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## Letter From the Editors

After the success of this academic year, we are delighted to present the fifth issue of the Aberdeen Historical Review (AHR). Our September 2023 issue, which was published on our website (<https://abdnhistory.co.uk/published-issues>) has excitedly welcomed more readers than ever! We hope that with each new issue published this engagement with the Review will continue to grow.

The Aberdeen Historical Review began in February 2021 amid the second semester of online teaching when a group of students from the university came together to discuss how they missed the uplifting atmosphere created by being on campus. As a result, the Review was established to celebrate the successes of Aberdeen University's students and continue to inspire academic accomplishments throughout the pandemic and beyond. The AHR is an open-access academic undergraduate journal that publishes first-class scholarship produced by students at the University of Aberdeen. Each paper was written for a history Honours course at the university and thoroughly peer-reviewed by a dedicated board of students. Authors and reviewers partake in an anonymised dialogue, through which authors are challenged to review and develop their papers. In this way, the essays are allowed to reach their greatest potential. Simultaneously, peer reviewers are enabled to take a unique approach to each paper and utilise their creativity, critical thinking, and academic writing skills in advising the author on improvements.

Throughout the 2023/24 academic year, we introduced our project to many Honours students. We were delighted to see students and staff referring to the journal as a continuing source of inspiration and a vital student-led project. Although the AHR is part of a global network of undergraduate publications it is primarily intended as a tool for its community in Aberdeen. We hope that students from across the year groups will use the AHR as a guiding voice as they write their assessments. This volume includes the course number and title for which each essay is produced, allowing students and tutors alike to refer to first-class essays from a specific history course.

Cerwynn McKay opens our newest issue with a historiographical review discussing the interpretive methods utilized to decipher ancient Aztec, Mayan, and Incan writings. Following this, Alexander Sutton offers an assessment of the failed Scottish invasion of Ireland from 1315 to 1318

launched by Edward Bruce and his armies. Next, Elizabeth Heverin examines Edward I's Arthurian enthusiasm and vision when uniting Britain under his rule.

Kathryn Berry analyses the significance of the First World War had upon works and ideals produced by Black intellectuals in post-war society. Further, Anna Pizzuto-Pomaco discusses the political and historical development of Black Liberation Theology. Emily McQuoid investigates how responsible British and French administrations were for the development of Kurdish nationalism. Cameron Beattie argues that the shift in gender-norms in post-war Weimar Germany prompted the emergence of a 'new' generation. Additionally, Matthew McCallum discusses the historiography of sexuality and gender identity from Western perspectives and beyond. Lastly, Peter Catterall evaluates the possible advantages and pitfalls of the utilization of images as historical sources.

As the new editorial board, we would like to thank everyone who was involved in helping to create the Aberdeen Historical Review. Specifically, we wish to thank our peer reviewers who were crucial in the editing process and all the student authors who submitted their essays to the journal. We were honoured to work with many talented and dedicated undergraduate students who now embark on new paths within academia and beyond. Producing the fifth issue of the AHR has been a rewarding experience but we could not have achieved this without the support of our faculty advisors Dr Bradford Bow and Dr Owen Walsh. We also want to thank the History Department for their continuous guidance and support. Finally, thank you to the readers for supporting us, we hope you enjoy reading the journal as much as we enjoyed making it.

Your Editors

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## Deciphering Ancient Scripts: Exploring Aztec, Maya, and Inca ‘Writings’

CERWYSS MACKAY

*Cerwyss McKay is a fourth-year single honours history student and the Managing Editor of the Aberdeen Historical Review. She enjoys studying the history of the modern Middle East through the lens of gender history, particularly the fall of the Ottoman Empire and incoming British colonialism. After completing her undergraduate degree, she would like to continue her studies and pursue a career in academia.<sup>1</sup>*

Academic scholarship on Aztec, Maya and Inca ‘writings’ is compelling. The historiography presents diverging interpretations of the disparate ways to read Aztec, Maya and Inca writing. Through a focus on these societies scholars have developed a sharpened understanding of the significance of writing as a method of communication and recording information. The historiography tends to focus extensively on Maya and Aztec hieroglyphic writings, and relatively few scholars have concentrated their research on the Inca khipus system. The debates have adapted as new technology and translations have been developed, allowing scholars to better contextualise the written records. Both Maya and Aztec cultures developed a writing system based on hieroglyphs whereas the Inca empire’s system was exceedingly different in comparison. It is for this reason that this essay will consider these societies separately when forming an interpretation of the wider historiographical trends. This separation is intended to explore distinctions in ancient writing systems and establish scholars’ positions concerning each civilisation. There are key differences between the approaches and ideas of historians, anthropologists and linguists at times and the development of new technology ensures that the field is constantly evolving.

