort of a folk costume then communicate? Rosemary recalled that older generations would say to married Transylvanian Saxon women in Canada that they were not wearing the full costume if they did not have the *Haube* on as well. She implied that this was a matter of personal relevance, such as when a woman "insists on wearing the full costume to be *authentic*. But I don't think you can really insist on doing that." Rosemary understands that Saxons in Canada today can be flexible with costume accuracy, though she feels it is important for the wearer to at least know about the traditions of the costume.

Figure 6. Wearing the red *Haube* at Trachtenball next to my husband, who is wearing the shirt my father previously wore and a hat like one my grandfather wore. Photo by Karen Horeth, November 5, 2022.

Both Shukla and Glassie, therefore, propose that retention and revival of tradition need an advocate who sets an example, thereby creating the future of a tradition through a process that is loyal to its past (Shukla 2015, 83; Glassie 2023). Rosemary is tolerant of changes in tradition, explaining that "society and times change, but you're still keeping some of the original tradition and you're changing it with the current time so that the future understands what traditions are." It would appear, then, that my choice to wear the *Haube* at certain events (but not all) was not only to connect with ancestors, heritage, and homeland, but also to demonstrate advocacy for the maintenance of costume traditions. This interpretation presents implications for my choices as a member of the group going forward. Shukla describes that "One reason to wear the costume during the public demonstrations is precisely to be seen by spectators, […] because this intentional display helps keep the tradition alive. A costume worn only in the privacy of the home does not inspire others to adopt the tradition and push it forward" (Shukla 2015, 86). This observation perfectly corresponds to my choices and the context in which I wear the *Haube*.

After examination of my actions, I am left wondering, *now what?* specifically, because my analysis, reflections, and conversation with my aunt have made me conclude that not only do I want to wear my *Haube* more often going forward, but I also want to encourage other married members in our dance group, of which I am the leader, to wear the other two *Haube* I have in my personal collection. If I do so, I will reinforce the notion that the *Haube* is more costume than folk art. Further, if I invite married members who are not Transylvanian Saxons but who perform as part of the group, I communicate that the *Haube* does not really fall into the rite of passage genre either. As for the folk belief, the number of married women in our community who have worn the *Haube* has fluctuated over the past five years, with typically only one or a maximum of two wearing it at a given event. It is never worn publicly by an unmarried woman (as community

members also confirmed through their questioning of me wearing it in 2018). About the possibility of a *Haube* revival, Rosemary articulated, "Usually there has to be a leader, and if the leader is strong enough to influence the others in the group, then they would wear it too. But if you leave it up just to be voluntary, then no, I don't see that happening." Thus far, my position as a community leader has been to carry on the tradition, metaphorically wearing my ancestors, my heritage, and my cultural homeland and to encourage other Saxons in Canada to wear our folk costumes for similar reasons. As a novice folklorist, my perspective and understanding of the artistic selection we Saxons make when choosing how to present our identity through dress or art is deepening. I find myself, therefore, at the crossroads, not only of genre but of insider-group member and outsider-folklorist.

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Burn your lips
ENZINA MARRARI

Broderie sur napperon vintage
et oreiller fait à la main
2022
Photo par Brian Adams

Embroidery on vintage doily
and handmade pillow
2022
Photo by Brian Adams

Brûle tes lèvres est une pièce de broderie et une sculpture douce basée sur le proverbe : « Brûle tes lèvres sur le lait chaud, tu commenceras aussi à souffler sur l'eau. » Il s'agit d'une pièce sur le traitement du traumatisme et du chagrin, de l'histoire personnelle et de la redéfinition de ce qu'est le confort.

Je suis attirée par les couches d'histoires tissées dans le tissu vintage d'un napperon. Pendant que je les repasse pour préparer ce qu'ils

deviendront ensuite, je pense à toutes les chansons chantées, aux larmes versées, aux rires et au temps passé rempli de trop et de néant dont le napperon a été témoin – tous les secrets qu'il contenait. .

La répétition de la broderie cousue à la main sert de rituel de processus – de souvenir, d'oubli – d'entraînement de soi, de cicatrice. Des marques qui reflètent la mémoire, point par point.

Un oreiller agit comme le vaisseau de ces souvenirs. L'oreiller offre confort, réconfort et chaleur – mais comme la plupart des choses, il a des côtés. Parfois frais, parfois étouffant – offrant du répit et de beaux rêves ; offrir un réceptacle de chagrin ou de cauchemars aigres ; offrant au moins un nouveau jour, et il y a là du réconfort.

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Burn your lips is an embroidery piece and soft sculpture based on the proverb, "Burn your lips on the hot milk, you'll start blowing on water too." It is a piece about processing trauma and grief, personal history, and redefining what is comfort.

I am drawn to the layers of stories woven into the vintage fabric of a doily. As I iron them out to prepare for what they'll turn into next, I think about all the songs sung, tears shed, laughs had, and time spent filled with the too much and the nothingness the doily witnessed – all the secrets it held.

The repetition of the hand stitched embroidery serves as a ritual of process – of remembering, of forgetting – a training of self, a scar. Marks that mirror memory, stitch by stitch.

A pillow acts as the vessel of those memories. The pillow provides comfort, solace, warmth – but like most things, it has sides. Sometimes cool, sometimes stifling – offering respite and sweet

dreams; offering a receptacle of grief or sour nightmares; offering a new day, at least, and there is comfort there.

Straying from *The Path*: Rethinking Culpability in "Little Red Riding Hood" through a Fairy Tale Video Game
AINJEL STEPHENS

Once upon a time, in 2009, a video game was released by video game studio Tale of Tales and this game was called *The Path*. Developed by Auriea Harvey and Michael Samyn, they describe *The Path* as "an ancient tale retold in a modern medium" ("Games," 2021). As a narrative, *The Path* is familiar: it follows the traditional tale type ATU 333, commonly known as "Little Red Riding Hood." As a video game, *The Path* is unfamiliar. Described by the developers as a "slow game," *The Path* does not have the typical objectives of most video games: there are no "monsters to defeat" or "hard puzzles" to solve, and "most activities in the game are entirely optional" ("The Path," 2021). With no challenges for the player, *The Path* focuses less on gameplay and more on narrative, taking the video game format and transforming it into an interactive storytelling experience. The focus on narrative above video game skill and play results in a game that "does not appeal to everyone" but for those who do enjoy it, the game "produces an intense emotional reaction": players have described it as "unsettling," "upsetting," and "thought-provoking" (Ryan and Costello 2012, 113). These player reactions stem from *The Path*'s grim narrative of a young girl being attacked by a wolf—the standard plotline of ATU 333— but these emotions are amplified by the gameplay itself. What makes *The Path* stand out from other retellings of "Little Red Riding Hood" across various cultural mediums is not its narrative, nor its gameplay techniques, but rather how it is able to take a traditional, popular folktale and reinvent it through the interactivity of video games.

While many video games focus on pushing the correct buttons in order to succeed, *The Path* focuses on narrative and as such, it does not require any skill with video games in order to play. There are only two gameplay mechanisms in *The Path*: moving your character and

interacting with found objects. Players can either use their keyboard's arrow keys or right-click their mouse to move around in any direction, and they can press the enter key or the left-click to "interact" with objects. The game itself is presented as simple: it opens with a character selection screen with six girls between the ages of nine and twenty standing in a red room (fig. 1). Once the player selects one of the girls, she appears on a path leading into the woods and the instructions appear on screen: "Go to Grandmother's House…. and stay on the path."

Figure 1: Character selection screen. From left to right: Ginger, Rose, Scarlet, Ruby, Robin, Carmen.

From here, players control their selected character's movements, guiding her through the game and letting her interact with objects she finds either by pressing the "interact" button or by releasing all controls. There are no monsters to fight or puzzles to solve. Instead, this game is exploratory in nature, with no goals or instructions other than to "stay on the path." In this sense, *The Path* is a slow game, one that the creators claim was made "for non-gamers" (Alexander 2009, qtd. in Ryan and Costello 2009, 123). However, *The Path* does belong to an emergent subgenre amongst video games: the independent, or

"indie," game. Indie games are produced by small studios outside of major (corporate) game studios that perceive games not as "products" but as "cultural works created by people" (Juul 2019, 6). Instead of focusing on conventional aspects of gameplay, indie games subvert player expectations and comment on traditional conventions (19). These games are about "personal expression" for developers but they are also a means of developing "more meaning" in gameplay, where games can devote space to "social commentary [and] whimsical charm" (22, 26). With a focus on gameplay that reflects society and reinterprets cultural conventions in new ways, indie games transform the experience of gaming from commercialized and corporatized into a form of collective expression and communication between developers and their audience of players. By focusing on creative expression among a small community of fans and creators, games such as *The Path* seemingly blend popular cultural mediums with folkloric functions, and in this sense, can be viewed as an emerging form of folklore.

