

# Ought: The Journal of Autistic Culture

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Volume 5 | Issue 1

Article 1

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December 2023

## Front Matter



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### Recommended Citation

(2023) "Front Matter," *Ought: The Journal of Autistic Culture*: Vol. 5: Iss. 1, Article 1.

DOI: [10.9707/2833-1508.1150](https://doi.org/10.9707/2833-1508.1150)

Available at: <https://scholarworks.gvsu.edu/ought/vol5/iss1/1>

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# OUGHT

*the journal of autistic culture*

Volume 5, Issue 1

Fall 2023

## OUGHT: The Journal of Autistic Culture

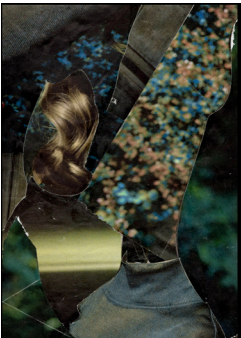
*Ought: The Journal of Autistic Culture* is a peer-reviewed, biannual journal that aims to document autistic culture by publishing scholarly and creative works examining and exploring it. *Ought* focuses on contributions of the autistic community, celebrating the visual, verbal, and non-verbal accomplishments of autistic scholars, artists, and others. It also showcases the work of the scholars, scientists, parents, professionals, and other autistic-adjacent individuals who share experiences with autistic people and influence their lives. In blending creative and critical works about autism, *Ought* seeks to break down barriers between academic disciplines, between genres of artistic expression, between caretakers and professionals, and finally, between neurotypicals and autistics. *Ought* is the conversation about autism as it ought to be.

### Language and Labels

*Ought* uses identity-first language to refer to autistic individuals whenever possible. Identity-first language communicates our commitment to neurodiversity and aligns with the journal's focus on autistic culture. *Ought* does employ the term "Autism Spectrum Disorder" to refer to autism, given the widespread use of this term in autism-related research. Nevertheless, *Ought* recognizes and values contributors who resist the pathologizing term "disorder."

### Submit to Ought: The Journal of Autistic Culture

*Ought* welcomes contributions from scholars, researchers, writers, and artists. Contributors are the initial owners of the copyright to their submitted pieces. For more information and the latest calls for submissions, please see <http://scholarworks.gvsu.edu/ought>.



### About the Cover Image

The cover image, titled *Asseyez Vous (Mme Bertillion) Analogue Collage* is by Sonia Boue, a multi-form artist and writer. Boue's practice articulates a concern with home and the domestic as metaphors for exile and displacement. She is also at the forefront of neuro-inclusive participatory arts practice in the UK.

## **OUGHT Editorial Board**

Our editorial board consists of a balance of autistic and neurotypical scholars from universities around the world.

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## **Reviewers for Volume 4, Issue 2 (Spring 2023)**

Sara M. Acevedo, Miami of Ohio University; John Bruni, Grand Valley State University; James McGrath, Leeds Beckett University; Barbara Mitra, University of Worcester; Beth Myers, Syracuse University; Jinx Mylo, Bowling Green University; Hanna Bertilsdotter Rosqvist, Södertörn University; Alyssa Hillary Zisk, University of Rhode Island.

# Note from the Editors: Critical Autism Studies

The first chapter to catch my attention in the new *International Handbook of Critical Autism Studies Handbook* (Routledge, 2022) was “Critical Autism Parenting” by Mitzi Waltz, who like me, is a neurotypical academic with an autistic child (p. 195). Waltz, in her eloquent historical overview, details how parents of autistic individuals have shaped the way autism is publicly perceived, treated at home and in school, subjected to research, and most critically, commodified in our neoliberal society. Parents have been willing to pay whatever it takes, to “prevent their autistic child from becoming an autistic adult” (pp. 200-201), Waltz suggests, not without empathy for parents facing the crush of normalizing social pressures. But the essay ends with forceful recommendations for the same: stop shopping for solutions, stop fighting for individuals alone, and start working toward collective solutions with larger affiliate groups of professionals, autistic people, and their family and friends.

In the first five years of its existence, this journal has attempted to heed Waltz’ call by working for the collective good of the autistic community. It has carved out a very small niche in the larger field of Critical Autism Studies (CAS throughout this issue), striving to achieve what Damion Milton and Sarah Ryan, in their introduction to the handbook, describe as a central concern of critical autism studies—namely, “creating a space to relieve some of the tensions that percolate around autism and autism research, enabling respectful, open dialogue and discussion” (p.4). In this issue, then, *Ought* explores these percolating tensions surrounding the emergent discipline of CAS, seeking to contribute to the conversation with both scholarly and creative works.

The issue begins with a broad overview CAS by one of its most notable scholars, Sonya Loftis, whose own major monograph, *Imagining Autism: Fictions and Stereotypes on the Spectrum* (2015) is a key work in the study of autistic representation. Loftis accounts for many of the seminal books in the field, scholarly texts that helped to establish the framework for what became CAS. Cansu Elmadagli examines how CAS intersects with several additional academic fields, including critical discourse analysis, feminist theory, and

post-colonialism. Catherine Caldwell-Harris and Anna Schwartz posit a new understanding of autistic sociality, reviewing relevant research while advancing a strengths-based perspective on this subject.

Because CAS has always embraced popular culture outside of the academy, Loftis' article is supplemented by Alyssa Hillary Zisk's annotated bibliography of non-academic web articles and blog posts that, in their words, "take defining actions of critical autism or neurodiversity studies." One defining action of CAS is the relentless interrogation of autistic representation in its many manifestations. *Sharp Stick*, a recent film by Lena Durham, features an autistically coded character, who is—yet again—played by a neurotypical actor. Autistic critic Meaghan Krazinski criticizes this representation from multiple theoretical viewpoints, arguing that the film, for its faults, invites viewers "to critically examine societal expectations, representations of neurodivergence."

This issue is well-supplemented with artwork by Pernille Fraser, and Shelly Wallace, and poetry by Sarah Nuttall. Their contributions suggest that the field of CAS must also include original creative and critical works by autistic individuals, paintings and poems that express how, in Nuttall's language, "we have all been/ we are all/ differences/ differently/ wired."

—Robert Rozema

## References

- Milton, D., & Ryan, S. (Eds.). (2022). *The Routledge International Handbook of Critical Autism Studies*. Routledge.
- Waltz, M. (2022). Critical autism parenting. In Milton, D., & Ryan, S (Eds.) *The Routledge International Handbook of Critical Autism Studies*, pp. 194-202. Routledge, 2022.

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