Beginning with the Olmecs it is important to note the hypothesis that Aztec and Mayan language and writing originated with this culture. Campbell and Kaufman present a linguistic approach and

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<sup>1</sup> This essay was written for HI355M: Aztecs, Mayas & Incas: Empires On The Eve Of Apocalypse.

explore the idea that the Olmecs spoke Mixe-Zoquean languages. Geographical and temporal correlation support this thesis, alongside the discovery of Mixe-Zoquean words within other Mesoamerican languages.<sup>2</sup> They suggest that Mixe-Zoquean loan words in Mesoamerican languages imply Olmec influence.<sup>3</sup> Mesoamerican words for food such as beans, squash and tomatoes were widely borrowed from Mixe-Zoquean. Furthermore, the first civilised agriculturists were the Olmecs, implying that they also used these words. They take a decisive position in early historiography advocating the far-reaching influence of the Olmecs on Maya and Aztec civilisations. However, they only briefly discuss the hypothesis within the historiography that the Olmec civilisation forms the foundations for Mesoamerican cultures. They operate on the assumption that Mesoamerican cultures originate from the Olmecs. This assumption is debated within the historiography: Pool argues that although Olmec civilisation heavily influenced Mesoamerica, they were not the only culture to do so.<sup>4</sup> This brings into question the extent of the Olmec influence over subsequent civilisations.

Pohl, Pope and von Nagy offer a similar interpretation regarding the Olmec origins of Mesoamerican writing. Their approach differs slightly from Campbell and Kaufman's linguistic approach as they rely on an archaeological excavation of San Andres, highlighting the different approaches taken by anthropologists in comparison to linguists. This excavation uncovered a cylinder seal and greenstone plaque with glyphs dating to approximately 650 BC, indicating that Mesoamerican writing originated in the Olmec centre of La Venta. They use comparisons with Late Formative to Early Classic period Mesoamerican speech scrolls, day signs and paired glyphs, to explore similarities.<sup>5</sup> Their article concedes that the similarities between Mayan, Isthmian and Oaxacan scripts indicate a common ancestral script. Bricker agrees when she argues that the scripts of pre-Classic Olmec and Zapotec civilisations likely predate the Maya script,<sup>6</sup> implying a rough consensus amongst scholars concerning

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<sup>2</sup> Lyle Campbell and Terrence Kaufman, "A Linguistic Look at the Olmecs", *American Antiquity*, 41.1 (1976), 80–89, (p.80).

<sup>3</sup> Campbell and Kaufman, 'A Linguistic Look', (p.82).

<sup>4</sup> Christopher A. Pool, *Olmec Archaeology and Early Mesoamerica*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), (p.301).

<sup>5</sup> Mary E.D. Pohl, Kevin O. Pope and Christopher von Nagy, 'Olmec Origins of Mesoamerican Writing', *Science (American Association for the Advancement of Science)*, 298.5600 (2002), 1984-1987 (p.1985).

<sup>6</sup> Victoria R. Bricker, 'Advances in Maya Epigraphy', *Annual Review of Anthropology*, 24, (1995), 215-235 (p.215).



the Olmec origins of Mesoamerican writing. It is also interesting to note that these articles have been published in a variety of journals, which is indicative of a wide-ranging and interdisciplinary debate. Furthermore, it provides an intriguing background for the preliminary discussion of approaches to reading Aztec, Maya and Inca writings.

Investigations of Aztec writing have been enriched in recent decades by scholarly contributions centred around re-evaluating Mexican codices. Bröchler reconsiders the Florentine Codex to offer insight into pre-conquest Central Mexico. She views sixteenth-century New Spain as a place of learning and cultural exchange rather than a place consumed by destruction and political turmoil. Her discussion centres around Franciscan Friar, Bernardino de Sahagun, who learnt the Aztec language, Nahuatl, and taught indigenous children the Spanish writing system.<sup>7</sup> When writing the Florentine Codex, Sahagun was assisted by his students, who painted illustrations to accompany the written text. Thus, the Codex brought new and old writing methods together. Scholars such as Gruzinski argue that the pictures within the Codex display a Spanish perspective and lack the artistic qualities of indigenous scribes.<sup>8</sup> However, Bröchler argues that the pictures within this Codex demonstrate the indigenous population's version of the story of conquest. She analyses pictures depicting the burials of Moctecuhzoma and Itzquauhtzin to highlight the Florentine Codex's Tlatelolcan bias.<sup>9</sup> In her opinion, the pictures tell a slightly different story to Sahagun's text: Moctecuhzoma does not receive the traditional burial of an Aztec ruler, indicating his culpability in the Spanish conquest.<sup>10</sup> Aztec imagery is telling a subtly different narrative than the Spanish text, reflecting the beliefs and cultural values of Aztec society. European religious and social frameworks had a penchant for misinterpreting many aspects of Aztec society, thus indigenous tlacuiloque developed new ways of visualising their history. They adapted to the imposition of the Spanish writing system, highlighting how Aztec writing traditions were maintained after the conquest.

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<sup>7</sup> Anja Bröchler, 'Revisioning the Conquest of Mexico: Image and Text in the Florentine Codex (1978-80), *Medieval History Journal*, 12.1, (2009), 47-76 (p.49).

<sup>8</sup> Serge Gruzinski, *Painting the Conquest: the Mexican Indians and the European Renaissance*, (Paris: Unesco, 1992), p.49.

<sup>9</sup> Bröchler, 'Revisioning', p.62.

<sup>10</sup> Bröchler, 'Revisioning', p.51.