Furthermore, as a storytelling medium, independent video games offer new opportunities for exploring and retelling traditional narratives. *The Path* is not unique in its focus on narrative: games such as *Slenderman: The Eight Pages* and *Five Nights at Freddy's* have become incredibly popular with their simple gameplay that invites exploration of ambiguous narratives. All three of these games refuse to tell a clear narrative: rather, they leave the story for players to discover through their gameplay, withholding the full narrative from a single playthrough, requiring repeated replay and a careful eye to unravel the story. Unlike these other popular narrative-based indie games, *The Path* stands out due to its firm basis in folklore. While *Slenderman*: *The Eight Pages* may have some folkloric origins, as it is based on the Internet legend surrounding the titular figure (Peck 2015), this is a digital legend for the digital age; therefore, it is unsurprising to find it in video game form. In contrast, "Little Red Riding Hood" is a traditional folktale, traceable back to similar oral

narratives from the Middle Ages (Zipes 1993, 18). With variations by both Charles Perrault and the Brothers Grimm, it is also practically ubiquitous in popular culture: it is a tale most people are familiar with and have heard countless versions of through various mediums. By adapting a tale like "Little Red Riding Hood" into a narrative-based indie video game, *The Path* invites audiences into a tale they *think* they already know, yet renders it unfamiliar through the mechanics of this new medium. Through player intervention in the narrative via its gameplay, *The Path* flips "Little Red Riding Hood" onto itself, defamiliarizing the tale to the player and offering ripe ground for reflection on the meaning and significance of ATU 333.

Despite the rising cultural presence[27] of indie video games such as *The Path*, video games have been largely neglected in folkloristics, but there has been some exploration of the way video games intersect with folklore. Kiri Miller has examined *Grand Theft Auto* as a form of digital folklore where individual performance is required to make sense of video game narrative (2008, 263). Likewise, scholars such as Ileana Vesa and Marissa D. Willis have argued that each video game playthrough is an individualized storytelling session, not unlike a folklore performance (2011, 2019). While there has not been much scholarship on folklore and video games, it is an increasingly rich area for folklore studies, especially considering the frequency in which folktales such as "Little Red Riding Hood" are evoked for inspiration. In a short survey article on video games and folklore, Emma Whatman and Victoria Tedeschi note that there is a "trend of revisionist fairy-tale video games" that explore "the darker undercurrents of the fairy-tale form" (2018, 634). "Little Red Riding Hood" is often adapted in these "revisionist" video games with the young girl

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[27] A quick search on video game hosting platform *Steam* reveals 62 000 games now fall under the broad category "indie" (on this platform, indie refers to any game made outside of major studios). There are nearly 4000 games in the "indie horror" category that *The Path* is classified under, but only 1000 in its "walking simulator" subcategory. See Juul 2019 for an analysis of some of the more popular indie game titles.

transformed into a "violent avatar" (636). One such game is *Little Red Riding Hood's Zombie BBQ* where the game "emphasiz[es] and exaggerat[es] the violence and sexuality" of older versions of fairy tales, including the titular character who is both violent (she kills zombies) and sexual (portrayed as an adult woman, not a child) (Keebaugh 2013, 591, 593). Video games, then, offer new opportunities to engage with folktales through gameplay, where darker themes can be explored, and the so-called "original" violence of the tales can be reclaimed.

   The Path follows this trend of revisionist video games, as it is an informed and engaged retelling of ATU 333, "The Little Red Riding Hood." The first known version of this tale type is Charles Perrault's "Le Petit Chaperon Rouge," part of his fairy tale collection *Histories ou contes du temps passé* (1697)[28] (Vaz da Silva 2016, 168). Fairy tale scholars such as Jack Zipes and Francisco Vaz da Silva have noted that it is likely that Perrault knew of oral versions of this tale and altered it to suit his narrative aims, making this tale's history both literary and oral (Zipes 1993, 18; Vaz da Silva 2016, 170). In oral tradition, ATU 333 is first recorded in the Grimm Brothers' *Kinder-und Hausmärchen* (1812) as "Little Red Cap."[29] It is in the Grimms' version that the huntsman is introduced as Red's saviour, and it is this version that has become predominant in mainstream culture (Zipes 1993, 36). According to Jack Zipes, the Grimm brothers "cleaned up" Perrault's telling in order to suit the "bourgeois socialization process of the 19th century," making their version a retelling of Perrault's and not an entirely "oral" tale (32). This sanitization of the tale remains consistent, with a wide assortment of children's books adopting the tale or simply reproducing the Grimms' narrative (344). For Zipes, the reason why both Perrault's and the

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[28] I have chosen to follow Christine A. Jones' translation of Perrault's French as I find her readings to be comprehensive and nuanced.
[29] Likewise, I have chosen to follow Jack Zipes' translation of the Grimms' German.

Grimms' versions remain relevant in the popular imagination is because they are able to demonstrate "shifts in social and political attitudes toward gender identity and rape" (343). Although there are no sex scenes in "Little Red Riding Hood," the narrative is commonly read as an allegory for rape, or alternatively, for sexual maturation. Tellings, including modern ones, tend to focus on how the tale conveys the "regulation of little girls' sexuality" and Red's sensual transgression, or they use the narrative to highlight rape culture (Zipes 1993, 66, 10-11). Although "Little Red Riding Hood" can be traced back for centuries, the vaguely sexual language and plot (of a girl tricked into climbing into bed with a male wolf) easily lends the tale to modernized tellings that focus on themes of sex, violence, and power.

Unsurprisingly, contemporary versions of "Little Red Riding Hood" highlight these themes through a feminist framework. Carri Keebaugh calls these versions a part of a culture-wide "fairy-tale recovery project," or the "recovery" of the original darker elements of the tale in oral and literary tradition (2013, 590). This "recovery" of the dark aspects is seen predominantly in films, such as adult thriller films that examine adult-child sexual relationships through using "Little Red Riding Hood" motifs and imagery (Greenhill and Kohm 2009, 37). In these retellings, Red is made out to be the hero, not the victim, through her vigilantism (55). Book adaptations as well focus on vigilantism, where Red must "protect others from being victimized" (D'Amore 2017, 387). These feminist vigilante themes highlight the "acute knowledge of rape culture" that is present in contemporary society (386). Thus, contemporary versions of "Little Red Riding Hood" focus upon Red's sexuality as a young woman, while also highlighting violence against women, transforming Perrault's traditional narrative into a contemporary and topical one.

As an indie game, *The Path*, then, functions as a modernized retelling of "Little Red Riding Hood" within an innovative storytelling format, combining both popular culture with folklore. As a retelling,

The Path highlights these dark undercurrents so popular in contemporary versions of this tale.

Before we continue, I will provide a summary of the plotline, or aim, of the game. After the character selection screen, the player-chosen girl appears on a path heading into the woods and the player is left with two options: follow the game's instructions and "stay on the path" or disobey the game and wander into the forest. If the player chooses to stay on the path, they reach Grandmother's house, climb into bed with her, and the game ends with a message on screen informing the player that they have received a "FAILURE!" If the player strays from the path, then the game becomes exploratory, where the player can discover various objects and locations to which their selected character will reveal a thought or emotion, allowing the player to piece together the girl's personality and loose story. Once the girl has strayed into the forest, the path is no longer able to be located by the player. The only way to find the path again is by chasing a wispy character known only as The Girl in White. The Girl in White is a young female dressed in a white slip dress who works as a guide for the player, helping locate objects and locations (such as the path) by running ahead of the red girl and motioning for her to follow. The Girl in White will also eventually lead the player toward the only other character in the game: the wolf. The visual appearance of the wolf varies for each girl, and once he is encountered, the exploration ends. The screen fades to black, and the Red Riding Hood girl is shown to be lying on the ground in front of Grandmother's house. Once inside, the camera changes from third- to first-person, and you and the girl, seeing through the same eyes, are led throughout the house, unable to stray from *this* path that guides you through the home. Grandmother's house is full of obscurities, such as objects spinning through the air and impossibly long hallways: it feels both dreamlike and horrifying. Finally, the girl arrives to Grandmother's room, where the game ends with the girl being attacked by her version of the wolf in a series of flashing images.

To most players, this narrative is typical of the familiar "Little Red Riding Hood" narrative where a young girl encounters a wolf in the forest and is ultimately overtaken by him. However, through the video game format, aspects of the tale are highlighted in ways that are too often overlooked. Video game scholars Malcolm Ryan and Brigid Costello have noted that as a video game, *The Path* is able to evoke a sense of tragedy through the interactive storytelling form (2012, 112). This tragedy is primarily demonstrated through the interaction between the girl and her wolf. Although there are six girls with six distinct wolves, I will focus upon two in particular--- Robin and Carmen--- because their storylines distinctively draw upon both Perrault's and Grimms' versions of the tale. Visually, Robin looks like typical images of Little Red Riding Hood (fig. 2). She is the youngest of the girls, around nine-years-old, dressed in the iconic and metonymic red hood. Robin skips as she wanders through the forest, and she attempts to play with nearly every object she interacts with.

Figure 2: Robin (left) and Carmen (right) sitting on the same bench at the "Theatre" location.

As a character, Robin is youthful and playful; I would say her story and appearance align with the common vision of "Little Red Riding Hood." In contrast, Carmen is much more mature at age seventeen. On the character selection page, Carmen admires her reflection, swaying back and forth as she adjusts a hat on her head. Self-image is important to Carmen as she is a flirt: upon sitting down on a bench, she thinks "oh come on, have a seat. Have a kiss" (fig. 2). While Robin is innocent and childish, Carmen is a girl on the cusp of sexual

maturation, showing interest in men and sex through her active flirting.

If Robin represents more traditional tellings, where the girl in the red hood is a "young country girl" (Perrault 1697, 175) or a "sweet little maiden" (Grimms 1812, 135), then Carmen reflects more contemporary retellings, where the red hood is viewed as a captivating sexual symbol and the term "little" is dropped from the Red Riding Hood name (Vaz da Silva 2016, 180-1). As well, through her flirtatious demeanor, Carmen's personality highlights both the academic and popular reading of the tale as one about sex and sexuality (Greenhill and Kohm 2009, 38). Both Carmen and Robin, then, reflect various interpretations and retellings of "Little Red Riding Hood," where the titular character is either a young, innocent, and sweet girl, or she is a seductive, sexual young woman.

Outside of narrative, many gameplay elements within *The Path* draw upon the cultural history of "Little Red Riding Hood." For example, there are collectable glowing flowers scattered throughout the forest. When enough flowers are collected, players are directed towards a findable location or object. Flowers play a significant role in both Perrault's and Grimms' version as the young girl makes flower bouquets while the wolf rushes to beat her to Grandmother's house (Perrault 1697, 175; Grimm 1812, 136). Francisco Vaz da Silva argues that these flowers are remnants of the "pins or needles" paths that Red chooses between in oral versions of the tale, and that these paths both represent menstrual blood, taking Red on a path to sexual maturation (2016, 179). Furthering this idea, *The Path* is full of the colour red: from the girls' names (all shades of red), to the character selection page (a red room), to the red elements in the found locations (a red sky in the graveyard location; a red bench at the theatre). Red is emblematic of the "Little Red Riding Hood" story, but it is also the colour of blood, whether that be the blood of violence, blood of menstruation, or blood of virginity loss. Indeed, there is a folk tradition of narratives of a girl in red encountering a wolf, even if the

"red hood" appears to be an invention of Perrault's imagination (Vaz da Silva 2016, 171-2). In contemporary culture, all it takes is a girl in a red cloak for the story of "Little Red Riding Hood" to be evoked, proving the redness to be not only metonymic, but also iconic and symbolic. Visually, then, *The Path* draws upon motifs of the "Little Red Riding Hood" tale as it is commonly represented in popular culture and in more traditional versions.

Of course, there is another element of the tale that *The Path* incorporates into its gameplay, and that is the role of the wolf. Each playable girl has her own unique wolf, suitable as each girl is demonstrated to be an individual with her own personality and story and thus, her own downfall. While each wolf is visually distinct, the wolf always appears male, with one notable exception. Ginger's wolf appears as a young girl, which can either support a queer reading or thematically emphasize that even the familiar or seemingly safe can be dangerous. For Robin, our young protagonist in the red hood, her wolf appears as an anthropomorphic wolf in the graveyard (fig. 3). This wolf walks primarily on his hind legs, humanizing him, but his body is wolfish, covered in fur with a wolf face and snout. Carmen's wolf is significantly different, appearing as a man chopping trees at the campground location (fig. 3). In a plaid shirt and suspenders, this wolf draws upon cultural associations and images of the "woodsman" or "huntsman," a character commonly found in tellings since the Grimms' introduction of this character to the tale in 1812. Instead of saving the young girl, as he does in the Grimms' version through cutting her out of the wolf's belly (Grimm 1812, 137), Carmen's wolf
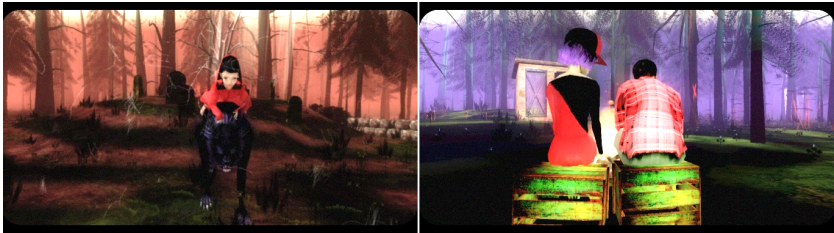

Figure 3: Robin and her wolf (left); Carmen and her wolf (right).

is not the saviour but rather the perpetrator of violence, subverting common notions of the woodsman.

The doubling-up of character types in "Little Red Riding Hood" narratives is not uncommon: Pauline Greenhill and Steven Kohm note that this is a common feature of thrillers inspired by this tale (2009, 48). What is significant here is how this doubling works to highlight an often-overlooked theme: the familiarity of the wolf. In Charles Perrault's telling, there is very little description of the wolf, but there is one key word used: "neighborhood" (1697, 175). The wolf that encounters the young girl is the "neighborhood wolf,"[30] *not* a stranger. Although many people I know interpret the tale as one cautioning about "stranger danger," Perrault's version highlights that this wolf is not a stranger, but a known or recognizable member of the young girl's local community.

The Path follows Perrault's version in this sense, making the wolves of both Carmen and Robin known to both the player and to the girls. Players understand that wolves are dangerous animals—both literally and figuratively—as Robin's wolf is, and they most likely recognize the woodsman as a hero-helper, made famous by the Grimms' version. With Carmen's wolf, seeing the huntsman evokes a sense of familiarity in the player, which then transforms into fear as they realize that the man they assumed to be the saviour is actually the perpetrator of violence. Even more terrifying is the slow realization that the wolf is *known* to the girls. Throughout the game, Robin repeatedly tells the player that she wants to play with her "big and cuddly thing." When she encounters the wolf, Robin begins to play with him, jumping on his back and riding around with him before the screen fades to black. Robin does not fear her wolf; for her, he is a

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[30] There is some debate on exactly how to translate the term Perrault uses to describe the wolf in its original French ("compère le loup"); however, both Christine A. Jones and Jack Zipes select to use "neighborhood" or "neighbor" and I have elected to follow their translations.

much wanted, playful friend. Likewise, Carmen actively flirts with her wolf by stealing his hat and placing it upon her head, drinking his beer, and sitting by the fire, waiting for him to join her. Not only is the wolf familiar to both girls, but he also intimately understands them. The wolf appears as what the girls desire most: a friend to play with, a man to seduce. Indeed, the entire forest seems familiar to the girls: it is littered with objects that the girls eagerly interact with, such as chairs or balloons, and most objects are only accessible to specific characters. For example, upon finding a red balloon, Robin specifically states that it must be the balloon she lost on her birthday. These objects found throughout the forest *belong* to the girls, implying that this is not the first time they have strayed from the path. As a retelling, *The Path* incorporates often forgotten aspects of older versions of the tale, such as how the wolf and the forest are not unknown to the girls. These elements are embedded into the gameplay, letting the player experience the tale in new light.