Fedorova's article addresses the use of emblems in the representation of language units within the Aztec script and argues that Aztec codices are generally accepted as "brilliant examples of pictography with single instances of syllabic spelling."<sup>11</sup> She attempts to expand upon this idea and distinguishes Aztec script from other Mesoamerican scripts. Although there are some similarities, she views Aztec script as different from Mixtec ideography and Maya morphosyllabic writing. Whittaker agrees with Fedorova's argument as he argues that the Aztec system was highly restricted in its usage, unlike the Maya script which was used in multiple different contexts. Aztec writing was used almost exclusively for recording names and titles for historical and administrative purposes.<sup>12</sup> In contrast, Mayan 'writing' was utilised to record historical events, religious rituals, astronomical observations and genealogical information. Whittaker differentiates between the three graphic recording systems used by the Aztecs: notation, iconography and writing.<sup>13</sup> His hypothesis that Aztec writing and iconography were separate and had different purposes provides a new interpretation of Aztec glyphs. Whittaker talks about Aztec writing in the same way that scholars used to discuss Maya writing before it was widely deciphered. A key difference is the large amount of pre-Conquest Maya 'text' which survives compared with the Aztec world, suggesting that Maya writers created more codices. Thus, scholars are right to imply that Aztec 'writing' had a much more restricted use.

Whittaker takes a linguistic approach to provide insights into how to read Aztec glyphs. His argument centres around the idea that writing is intrinsically tied to language. Thus, Aztec glyphs and Nahuatl are interlinked. Furthermore, his definition of writing is narrower than what scholars have previously taken, and he is quickly becoming a key scholar in the field of Aztec glyphs. He argues that iconography can be interpreted by the reader whereas writing is not open to interpretation.<sup>14</sup> This is an innovative approach and enables him to claim that Aztec writing relied on grammatical structures and phonetic components, challenging the previous understanding of Aztec glyphs as iconographic. Maya

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<sup>11</sup> Liudmila L. Fedorova, 'The Emblematic Script of the Aztec Codices as a Particular Semiotic Type of Writing System', *Written Language and Literacy*, 12 (2009), 258-275 (p.258).

<sup>12</sup>Gordon Whittaker, 'Aztec Hieroglyphics: A Name-Based Writing System', *Language & History*, 61 (2018), 60-76 (p.61).

<sup>13</sup> Whittaker, 'Aztec Hieroglyphics', p.60.

<sup>14</sup> Gordon Whittaker, *Deciphering Aztec Hieroglyphs: A Guide to Nahuatl Writing*, (California: University of California Press, 2021), p.23.

glyphs often feature a combination of logograms and phonetic elements which allowed for a more versatile writing system. Therefore, Whittaker's argument becomes compelling as he hints at similarities between Aztec and Mayan 'writing' systems, perhaps due to their Olmec origins. However, this is not to say that Whittaker does not rely heavily on iconography throughout his research. This reliance is most likely due to a lack of source material as Spanish destruction of the majority of Aztec writings resulted in an overreliance on glyphs. Glyphs carved onto monuments constitute the majority of surviving Aztec writing, limiting the scope for research and decipherment.

In contrast, Fedorova argues that Aztec writing can be characterised as illustrative and compares Aztec codices to contemporary children's books.<sup>15</sup> This comparison is problematic as it reduces Aztec glyphs to iconography and simplifies their meaning. The only similarity is that both children's books and Aztec writing contain pictures. However, Fedorova does acknowledge the differences in the function of the pictures. Unlike children's books, Aztec iconography was either iconic or indexical.<sup>16</sup> In addition, her approach does not consider the influence of scribes on the Aztec writing system. According to Whittaker, Aztec glyphs were flexible and were used depending on the "taste, tradition, and requirements of the scribe"<sup>17</sup> However, it is important to note that Mayan glyphs were more phonetically based than Aztec and were thus considerably more flexible.

Aztec hieroglyphs often required colour to be properly read, with the standard strategy to paint the coloured item. Whittaker argues that the addition of colour was not for cosmetic purposes, instead terms of colour are represented by the colour itself.<sup>18</sup> He uses the example of Xiuhcaque whose name means 'He Has Turquoise Sandals', therefore his glyph exhibits a blue sandal.<sup>19</sup> Tokovinine takes a comparable approach to Whittaker in his analysis of colour classification in Classic Maya inscriptions. The key question he bases his research on is whether the five basic terms corresponding to red, white, black, yellow and blue/green were the only means of referring to colour in Maya writing. He offers a comparison to the languages of Ch'olan, Tzeltalan and Yucatecan in which there is an array of terms

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<sup>15</sup> Fedorova, 'The Emblematic Script', p.460.

<sup>16</sup> Fedorova, 'The Emblematic Script', p.460.

<sup>17</sup> Whittaker, *Deciphering*, p.54.

<sup>18</sup> Whittaker, 'Aztec Hieroglyphics', p.66.

<sup>19</sup> Whittaker, 'Aztec Hieroglyphics', p.67.

for secondary colours. He concludes that the use of basic colour terms was possibly linked to the broad meaning of signs.<sup>20</sup> His research provides a deeper analysis of Maya glyphs, taking into account Bricker's linguistic ideas of multiple glyph meanings.