We have explored how *The Path* incorporates elements from both traditional and contemporary tellings of "Little Red Riding Hood" into a new narrative experience, but what we have yet to explore is perhaps the most essential part of *The Path*, and what distinguishes it among other versions of this tale: the role of the player. While traditional narratives consist of two roles, that of performer/teller and that of audience, video games blur the line between the two through the role of the player. Within video games, the player becomes both teller and audience as they help construct the narrative through interactive gameplay while at the same time, they experience the game and story for the first time (Vesa 2011, 252). The player, then, is a sort of narrator, where they are part of a narrative as they control the movement and actions of the character, while also being outside of the narrative, as they have limitations to what actions they can make by the intended narrative of the game. The role of the player as narrator is where the tragedy of *The Path* truly takes place as the player must grapple with the decision on whether or not to engage with the wolf

(Ryan and Costello 2012, 121). The only way for the player to "win" the game is to allow the girl to encounter the wolf, but because players already know the "Little Red Riding Hood" tale type, they know that by doing so, the girl will be harmed by him. It is only upon being attacked by the wolf in Grandmother's House that the endscreen informs the player that they have had a "SUCCESS!" rather than a failure. In their discussion of *The Path*, Malcom Ryan and Brigid Costello refer to the complicated feelings surrounding the relationship between the tale and the game as "player culpability" (2012, 112) and indeed, the culpability of the player makes the telling of this tale unique among retellings. Players are *directly responsible* for the demise of Robin or Carmen as they are the ones who choose to guide the girls from the path and choose to interact with the wolf. The game never forces players to stray nor to find the wolf; these are choices the player knowingly makes, understanding what must happen when they do so. This culpability is only heightened in the final scene, in Grandmother's House, where the gameplay changes from third- to first-person, letting the player experience the horrors of the violence and trauma of encountering the wolf through the girl's eyes. *The Path*, then, represents an interesting dilemma for the player where to win is to let the girls fail, resulting in the player experiencing not euphoria at winning, but rather a sense of guilt for their role in the narrative, complicating traditional gameplay by subverting norms regarding what it means to "win."

While listeners or readers of traditional "Little Red Riding Hood" narratives may not get to experience a degree of culpability or guilt, that does not mean that these themes are not present. *The Path* features characters that one expects in a telling of "Little Red Riding Hood" such as the young titular girl, her grandmother, and a wolf. There is only one character present in most tellings that is strangely missing from *The Path*: the young girl's mother. In the Grimms' version of the tale, the mother cautions her daughter, telling her not to "tarry" and not to "stray from the path" (Grimm 1812, 135). These

instructions appear very similar to those given to the player at the start of the game, where they are told to "stay on the path." In Perrault's version, however, the mother gives no such warning. Instead, she is said to be "crazy" about her daughter, adoring her so much that her daughter "didn't know that it is dangerous to stop and listen to wolves" (Perrault 1697, 175). Here, the mother never taught her daughter the skills necessary to navigate the woods, and it is this ignorance that leads to the daughter's demise. It is the mother, then, who is culpable for the girl's death--- not unlike how the player is culpable for Robin's or Carmen's end in *The Path*: it is the player who chooses which girl to send into the woods, just as it is the mother who sends her daughter. The player is thus not only witness to this narrative, but they also play a crucial role in its unraveling. When the player finds the location of the wolf in *The Path*, they are given the opportunity to leave or they can approach the wolf, free the controls, and watch the girl interact. With this choice, the player *lets* the girl interact with the wolf despite knowing she will be harmed, similar to how the mother *lets* her daughter leave without warning, despite the fact that Perrault's moral states "who among us does not know/that the saccharine wolf, of all wolves,/is the most treacherous?" (Perrault 1697, 177). This rhetorical question implies that everyone should know the dangers of the wolf, including and especially the mother who sends her daughter and thus should have cautioned her. The gameplay elements of *The Path* that evoke these feelings of guilt reinterpret the themes of culpability originally directed towards the mother and places them upon the player, making the player an active part of the narrative. These feelings of culpability and guilt are *only* able to be expressed through this interactive storytelling form, as the player takes on an important character role in the narrative and experiences the story first-hand.

Interestingly, there is one original character in *The Path*—that is, a character that does not appear in Perrault's nor the Grimms' nor any other common telling of the tale. This character is the aforementioned

Girl in White. As a gameplay mechanic, the Girl in White serves as a guide for the player: she runs through the woods, and if the player chooses to follow her, she will lead them to various items and locations. Following her is also the only way for the player to make their way back to the path. When the player locates the wolf, the Girl in White will run across the player's screen, as a sort of warning for the player or the girl. Outside of these gameplay functions, the Girl in White also serves a narrative role. After a girl encounters the wolf and goes through Grandmother's House, the game reboots to the character selection screen, except now the girl just played is missing. Players can play through each girl, and one by one, they disappear from the character selection screen. It is only when all girls have been played that the Girl in White appears in the character selection room, alone. As a playable character, the Girl in White is free to wander the forest. She has no wolf, and neither the path nor Grandmother's House disappear for her. When she enters the house, there is an unmoving wolf in Grandmother's bedroom—as though he is waiting--- and Grandmother lying in her bed. The Girl in White leans down at Grandmother's bedside and the screen fades to black. Once it fades back in, the girl is standing in the character selection room, red blood on her white dress (fig. 4). Slowly, one by one, the other girls re-enter and lastly, the Girl in White leaves, effectively restarting the entire gameplay experience.

Figure 4: The Girl in White standing alone on the character selection page. Note the slash of red on her normally white dress.

The Girl in White becomes the saviour of the other young "Red" girls. Instead of having a man, the woodsman, save them, it is a young, fearless girl who frees the others from the belly of the wolf. The red blood on her dress evokes violence, implying that she killed the wolf, and the girls re-entering shows that they have been freed. In this sense, the Girl in White represents the feminist vigilantism so often found in contemporary retellings of "Little Red Riding Hood." Through violence, she "takes on the responsibility of vigilantism to protect others from being victimized," a role that many modern retellings give to the girl in the red hood (D'Amore 2017, 387). Despite her fearless vigilantism, once the Red girls return, the game restarts. All the girls are once again playable, able to re-enter the woods and fall again as prey to the wolves. *The Path*, then, presents itself as a truly tragic tale, where even after being freed from the wolf's belly, the girls cannot entirely be saved, not so long as the game is still able to be played.

Who is to blame for this cycle of violence, where even the saved can fall prey again? If the tale of "Little Red Riding Hood" is a story of maturation, then the girls of *The Path* do not mature and never learn. Indeed, the cycle of violence enforced upon them exists outside of the girls: it is the player who sends them forth, and the player who strays them from the path, and the Girl in White who brings them back. The girls have very little to do with the violence enacted upon them directly by the wolf and indirectly by the player, who sent them forth into the world *knowing* the wolf was waiting for them. Through this subversive gameplay, *The Path* seems to imply that there is no singular person to blame for violence against women, but rather, this violence is systemic, part of a societal cycle that asserts this patriarchal violence as normative behaviour. Just as there is no singular person to blame for this violence, there is no singular saviour: the Girl in White can help, but that does not mean she will be followed by the girls in red. Players, then, are left with a game without

satisfying conclusion that cycles through without resolution. Players want games to be replayable, but with *The Path*, the replayability only means restarting a cycle that can never end satisfyingly. Here is a game where there is truly no way to win.

What *The Path* offers is a bleak version of "Little Red Riding Hood" that comments upon contemporary societal concerns, such as violence against women, in a modernized way through the indie game format. As an independent game, *The Path* subverts normative gameplay, and as a folktale, it also subverts our expectations of the "Little Red Riding Hood" tale. The narrative *The Path* offers is not "original" in that it is a retelling that draws upon other versions of the tale, but it is original in the sense that this narrative could only be told through the independent video game medium. As players become both tellers and listeners, *The Path* encourages interactivity with folktales, demanding players reconsider the tales that they have taken for granted and think through the issues and concerns that the tales continue to carry throughout time and space. Folk- and fairy-tale inspired video games, then, are not necessarily reiterations of familiar narratives, but rather they are new variants that offer fresh and unique ways of thinking through these tales, demonstrating the continued importance of folktales in the popular imagination.

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Organic Growth
LANA THORIMBERT
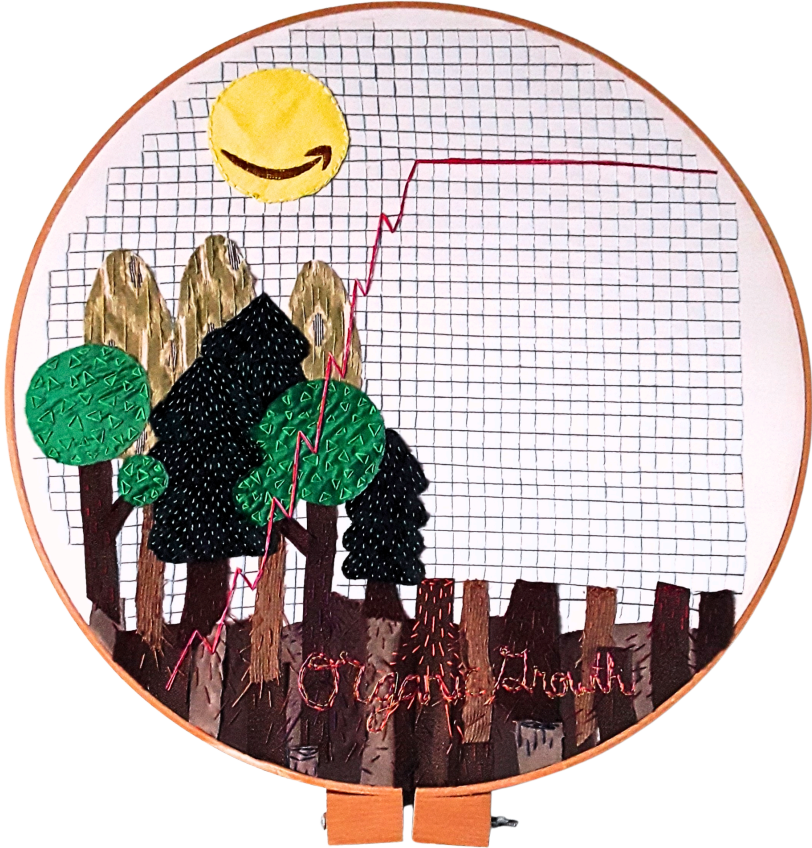
Reclaimed fabrics,
embroidery thread,
worked on a hoop from
the thrift store.
2020

Tissues de récupération,
fil à broder,
travaillées sur un cerceau de
la friperie.
2020

L'inspiration pour cet article est née lorsque j'ai entendu un PDG utiliser le terme « croissance biologique » (en anglais, "organic growth") pour décrire la croissance de l'entreprise. Que signifie le biologique en termes de croissance ? Cette pièce représente la nature comme une forêt luxuriante, abondante, favorable et intacte, surmontée d'une ligne sur un graphique se dirigeant dans un mouvement ascendant constant, désignant un moniteur de fréquence cardiaque. Lorsque ses ressources sont supprimées et insuffisamment reconstituées, la forêt ne peut plus soutenir cette croissance et la ligne devient plate, plus d'arbres, plus d'oxygène, plus de vie. Les couleurs vives, les textures douces et le soleil souriant apportent du réconfort tandis que l'espace vide apporte du malaise.

À mesure que je progresse en tant qu'artiste dans cet état précaire du monde, ma principale source de motivation pour créer vient de mes réactions face au capitalisme persistant qui reste toujours incontrôlé. J'aimerais voir diminuer la surproduction d'objets, de biens et de services qui ont des conséquences néfastes cachées sur l'environnement, ainsi que le marketing qui lave le cerveau des gens en leur faisant croire qu'ils ont constamment besoin de plus en plus de ces choses souvent inutiles. Mon objectif est de transmettre des messages réfléchis et bienveillants sur un mode de vie durable, qui prend en compte toutes les ressources impliquées et vise à marcher le plus légèrement possible sur notre précieuse planète. Je souhaite promouvoir une culture du bricolage au sein des communautés locales autonomes ainsi qu'inspirer les gens à repenser leurs besoins et à s'éduquer pour devenir des consommateurs plus conscients.

Les médias que je choisis d'utiliser principalement sont récupérés, d'occasion, usés, trouvés, destinés aux matériaux de décharge, ce qui soutient le thème de la durabilité que je vise. De plus, mon objectif est de présenter des idées de manière amusante, curieuse, ludique et colorée afin de ne pas créer un sentiment de culpabilité mais de

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curiosité et d'émerveillement, de sortir des sentiers battus, d'être responsabilisé et inspiré pour réduire son impact. Le changement doit commencer quelque part, donc même si les choix individuels sur la façon de vivre ne font apparemment aucune différence, en réalité, ils le font !

The inspiration for this piece was sparked when I heard a CEO use the term "organic growth" when describing the growth of the company. What does organic mean in terms of growth? This piece represents nature as a lush, bountiful, supportive, undisturbed forest overlain is a line on a graph heading in a steady upward motion, denoting a heart rate monitor. When its resources are removed and not adequately replenished, the forest can no longer sustain this growth and the line goes flat, no more trees, no more oxygen, no more life. The bright colours, soft textures and the smiling sun bring comfort while the empty space brings unease.

As I progress as an artist in this precarious state of the world, my main source of motivation to create stems from my reactions to the persistent capitalism that consistently goes unchecked. I'd like to see a decline in the overproduction of objects, goods and services that have hidden detrimental environmental consequences, as well as the marketing that brainwashes people into thinking they constantly need more and more of these often useless things. My goal is to portray thoughtful and caring messages about living a sustainable lifestyle, one that considers every resource involved and aims to tread as lightly as possible on our precious planet. I wish to promote a do-it-yourself culture within self-sustaining local communities as well as to inspire people to rethink their needs and to educate themselves to become more mindful consumers.

The media I choose to use primarily is salvaged, second hand, worn out, found, destined for the landfill materials which supports the theme of sustainability I'm aiming for. Additionally, my goal is to present ideas in a fun, curious, playful and colourful way so as not to create a feeling of guilt but of curiosity and wonder, to think outside the box, be empowered and inspired to lower one's impact. Change has to start somewhere, so although individual choices on how to live seemingly make no difference, in actual fact they do!

The Ghost in the Machine: Loab, the Uncanny, and AI-Generated Art
JOHN E. PRIEGNITZ II

The concept of cursed images and objects is a type of folk narrative that is common in legend cycles. However, since the Internet became widely accessible to the public in the early 1990s a new frontier was created for these types of legends to find fertile ground to grow and thrive. Examples of this have included cursed YouTube videos, video games, Creepypasta legends, and now art generated by artificial intelligence (also referred to as AI). This paper will examine Loab, the emergent Internet legend purportedly created by AI generated art. Loab and other AI generated art is unsettling as it enters the realm of the uncanny and speaks to modern anxieties that are attached to emerging technologies. Further, AI generated art is a new medium of expression that questions the definition of humanity, authorship, and reality itself. This emerging technology is creating a space where new narratives are crafted and further cements the Internet as a legendary destination for those who seek the strange and uncanny.

In the Summer of 2022, AI generated art engines began to appear on the Internet. In a way it was (and still is) treated as a novelty and toy. Users would visit sites such as MidJourney, one of the earliest AI generated art platforms, to see what the AI algorithms would draft up with the prompts given by them. Examples of such art produced by programs such as MidJourney had a surreal and dreamlike quality. A favorite of mine was a mashup of Disney's Mickey Mouse depicted in a post-apocalyptic world inspired from the video game *Fallout* and dystopian film franchise *The Purge* (see Figure 1). Some users also fed MidJourney prompts to create realistic photos of scrapped movie productions that appeared convincing. Even I tinkered with the new technology creating unsettling images of liminal spaces that combined elements of Edward Gorey, Ansel Adams, and Grant Wood's *American Gothic* (see Figure 1).

Figure 1. AI-Generated Art has a dreamlike and surrealist quality that can be classified as unsettling, liminal, and cryptic.

The art being produced by a machine has invoked a vast array of emotions. On one side, there are people who view such technology as benign and a novelty. On the other, there is a camp opposite of this point of view who interpret AI generated art as threatening. The threat in question though largely stemmed from anxieties of not yet established artists who earn their living taking commission from patrons. However, the surreal and dreamlike quality of images being produced by AI generated art also left viewers uneasy and anxious as questions arose about the process and who exactly is creating these

works of art. It is the latter of these fears and anxieties where Loab gained notoriety and prominence.