Bricker is a key scholar in the field of Maya writing. She takes a linguistic approach and examines a spelling convention in the post-conquest manuscript *The Book of Chilam Balam of Chumavel*. She believes that this may represent an adaption of logosyllabic principles to the Latin alphabet. The script in this manuscript uses both logographic and syllabic principles of Mayan writing which appear to have adapted rather than replaced the Latin alphabet.<sup>21</sup> She argues that the spelling inconsistencies present reflect Mayan acquaintance "to a mixed writing system that permitted words to be represented" in different ways.<sup>22</sup> Her approach to understanding Maya writing is similar to that of Bröchler, they both examine primary documents for insight. This article was published in a linguistic journal whereas Bricker's 1995 article was featured in a journal of anthropology.<sup>23</sup> This highlights the interdisciplinary nature of 'reading' Maya writing as scholars of both fields are involved in research.

Bricker's later article furthers her original hypothesis. She discusses in greater depth the composition of Mayan writing and her ground-breaking research has had a significant impact on scholars' understanding. She disputes the theory that the Maya writing system was based on logograms or word signs, instead, it is a mixed system of logograms and syllabic signs. Her argument and its supporting evidence are strong and highlight how Maya glyphs can be read differently: "A single sign can have as many as two logographic readings and one syllabic reading."<sup>24</sup> She challenges the traditional scholarly view and offers a new way of thinking about Maya hieroglyphics. She continues to take a linguistic approach and her work on Mayan grammar has been a vital contribution to the

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<sup>20</sup> Alexandre Tokovinine, 'Writing Color: Words and Images of Colors in Classic Maya Inscriptions', *Res*, 61/62 (2012), 283-299 (p.296).

<sup>21</sup> Victoria R. Bricker, 'The Use of Logosyllabic Principles of Writing in 'The Book of Chilam Balam of Chumayel'', *International Journal of American Linguistics*, 51.4 (1985), 351-53 (p.352).

<sup>22</sup> Bricker, 'The Use of Logosyllabic', p.352.

<sup>23</sup> Bricker, 'Advances in Maya Epigraphy', pp.215-235.

<sup>24</sup> Bricker, 'Advances in Maya Epigraphy', p.219.

decipherment of Maya glyphs. Scholars such as Houston, Knowlton and Matsukawa extensively cite her work and make use of her linguistic translations to further their arguments.

Another significant scholar for understanding Mayan writing is Houston. Houston and Stuart view writing as a system of communication rather than technology and argue that evidence points to the role of society, not script, in determining who can read. In contrast, Brown argues that hieroglyphic literacy was not widespread amongst ancient Maya as most pre-conquest Mayan languages had no word for 'read'.<sup>25</sup> Similar to scholars such as Chuchiak, Brown discusses how the Maya elite manipulated their language to make it extremely difficult to learn, thus they preserved their control over literacy.<sup>26</sup> However, Houston and Stuart dispute this hypothesis, arguing the Maya writing system was not as complex as Brown states. They argue that beginners have been taught the basics of the script in a week at contemporary universities, therefore it would have been possible for Mayan lower classes to learn.<sup>27</sup> The pictorial aspects of Maya script would have been easier to access for a larger group of readers, whereas the production of writing was much more difficult.<sup>28</sup> Their hypothesis that the ability to write and the ability to read should be separated is interesting. This is a new distinction as previous scholars have considered writing and reading as synonymous. It is interesting to note that both Brown and Houston are anthropologists yet fundamentally disagree regarding the complexity of Maya writing, implying a paucity of consensus. In contrast, Stuart is an epigrapher, and his interests are grounded in Maya inscriptions rather than society which accounts for his different approach.

Houston and Stuart consider evidence from Mayan graffiti, evidence not widely considered within the historiography. They argue that graffiti reflects an ability to write more directly than official documents. Graffiti provides insight into wider patterns of literacy and implies a regional difference in literacy. This significant development laid the foundation for further research into Maya graffiti. Helmke and Żrałka build upon this research in their 2021 article. They conclude that glyphic graffiti in

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<sup>25</sup> Cecil H. Brown, 'Hieroglyphic Literacy in Ancient Mayaland: Inferences From Linguistic Data', *Current Anthropology*, 32.4 (1991), 489-496 (p.490).

<sup>26</sup> Brown, 'Hieroglyphic Literacy', (p.490).

<sup>27</sup> Stephen D. Houston and David Stuart, 'On Maya Hieroglyphic Literacy', *Current Anthropology*, 33 (1992), 589-593 (p.590).

<sup>28</sup> Houston and Stuart, 'On Maya Hieroglyphic', p.591.

Mayan areas is relatively low in comparison to other ancient civilisations,<sup>29</sup> which implies that literacy among Maya was low. Whereas Houston and Stuart argue that the authors of graffiti were lower-class Maya, Helmke and ŻraŃka believe that the elite drew graffiti. They use evidence from autographs on graffiti which all belonged to royalty, members of the court, and artisans in the court's service.<sup>30</sup> This demonstrates the evolution of the debate as scholars revisit evidence and read against the grain to provide new insights.

Houston outlines a key weakness of older historiography on Maya writing. Precise translations were unavailable, and epigraphers were forced to rely heavily on “paraphrases and loose semantic equivalents in English or Spanish”.<sup>31</sup> For example, in the 1980s, Houston believed that the dominant theme of Maya texts was bloodletting. However, the decipherment work of scholars such as Bricker has shown that bloodletting signs are now believed to be rare in inscriptions.<sup>32</sup> There have been considerable developments since the 1980s which have disproven old assumptions. Bruce Love establishes further debate regarding an older hypothesis. He proposes that the ‘eclipse glyph’ does not refer to an eclipse but instead refers to the darkened sun and moon associated with heavy rainfall.<sup>33</sup> He questions the universal acceptance of this ‘eclipse glyph’, implying that the original hypothesis is wrong. This highlights the developments within this field over time and that although Maya writing is not a new field of study, recent technology and methodology have resulted in new interpretations.