The earliest reports of Loab that I could find with online newspapers began in early September of 2022. Interestingly, these online articles all indicated that Loab made her debut on Twitter in April of that year. Anthony Wood reporting for IGN heralded the arrival of Loab in September stating, "an AI art enthusiast has apparently stumbled across a creepy, recurring image –now known as Loab– which appears to be more easily generated than you'd ever expect (or want). The Internet has now dubbed Loab the first AI art cryptid." (2022). He and other media outlets go on to attribute this "discovery" to a Swedish music artist, known as Supercomposite, as the creator/discoverer of Loab who showcased the first images on their Twitter account in April of 2022 (IGN; 2022, Daily Dot; 2022, Art Net; 2022, Dazed Digital; 2022, Science Alert; 2022).

Additionally, the news reports followed the same pattern detailing the narrative. A Swedish music artist known as Supercomposite was having fun with one of the new AI art generators that is never specified. She gave the program prompts seeking an image that is opposite of American actor Marlon Brando,

> …and unexpectedly created a strange logo depicting a skyline, and the letters 'DIGITA PNTICS.' Curiosity got the best of Supercomposite, who fed the letters back to the AI as another negative prompt, wondering if it would show them a picture of Marlon Brando. In return, the program apparently returned the first images of Loab. (IGN; 2022)

Loab, the supposed opposite of Marlon Brando, is depicted as a gaunt mature woman with sunken eyes, triangular ruddy cheeks, and a blank haunted expression (see Figure 2). The narrative continues that as Supercomposite attempts to adjust the prompts and parameters with the computer program the images produced become increasingly violent and grotesque depicting hellish and nightmarish illustrations.

Figure 2. The Legend of Loab, or how Marlon Brando (Supposedly) Begat a Digital Cryptid.

This is how the legend of Loab came into being, and like contemporary legends that have preceded and will proceed her she possesses the hallmarks of vague origins, second and thirdhand accounts, and ambivalent purpose that teeters toward the sinister. So, what does it all mean?

The concept of cursed objects and images are not a recent phenomenon. Western literature and folklore are replete with them. In 1890, Oscar Wilde immortalized the genre of the cursed painting in his homoerotic novel, *The Portrait of Dorian Grey* where a foppish dandy obsessed with his youth and beauty makes a Faustian pact to have his soul infused with a portrait done in his likeness to age while he remains forever young. The pact is nullified decades later when

Dorian Grey comes fact-to-face with his now grotesque and decrepit portrait where he quickly dies from old age (Wilde; 1890).

Figure 3. Both literary and folkloric examples of the cursed painting genre exist. Consider for example: *The Portrait of Dorian Gray* and *The Crying Boy* paintings.

Outside the realm of literature there are real world examples of purportedly haunted/cursed paintings. For example, there are *The Crying Boy* paintings that were popular in post-war Great Britain (see Figure 3). The legend emerged in 1985 from British tabloid, *The Sun* that the mass-produced paintings were responsible for a spate of housefires. What cemented these allegations was that *The Crying Boy* paintings were impervious to flame (Ocker; 2020). Whether or not this is due to the fact that wall décor typically falls face down during housefires is not relevant because tabloids seldom let the truth get in the way of a good story. What matters though is that cursed objects –especially cursed images and paintings– capture the popular imagination. Works of art by its very nature is supposed to invoke and illicit emotion from their viewers. It is therefore not a stretch of the

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imagination to have feelings of unease and ill-omen attached to images depicting weeping children.

At this point, it should be noted that art often imitates life. This imitation of life lies on a spectrum that ranges from the abstract to hyper-realism. It is the hyper-realism on this spectrum that I want to focus on as it is tied to Loab and the genre of AI-generated art. There is a point where works of art (especially works that focus on human features) that enter what is called, "the uncanny." Pioneer of modern psychology Sigmund Freud called this *das Unheimlich*, or "not from home" (1919). In other words, it is not familiar and there produces effects of uneasiness. Tok Thompson in *Posthuman Folklore* takes this further when discussing the production of lifelike androids in Japan. He states, "as developers near the production of human-looking interfaces, people's reactions to the interfaces become increasingly unnerved. They describe the creations in terms often reserved for the supernatural: androids are 'creepy,' 'spooky,' or otherwise unsettling." (2019). The same can be said of computer-generated artwork created by either AI or humans. For example, consider the 2004 adaptation of *The Polar Express* starring Tom Hanks or *The Adventures of Tintin* in 2011. Both films failed to overcome the Uncanny Valley and ended up unsettling their audiences.

Loab, in a way, borrows from the uncanny and folk narratives that predate her. As a result, she falls into the category of what Michael Dylan Foster calls the folkloresque "where folklore is alluded to in a general way, although there is no specific connection to a particular genre or motif that already exists in folklore." (2014, Kitta; 2018). Loab is a patchwork, or rather a pastiche, of a history of unnerving paintings, literature, popular entertainment, and children's folklore such as Bloody Mary repackaged for the digital age.

While Loab is indeed uncanny and unsettling it bears noting that she is not explicitly a cursed or haunted image. According to J.W. Ocker, a cursed object is "an inanimate item that brings misfortune, harm, or death to its owners or those whom it comes into contact."

(2020). He goes on further to differentiate between cursed and haunted objects. "*Cursed* is often used synonymously with *haunted* and *possessed*, but these qualities are distinct… The difference is one of intelligence. Cursed items have none… By contrast, a haunted object has a spirit intelligence attached directly to it, and a possessed item is similarly inhabited, in this case by a demonic entity." (2020). So far, Loab has not been attributed to bringing about misfortune or haunting anyone except perhaps in someone's dreams. Therefore, her unsettling appearance in AI generated art is a projection of the viewers feelings of anxiety.

This projection of hopes, fears, and anxieties is not unlike what was documented in Jared Colton's article about the Horse E-Books Twitter account that was once believed to be generated by a chatbot, or rather artificial intelligence (2016). Followers of this Twitter account were for a time led to believe that the tweets were genuinely being produced by AI, and that a machine was producing cryptic (and sometimes interpreted as profound) messages. The followers of Horse E-Books treated the account as a type of digital Oracle of Delphi who would attempt to apply meaning to what would otherwise be considered gibberish. This is typical of emergent technologies where the public tries to make sense of the novel and give it meaning. Similarly in 2016, Microsoft launched Tay whom they hoped would be a pop icon. According to Tok Thompson, "Within in a few hours, the bot began to post racist and offensive tweets, forcing Microsoft to shut down Tay after only sixteen hours." (2019). The difference between Horse E-Books and Tay though is that Tay was actually artificial intelligence and Internet trolls fed Tay enough problematic prompts to turn the AI into a digital neo-Nazi. The hopes, fears, and anxieties being applied to this emergent technology is well-founded.

However, these feelings are nothing new when it comes to state-of-the-art technology and folklore and popular media reflect this. Consider, for example, Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*. At face value it is a horror story of a mad scientist bringing a cadaver to life. It is also

in direct response to a scientific revolution taking place in the 19th Century projecting meaning and possibilities of Charles Darwin's research and findings. Later film adaptions would explore this further in what is considered in popular discourse as taboo and monstrous. The same can be said with the advent of electricity and powerlines. An illustration dating to 1889 titled, *The Unrestrained Demon* depicts the anxieties and fears during the time of the then novel technology with Death shown as a spider with a lightbulb as its abdomen sitting in a web of powerlines causing havoc in an urban setting (see Figure 4). Interestingly, the same illustration resurfaced during the Covid-19 pandemic mocking people who were panicking over 5G cellular towers being installed. Finally, the Internet is not an exception in this kind of folk speculation.

Figure 4. The Unrestrained Demon. Circa 1889.

Projections of the Internet and what it could mean for humanity since it became widely available to the public in the early 1990s has ranged on the spectrum of the hopeful, revolutionary, and terrifying. This manifested when chat rooms allowed for strangers to interact virtually and opened the possibility of meeting in real life during a time when "Stranger Danger" was still in vogue in the United States. "Stranger Danger" was the popular shorthand at the time to articulate the fears and anxieties of encountering anyone not known to the individual or community and posed a threat. Thirty years later, this notion has become a source of amusement as we live in an age of smart devices that allow us to date, hookup, and seek rides from total strangers.