Chuchiak offers a revisionist historian's view on the nature of colonial Maya literacy. He argues that the Mayan elite used both the traditional hieroglyphic script and the new Latin alphabet. The decipherment of Mayan writing has enabled him to explore how the elite utilised writing to defend their interests. He is a historian and so considers Maya writing from a historical perspective and does not discuss the linguistics of the language. He argues that the Maya maintained graphic pluralism by

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<sup>29</sup> Christophe Helmke and Jaroslaw ŻraŃka, ‘Writing Amidst the Scribbles: The Role and Place of Writing in Ancient Maya Graffiti’, *Papers from the Institute of Archaeology*, 21 (2021), 93-120 (p.115).

<sup>30</sup> Helmke and ŻraŃka, ‘Writing Amidst the Scribbles’, p.115.

<sup>31</sup> Stephen D. Houston, ‘Into the Minds of Ancients: Advances in Maya Glyph Studies’, *Journal of World Prehistory*, 14 (2000), 121-201 (p.123).

<sup>32</sup> Houston, ‘Into the Minds of Ancients’, p.131.

<sup>33</sup> Bruce Love, ‘The ‘Eclipse Glyph’ in Maya Text and Iconography: A Century of Misinterpretation’, *Ancient Mesoamerica*, 29 (2018), 219-244 (p.241).

continuing to use their script to preserve their ritual knowledge alongside learning the new Latin alphabet. Chuchiak's contribution broadly reflects the trend towards acceptance of the literacy dominance of the Mayan elite. Knowlton offers a similar interpretation when he discusses how literate Maya helped maintain the writing tradition and produced new versions of both indigenous and European documents.<sup>34</sup> This suggests a rough consensus among scholars regarding the literacy of the Mayan elite.

More recently, Matsumoto offers a focus on the moulding and stamping of texts onto ceramics rather than deciphering Mayan writing. This reflects the continuing trend of exploring literacy amongst the Maya. She argues that the process of moulding and stamping reflects changes in the role of writing in Mayan communities. Her hypothesis centres around the idea that differences between handwritten pottery and those stamped or moulded "often correlated with differences in form, regions, and contents."<sup>35</sup> Moulded ceramics were distributed to a wider range of social backgrounds and were generally well-adapted to writing in contexts with little literacy. This contrasts with the arguments of Chuchiak, Helmke and Żrałka who conclude that literacy was concentrated in the elite of Mayan society. However, Matsumoto does not dispute the hypothesis that the majority of Mayans could not write but she argues that they could understand basic moulded or stamped texts. Her research is highly interdisciplinary: she incorporates anthropology, archaeology, ethnography and linguistic anthropology. Her approach is unique as most epigraphers focus on painted and carved Maya hieroglyphics with relatively few articles on moulded ceramics. This is the only research to explore the implications for Maya ceramic technology and scribal practice.

The Inca empire was dissimilar to the Aztec and Mayan empires and was organised without writing. Instead, they stored data in khipus. Classen argues that this was a mnemonic device that could only be deciphered by someone familiar with the information stored.<sup>36</sup> On the other hand, Brokaw argues that khipus stored information in a non-mnemonic way which when 'read' produced a series of

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<sup>34</sup> Timothy Knowlton, 'Dynamics of Indigenous Language Ideologies in the Colonial Redaction of a Yucatec Maya Cosmological Text', *Anthropological Linguistics*, 50.1 (2008), 90-112 (p.93).

<sup>35</sup> Mallory E. Matsumoto, 'Replicating Writing: Moulding and Stamping Hieroglyphs on Classic Maya Ceramics', *Cambridge Archaeological Journal*, 28 (2018), 299-320 (p.299).

<sup>36</sup> Constance Classen, 'Literacy as Anticulture: The Andean Experience of the Written World', *History of Religions*, 30.4 (1991), 404-421 (p.404).

Inca biographies. In his opinion, khipus were highly complex and were capable of encoding a vast array of information.<sup>37</sup> There is a clear historiographical debate surrounding the Inca khipus and their function. It is important to note that scholars have not yet succeeded in deciphering khipus and this field of study is still a wide-open debate. Recent scholarship implies a rough consensus amongst scholars regarding Inca khipus. De la Puente Luna advances the idea that postcolonial Incas used khipus to record legal information. He argues that khipus demonstrate how the ayllus of Jauja adapted to Spanish judicial demands.<sup>38</sup> This disputes the hypothesis that khipus were mnemonic devices. This debate has evolved as new information has been discovered and scholars generally appear to agree regarding the complexity of Inca khipus.

Classen explores the oral basis of Inca culture and the interactions between the Inca and the literate culture of the Spanish. Classen discusses Inca oral culture with reference to Inca mythology and cosmology. The Inca believed they were representatives of the creator and had been given the power of speech for communication. Unlike the Aztecs and Mayas, Classen states that for the Inca writing “creates a sense of alienation” as knowledge was silent and did not involve active engagement with others.<sup>39</sup> Similarly, Seed explores the initial interactions between the Inca and the Spanish. She uses evidence from the Spanish account of Francisco de Jerez who she argues was frustrated at the Inca’s failure to marvel at Spain’s possession of writing.<sup>40</sup> In this instance, writing was a symbol of Western cultural supremacy. Seed and Classen are both historians and their research takes a decidedly historical perspective. Their discussions provide insight into how the Inca perceived writing. However, neither Classen nor Seed discusses Inca methods for recording information in great detail: their focus centres on the significance of oral culture and its interaction with Spanish writing. Furthermore, unlike Seed who uses evidence from Spanish chronicles, Urton believes that analysing khipus is the only way to

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<sup>37</sup> Galen Brokaw, ‘The Poetics of Khipu Historiography: Felipe Guaman Poma de Ayala’s ‘Neuva Corónica’ and the ‘Relación de Los Quipucamayos’’, *Latin American Research Review*, 38.3 (2003), 11-147 (p.141).

<sup>38</sup> José Carlos de la Puente Luna, ‘That Which Belongs to All: Khipus, Community, and Indigenous Legal Activism in the Early Colonial Andes’, *The Americas*, 72 (2015), 19-54 (p.27).

<sup>39</sup> Classen, ‘Literacy as Anticulture’, p.410.

<sup>40</sup> Patricia Seed, ‘Failing to Marvel: Atahualpa’s Encounter with the Word’, *Latin American Research Review*, 26 (1991), 7-32 (p.17).



understand Inca beliefs about their world.<sup>41</sup> Spanish chronicles display an inherent bias and are unreliable accounts of Inca beliefs. This is a flaw in earlier research, although it is not the scholar's fault as they only had access to Spanish documents.

In contrast, Urton is one of the leading scholars of Inca record keeping. He has published a considerable volume of research on Inca khipu and has been widely cited. His 2014 article considers the period from Middle Horizon to the Later Intermediate period in relation to pre-Inca record keeping. He uses the archaeological evidence of seventeen Middle Horizon cord samples to argue that they belonged to a cord-keeping tradition “that was shared by a probably diverse group” in the Wari state.<sup>42</sup> In contrast to Classen, he focuses on the origins of Inca khipu technology to hypothesise that Inca khipus may originate from two Middle Horizon khipus types.<sup>43</sup> His article was published in 2014, twenty-three years after Classen, as such technological advancements provided Urton with access to new information. For example, in 2010, two samples of khipus cord were radiocarbon dated to the Middle Horizon period. Thus, the debate has progressed to a deeper analysis of Inca khipus by utilising this new technology. Very few studies have been conducted on pre-Inca khipus; the most notable is Conklin's reference to “wrapped quipus”.<sup>44</sup> Nonetheless, Urton's ethnographic research was the most comprehensive study at the time of publication.

Hyland furthers Urton's discussion of Inca khipus and explores the debate concerning whether elements of cord construction, such as the direction of ply, had significant meanings. It is important to note that scholars can read numbers on khipus but it is unknown what other forms of information may have been recorded. She uses the testimony from an Aymara-speaking khipu maker, collected in 1895, which has been recovered from the unpublished research notes of Max Uhle. This testimony is combined with an analysis of the Cutusuma khipu at the University of Pennsylvania. Both Hyland and

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<sup>41</sup> Gary Urton, 'Writing the History of an Ancient Civilisation without Writing: Reading the Inka Khipus as Primary Sources', *Journal of Anthropological Research*, 73 (2017), 1-21 (p.19).

<sup>42</sup> Gary Urton, 'From Middle Horizon Cord-Keeping to the Rise of the Inka Khipus in the Central Andes', *Antiquity*, 88 (2014), 205-221 (p.206).

<sup>43</sup> Urton, 'From Middle Horizon', p.209.

<sup>44</sup> William J. Conklin, 'The Information System of the Middle Horizon Quipus', in *Ethnoastronomy and Archaeoastronomy in the American Tropics: Conference, New York Academy of Sciences*, ed. by Anthony Aveni and Gary Urton (New York: New York Academy of Sciences, 1981), p.267.

Urton are anthropologists and take an ethnohistoric approach. Urton developed a concept of markedness which he hypothesises is present within ply direction.<sup>45</sup> However, Hyland argues that Urton did not have sufficient evidence to support his theory. Hyland's new research offers evidence for this theory of markedness, and she builds upon Urton's concept demonstrating how the debate on Inca khipus has evolved.

To conclude, there are a range of different approaches to understanding reading Aztec, Maya, and Inca 'writings'. There is an apparent consensus amongst historians of the Olmec origins of Mesoamerican language and writing. Evidence of loan words and other similarities are used by Campbell and Kaufman to support this hypothesis. In contrast, scholars of the Aztecs take disparate approaches. Bröchler reconsiders the Florentine Codex whereas Whittaker and Fedorova explore the composition of emblems. Whittaker uses linguistics to dispute the idea that Aztec hieroglyphics were solely iconographic, innovating the field and challenging previous ideas about Aztec glyphs. Bricker takes a similarly linguistic approach. Her research on the Maya writing system is extensively cited which highlights her eminence in the field. There is significant debate surrounding the complexity of Mayan writing and its subsequent impact on literacy rates. Recent research has considered Mayan graffiti and how it supports the thesis that writing was dominated by the elite. Finally, the debate concerning Inca khipus has received more recent scholarly attention. A clear methodology for decipherment has not been developed and new evidence is continually evolving the debate. Therefore, new technology enables new interpretations which constantly changes the shape of the debate concerning Aztec, Maya and Inca writings.