Artificial intelligence has not escaped the hopes, fears, and anxieties of people and has been thoroughly articulated in popular culture. Narratives involving AI ranges on a spectrum of the benign to the malicious. At one end, we have Rosie from *The Jetsons* and Data from *Star Trek*. On the other, there is *The Terminator*, *The Matrix*, and *M3gan*. It is through these kinds of narratives that allow for the folk to explore a world of endless possibilities that technology can bring to humanity. Loab is symbolic of this and as the world catches up with science fiction, I suspect more folk narratives such as her will emerge to continue articulating meaning, belief, and implications of new technology that was once the stuff of dreams. Such narratives whether they are folk, popular culture, or a combination of the two allows the audience to speculate and call into question what exactly artificial intelligence is and how we define the parameters of humanity in an age where sentience is being rapidly redefined. In essence, folk narratives about AI functions as an uncanny mirror that reflects the best and worst that humanity has to offer.

We know that Loab is not cursed or haunted. We also know that she is a projection of the hopes, fears, and anxieties coming from digital users. What then is going on? I propose that, like Slenderman

who is also an Internet legend and monster born from online horror fiction, reverse ostension is occurring. Both Jeffrey Tolbert and Andrea Kitta agree this is what occurred with Slender Man. Kitta explains that with Slenderman reverse ostension occurs because, "we have to create both the experience and the narratives." (2018). The same can be applied with Loab. Further, while Slender Man originated as a short story on Creepy Pasta, Loab's narrative is not supplemented with an already established narrative. All we have to go on is a series of images and a vague origin story.

It is therefore up to the people (or the folk) viewing the artwork to apply meaning and a narrative to fill in the spaces of ambiguity. This is not unlike Lynne McNeill's research with Fairy Fables, a chatbot who would produce a new micronarrative fairy tale every three hours every day via Twitter and Tumblr (2018). Also, much like Colton's Horse E-Books, the messages would appear disjointed and cryptic where the audience is compelled to give the text meaning. However, so far as we know Fairy Fables are being genuinely produced by artificial intelligence. McNeill observes:

> 'Fairy Fables' has replaced the human with the mechanical, the folk with the institutional. Implicit in almost all instances of fairy tales being shared online, whether as narratives or as textual tones, there remains a sense of a 'teller,' someone behind the manifestation of tradition within the technology. Is the AI the storyteller in these contexts? Do audiences actually require a teller in order for a story to have meaning? (2018)

I feel artificial intelligence today and moving forward are becoming legitimate "tellers" and artists. The implications of mechanized/non-human folk narrators ought to be explored further in a separate paper and Tok Thompson's *Posthuman Folklore* is an excellent primer for that.

Artificial intelligence is increasingly becoming part of everyday life in the 21st Century. From Alexa and Google Home to self-driving

cars, and ChatGPT and MidJourney. It is inescapable. These devices and programs are meant to ease burdens and relieve stress. However, like with all novel technology, it sometimes goes awry. The glitches that occur create digital spaces of ambiguity waiting to be filled in with folk narratives that provide explanation. Take for example, the Allied Forces who flew during the Second World War dealt with emerging technologies that ranged from radar to newly designed aircraft. The glitches that occurred were explained with now familiar narratives of gremlins and Foo-Fighters. So, what happens when you glitch out an AI program designed to generate digital artwork that becomes unsettling? The audience will create a monster and story to make sense of the extraordinary. In this case it is Loab.

Every day the pantheon of Internet legends and cryptids is growing, and undoubtedly more ghosts lurk within the machines that are our computers and handheld mobile devices. Loab now joins the likes of Slenderman, Momo, and the Backrooms. However, is it all a hoax like the Horse E-Books Twitter account? As of now, that remains to be seen. As a folklorist I hope it is real. I hope there is a ghost in a machine who creates surrealist artwork from their dreams of electric sheep. Hoax or not, the folk narratives that give meaning and belief around Loab and other emerging technologies is fascinating. An audience member views a work of art created by something that is not human or organic and attempts to make sense of it all. These narratives speak to a broader conversation taking place on personhood, ethics, motivations, and humanity. As artificial intelligence continues to develop and evolve so do the conversations that will take place on questioning the meaning of being human and possessing humanity. We are entering a brave new world and digital folklore such as Loab further cements the Internet as a new frontier for legends to grow and thrive.

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Biographies des contributeurs | Contributor Biographies

Udita Banerjee
Udita Banerjee est doctorante au Département des sciences humaines et sociales de l'IIT Gandhinagar. Elle a complété son maîtrise en philosophie du Département d'études anglaises et culturelles de l'Université de Burdwan. Ses intérêts de recherche comprennent les littératures postcoloniales et les études sur les frontières. Ses publications récentes incluent un chapitre de livre dans *Kalapani Crossings : Revisiting 19th Century Migrations from India's Perspective* (2021), édité par Ashutosh Bhardwaj et Judith Misrahi-Barak, publié par Routledge.
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Udita Banerjee is a doctoral candidate in the Department of Humanities and Social Sciences at IIT Gandhinagar. She has completed her M. Phil from the Department of English and Culture Studies, University of Burdwan. Her research interests include Postcolonial Literature(s) and Border Studies. Her recent publications include a book chapter in *Kalapani Crossings: Revisiting 19th Century Migrations from India's Perspective* (2021), edited by Ashutosh Bhardwaj and Judith Misrahi-Barak, published by Routledge.

Roshni Caputo-Nimbark
Roshni Caputo-Nimbark est candidate au doctorat en folklore à l'Université Memorial. Ses recherches portent sur l'homosexualité et le patrimoine dans une communauté agricole de Terre-Neuve. Avec les résidents, elle réévalue les économies et les structures de sentiments basées sur les biens communs dans le but de forger un avenir plus inclusif centré sur la durabilité, les soins, la coopération et la réciprocité. Grâce à ce travail, elle dirige le développement d'un écomusée communautaire qui donne la priorité aux représentations critiques/queer du patrimoine et à l'ethnographie réciproque.
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Roshni Caputo-Nimbark is a PhD Candidate in Folklore at Memorial University. Her research concerns queerness and heritage in a Newfoundland farming community. Together with residents, she is revaluing commons-based economies and structures of feeling with the aim of forging a more inclusive future centred on sustainability, care, cooperation, and reciprocity. Through this work, she is spearheading the development of a community-led ecomuseum that prioritizes critical/queer representations of heritage and reciprocal ethnography.

Rebecca Horeth
Rebecca Horeth est candidate à la maîtrise en folklore à l'Université Memorial et vice-présidente de l'Alliance des Saxons de Transylvanie au Canada. Ses recherches portent sur les Saxons de Transylvanie nés au Canada et sur les modes changeants de transmission de la danse folklorique dans le contexte de leur communauté d'immigrants du sud-ouest de l'Ontario. Avant de commencer des études supérieures et grâce à sa formation en éducation, Rebecca a développé le projet de subvention « Folk Dance at School » en 2020 et elle continue de faciliter la programmation basée sur le curriculum dans les écoles publiques de l'Ontario.
*
Rebecca Horeth is a Masters Candidate in Folklore at Memorial University and Vice-President of the Alliance of Transylvanian Saxons in Canada. Her research focus is on Canadian-born Transylvanian Saxons and the shifting modes of folk dance transmission in their immigrant community context in Southwestern Ontario. Before beginning graduate studies and as a result of her background in Education, Rebecca developed the "Folk Dance at School" grant project in 2020 and she continues to facilitate curriculum-based programming in Ontario public schools.

Fritz-Gerald Louis

Fritz-Gerald Louis, est licencié en Histoire de l'art et archéologie de l'Université d'État d'Haïti (UEH). Titulaire d'une maîtrise en Histoire, mémoire et patrimoine (UEH/Université Laval à Québec), Louis poursuit des études doctorales dans le domaine de la muséologie à l'Université du Québec à Montréal (UQAM), particulièrement sur la thématique du collectionnement muséal. Ses recherches figurent présentement au Canada et à l'étranger au travers de multiples communications et ateliers. En parallèle de ses activités de recherches, Louis est chargé de cours en histoire de l'art et esthétique à l'Université d'État d'Haïti et à l'École Nationale des Arts. Il publie également des éditoriales dans le quotidien Le Nouvelliste. Louis est membre de la Chaire de recherche sur la gouvernance des musées et le droit de la culture, de l'Institut du Patrimoine de l'UQAM, du Centre Interuniversitaire d'Études sur les Lettres, les Arts et les Traditions (CELAT) et chercheur associé au Centre international de documentation et d'information, caribéenne et afro-canadienne (CIDIHCA).