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<sup>45</sup> Gary Urton, *Signs of the Inka Khipu: Binary Coding in the Andean Knotted-String Records*, (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2003), pp.143-154.

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## **"Common Language and Common Custom": The Bruces and the Failure of the Scottish Invasion of Ireland, 1315-1318**

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The 1315 Scottish invasion of Ireland is a strange prequel to the Wars of Independence and marks a high point in Medieval Scotland's power. The Bruce invasion of Ireland ended with Edward Bruce's death in battle in 1318. An understanding of this episode is essential to a full picture of the balance of power within the British Isles at this time, with important political ramifications in all three kingdoms and had a devastating impact on the people of Ireland. Numerous factors impacted the outcome of the invasion. Famine, exacerbated by the devastation caused by occupying and marching armies, caused high levels of attrition and at times made campaigning impossible. Furthermore, this caused greater reliance on supplies from Scotland, which were not always forthcoming. Many of Ireland's hardships at this time were attributed by those in Ireland to the Scots, alienating potential allies. Additionally, for numerous reasons Edward Bruce failed to gain the widespread support of either the Gaelic Irish or the Anglo-Irish and, from 1317, the organisation of the English government in resisting the Scots was improved, aided by a strong understanding of Irish politics and a well-established administration. The traditional explanation for the defeat has been Edward's character.

From 1315 to 1317 poor harvests, known as 'The Great Famine', affected all of Northern Europe, with these years already following a period of poor harvests.<sup>2</sup> Ireland, England, and Scotland

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<sup>1</sup> This essay was written for HI4009: The Scottish Wars Of Independence, 1286-1328.

<sup>2</sup> William Chester Jordan, *The Great Famine: Northern Europe in the Early Fourteenth Century*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996). p.31.

all felt the effects of the food shortages, with *The Chronicle of Lanercost* speaking, in 1316, of ‘such a mortality of men in England and Scotland through famine and pestilence as had not been heard of in our time.’<sup>3</sup> The following year, the *Annals of Connacht* describe ‘Great famine this year throughout Ireland.’<sup>4</sup> Philip Slavin also describes the effect of warfare on famine in early-fourteenth century Britain and Ireland, stating that, although widespread famine occurred, it was in ‘war-zones’ that the impact was ‘exceptionally harsh’.<sup>5</sup>

The *Annals* speak of the methods employed by Robert the Bruce on his campaign: ‘Passing through the whole land of Ulster where he had landed, he crossed Ireland almost as far as Limerick burning, killing, destroying and plundering vills, castles and even churches, both in going and returning.’<sup>6</sup> The destruction of crops, mills, storage facilities, and the stealing of cattle were all utilised by Scottish, Gaelic Irish, and Anglo-Irish forces during the Bruce invasion.<sup>7</sup> This was all on top of the taking of food for feeding armies. While all sides caused devastation in their campaigns,<sup>8</sup> ultimately the blame would lie with Edward Bruce and his armies. As the invading force, the Scots, according to Robin Frame, almost inevitably would do more damage, with destruction a vital step towards conquest.<sup>9</sup> Famine and the further destructive effects of warfare had three main consequences for the Scottish cause.

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<sup>3</sup> *The Chronicle of Lanercost, 1272-1346*, translated, with notes, by the right hon. Sir Herbert Maxwell, Baronet (Glasgow: James Maclehose & Sons, 1913), p.217.

<sup>4</sup> *Annala Connacht, The Annals of Connacht (A.D. 1224-1544)*, ed. by A. Martin Freeman (Dublin: ColourBooks Ltd, 1996) p.251.

<sup>5</sup> Philip Slavin, ‘Warfare and Ecological Destruction in Early Fourteenth-Century British Isles’, *Environmental History*, vol.19.3 (2014), pp.528–50.

<sup>6</sup> John Clyn, *The Annals of Ireland Friar*, ed. and trans. by Bernadette Williams (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2007), p.166.

<sup>7</sup> Slavin, p.88-91.

<sup>8</sup> James Lydon, *The Lordship of Ireland in the Middle Ages* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2003), p.113.

<sup>9</sup> Robin Frame, ‘The Bruces in Ireland, 1315–18’, in *Irish Historical Studies*, vol. 19.73 (1974), 3–37 (p.10).