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Fritz-Gerald Louis, has a degree in Art History and Archeology from the State University of Haiti (UEH). Holder of a master's degree in History, memory and heritage (UEH/Laval University in Quebec), Louis is pursuing doctoral studies in the field of museology at the University of Quebec in Montreal (UQAM), particularly on the theme of museum collecting. His research is currently featured in Canada and abroad through multiple communications and workshops. In parallel with his research activities, Louis is a lecturer in art history and aesthetics at the State University of Haiti and the National School of Arts. He also publishes editorials in the daily Le Nouvelliste. Louis is a member of the Research Chair on museum governance and cultural law, the UQAM Heritage Institute, the Inter-university Center for Studies on Letters, Arts and Traditions (CELAT) and associate

researcher at the International Center for Documentation and Information, Caribbean and Afro-Canadian (CIDIHCA).

Enzina Marrari

Enzina Marrari, elle/la, est étudiante au doctorat au Département de folklore de l'Université Memorial de Terre-Neuve-et-Labrador. Elle est une artiste multidisciplinaire et boursière Connie Boochever 2015, ainsi que boursière artistique de la Rasmuson Foundation 2017 (et deux fois primée). En 2018, elle a reçu le prix Top 40 Under 40 de l'Alaska Journal of Commerce. Elle a été soutenue par la Awesome Foundation, l'Alaska State Council on the Arts, l'Alaska Arts and Culture Foundation, Radical Arts for Women et la Rasmuson Foundation. En 2015, elle a été nominée pour un prix d'artiste émergent par l'intermédiaire de la Fondation Joan Mitchell. Elle a été artiste en résidence au Proyecto 'ace, à Buenos Aires, en Argentine, et au Cill Rialaig Artist Center à Ballinskelligs, en Irlande. Elle a obtenu une résidence à la Olive Stack Gallery de Listowel, en Irlande, pour 2024, et reviendra pour une résidence à Cill Rialaig en 2025. Marrari a publié « Mimes and Road Construction : An Improbable Partnership for Community Investment ». » pour la Banque fédérale de réserve de San Francisco, Community Development Innovation Review, en 2019. Elle est professeur adjoint de beaux-arts à l'Université d'Alaska à Anchorage et a été partenaire fondatrice de l'incubateur artistique @ Studio C à Anchorage. Elle a obtenu un B.A. Il est titulaire d'un BA en Studio Art (concentration : sculpture et dessin de figures) de l'Université d'Alaska à Anchorage et d'une maîtrise en Studio Art (concentration : installation et performance) de l'Université de New York.
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Enzina Marrari, she/her, is a doctoral student in the Department of Folklore at Memorial University of Newfoundland and Labrador. She is a multidisciplinary artist and a 2015 Connie Boochever Fellow, and a 2017 Rasmuson Foundation Artist Fellow (and two time awardee).

In 2018, she received an Alaska Journal of Commerce's Top 40 under 40 award. She has been supported by the Awesome Foundation, Alaska State Council on the Arts, Alaska Arts and Culture Foundation, Radical Arts for Women, and the Rasmuson Foundation. In 2015, she was nominated for an emerging artist award through the Joan Mitchell Foundation. She has been an artist in residence in Proyecto 'ace, at Buenos Aires, Argentina, and the Cill Rialaig Artist Center in Ballinskelligs, Ireland. She has been awarded a residency at the Olive Stack Gallery in Listowel, Ireland for 2024, and will return for a residency at Cill Rialaig in 2025. Marrari published, "Mimes and Road Construction: An Unlikely Partnership for Community Investment. " for the San Francisco Federal Reserve Bank, Community Development Innovation Review, in 2019. She is an Adjunct Professor of Fine Arts at the University of Alaska, Anchorage, and was a founding partner of the arts incubator @ Studio C in Anchorage. She received a B.A. in Studio Art (concentration: sculpture and figure drawing) from the University of Alaska Anchorage and an M.A. in Studio Art (concentration: installation and performance) from New York University.

John E. Priegnitz II
John E. Priegnitz II est un folkloriste qui a obtenu sa maîtrise en études folkloriques à l'Utah State University en 2023. Il termine actuellement sa première année de doctorat en se concentrant sur la même discipline au département de folklore de l'Université Memorial de Terre-Neuve. Ses travaux antérieurs incluent la création du projet d'histoire orale d'Intermountain West LGBTQ+, ce qui est hébergé dans les collections spéciales et archives des bibliothèques de l'Utah State University. Ses domaines d'intérêt comprennent la recherche sur les légendes, la culture matérielle et le folklore queer.
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John E. Priegnitz II is a folklorist who earned his MA in Folklore Studies at Utah State University in 2023. He is currently completing

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his first year as a PhD student focusing on the same discipline at Memorial University of Newfoundland's Department of Folklore. His previous work includes creating The Intermountain West LGBTQ+ Oral History Project housed at Utah State University's Libraries Special Collections and Archives. His areas of interest include legend research, material culture, and Queer folklore.

Ainjel Stephens

Ainjel Stephens est doctorant à l'Université Memorial de Terre-Neuve-et-Labrador. Bien que ses recherches portent sur un vaste réseau de contes populaires et de contes de fées, sa spécialisation réside à l'intersection entre les contes de fées, la théorie queer et la culture Internet.
*
Ainjel Stephens is a PhD candidate at Memorial University of Newfoundland and Labrador. While her research includes a vast web of folk- and fairy tales, her specialization lies in the intersection between fairy tales, queer theory, and Internet culture.

Lana Thorimbert

Lana Thorimbert est originaire de Saskatchewan et habite à Terre-Neuve-et-Labrador depuis 2011. Après avoir terminé un baccalauréat en biochimie-nutrition à St. John's, elle a décidé de s'essayer à la culture d'un jardin et de viser l'autosuffisance dans la région de Codroy Valley, qui est historiquement le centre agricole de Terre-Neuve. Au jardin ou dans la nature, observer les plantes sauvages et cultivées qui poussent tout autour est son lieu de bonheur et c'est en grande partie là que puise son inspiration. Respecter et apprendre de son environnement local est essentiel à une prise de décision constructive et bienveillante. Plus récemment, la passion de Lana pour les plantes a évolué et l'a amenée à émerger dans le monde de la production durable de fibres de laine et de lin qu'elle poursuivra sous la forme d'un stage cet été en Nouvelle-Écosse. La nature regorge

de cycles magnifiques où aucun déchet n'est généré. C'est le style de vie que Lana rêve de vivre et de promouvoir, un style de vie sans gaspillage.

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Lana Thorimbert is originally from Saskatchewan and has been calling Newfoundland and Labrador home since 2011. After finishing a bachelor's degree in biochemistry-nutrition in St. John's, she decided to try her hand at growing a garden and aiming for self-sufficiency in the Codroy Valley, which is, historically, the agricultural hub of Newfoundland. In the garden or out in nature, observing wild and cultivated plants growing all around is her happy place and is largely where her inspiration is drawn from. Respecting and learning from one's local environment is crucial to constructive, caring decision making. More recently Lana's passion for plants has evolved and led her to emerge into the world of sustainable wool and linen fibre production which she will pursue in the form of an internship this summer in Nova Scotia. Nature is full of beautiful cycles where no such thing as waste is generated. This is the lifestyle Lana dreams about living and promoting, one without waste.

Brandon M. Ward

Brandon M. Ward est né et a grandi dans la petite communauté de pêcheurs historique de Portugal Cove South, sur la côte sud de Terre-Neuve. Il ressent un lien profond avec son pays et sa région à travers sa passion pour la culture locale, l'histoire et la généalogie. Cette passion est née de sa vie dans une petite communauté très unie où il passait une grande partie de son temps à écouter les histoires de son grand-père Mike Coombs. Brandon aime faire de la randonnée et passer du temps dans la nature, principalement au bord de l'océan, pour se détendre après son travail quotidien. C'est à cette époque qu'il trouve l'inspiration et se sent obligé d'écrire. Brandon est relativement nouveau dans la poésie, Stone Island étant la première publication officielle de son œuvre.

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Brandon M. Ward was born and raised in the small, historic fishing community of Portugal Cove South on the Southern Shore of Newfoundland. He feels a deep connection to his home and region through his passion for the local culture, history and genealogy. This passion evolved from living in a small, tightly-knit community where he spent much of his time listening to the stories of his grandfather Mike Coombs. Brandon enjoys hiking and spending time in nature, mostly beside the ocean, to unwind from his day job. It is during such time that he finds inspiration and feels compelled to write. Brandon is relatively new to poetry with Stone Island being the first official publication of his work.