Firstly, soldiers starved and military efforts were curtailed, such as in the retreat of 1316 when Scottish soldiers died from hunger and cold, and it was a similar story in 1317.<sup>10</sup> Roger Chatterton-Newman blames the failure of the 1316 campaign on a lack of food, which was further compounded by Edward Bruce's burning of crops,<sup>11</sup> and Frame attributes the withdrawal from the south in 1317 to a lack of supplies.<sup>12</sup> Duffy goes so far as to argue that any potential for a successful conquest was ended in 1317 when the Scots failed to attack and take Dublin.<sup>13</sup> Although the central importance of the failure to take Dublin has been questioned<sup>14</sup> the failure of the 1317 campaign was a significant moment, and famine was an important factor in its failure. It was not until the improved harvest of 1318 that Edward again moved out of Ulster, with a lack of supplies making further campaigns impossible unless supplied from Scotland.<sup>15</sup>

The second impact of famine was reliance on support from Scotland. This too caused difficulties as support from Scotland was not consistent because, as McNamee argues, while many Scottish lords were happy to come to Ireland when it was to their benefit their presence was not constant.<sup>16</sup> Frame strongly sets out the argument that the Scottish invasion was directed, and fully relied on support, from Robert the Bruce and Scotland, going so far as to say the invasion was 'never self-supporting'.<sup>17</sup> The decisions to campaign in the winters of 1316 and 1317 are attributed to the need to wait for supplies and reinforcements from Scotland,<sup>18</sup> and, when supplies from Scotland were not forthcoming following Robert's return to Scotland in early 1317, it took until the harvest of 1318 for another campaign to come to fruition.<sup>19</sup> Chatterton-Newman does not see Robert's arrival in Ireland as a sign of support, but rather

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<sup>10</sup> McNamee, Colm, *The Wars of the Bruces: Scotland, England and Ireland, 1306-1328* (East Linton: Tuckwell Press, 1997), p.168.

<sup>11</sup> Roger Chatterton-Newman, *Edward Bruce, A Medieval Tragedy* (Cambridge: Ian Faulkner Publishing, 1992), p.115.

<sup>12</sup> Frame, p.21.

<sup>13</sup> Sean Duffy, *A Colony in Retreat. In: Ireland in the Middle Ages. British History in Perspective* (London: Palgrave, 1997), p.137.

<sup>14</sup> Chatterton-Newman, p.116.

<sup>15</sup> McNamee, p.11.

<sup>16</sup> McNamee, p.170.

<sup>17</sup> Frame, p.10.

<sup>18</sup> Frame, p.11.

<sup>19</sup> Frame, p.11.



suspicion and a desire to ‘see the situation for himself.’<sup>20</sup> In attributing the invasion primarily to Edward’s ambitions,<sup>21</sup> rather than to Robert’s, he diverges from Frame’s view. However, differing priorities within Scotland had a damaging impact on the Irish campaign, with Robert’s interests in 1317 focused on Berwick and Ireland by then a ‘desert’ in which Robert could see no profit.<sup>22</sup>

In contrast, Barbour describes Robert’s support for Edward’s efforts as very strong: ‘When his brother, as he was king, had all the Irish at his obedience and Ulster too, he prepared to make his way home. He left with his brother a large part of his men who were most hardy and renowned for all chivalry, then he went to the sea.’<sup>23</sup> However, the veracity of this analysis of the situation is doubtful. Barbour is looking to show Robert as having secured Edward’s position in Ireland, leaving him in charge in Ireland in a strong position, so that all the problems that then followed could not be pinned on Robert. Further to this, following Robert’s departure the Isle of Man was taken from the Scots, disrupting Scottish power in the Irish Sea and endangering supply routes to Ireland.<sup>24</sup> All aspects of support from the Scottish mainland were shaky at best, and reliance on them put the Irish expedition in a dangerous position.

Thirdly, famine had a detrimental effect on Edward Bruce’s wider problems with finding allies. Famine’s impact on local support in Ireland was multifaceted. Sean Duffy argues that potential allies in Ireland would necessarily place survival above support for the Bruce invasion.<sup>25</sup> In a time of starvation, warfare - and warfare in support of a foreign invader - would not hold priority in a highly unstable situation where one’s own existence was threatened. The campaign of 1317, launched perhaps with the intention of winning allies in the south, is argued by Chatterton-Newman to have had the opposite effect.<sup>26</sup> The chronicles, in their concluding remarks on Edward, are almost unanimous in their joy at

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<sup>20</sup> Chatterton-Newman, p.130.

<sup>21</sup> Chatterton-Newman, p.136.

<sup>22</sup> Chatterton-Newman, p.140.

<sup>23</sup> John Barbour, *The Bruce*, trans. by A.A.M. Duncan (Edinburgh: Canongate Books Ltd, 1997), p.614.

<sup>24</sup> Beth Hartland, ‘The Height of English Power: 1250-1320’ in *The Cambridge History of Ireland, Vol. I 600-1550*, ed. by Brendan Smith (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), p.222.

<sup>25</sup> Duffy, p.137.

<sup>26</sup> Chatterton-Newman, p.148.

his death. The Annals of Ulster remark: ‘there was not done from the beginning of the world a deed that was better for the Men of Ireland than that deed. For there come dearth and loss of people during his time in all Ireland in general for the space of three years and a half and people undoubtedly used to eat each other throughout Ireland.’<sup>27</sup> The Annals of Clonmacnoise describe Edward on his death as ‘Destroyer of all Ireland in Generall both English and Irish’,<sup>28</sup> and speak of: ‘great joy & comfort of the whole kingdom in generall, for there was not a better deed, that redounded better or more for the good of the kingdome since the creation of the world and since the banishment of Fine ffomores out of this land, done Ireland then the killing of Edward Bruce’.<sup>29</sup>

The reasons given for this ‘joy’ are telling. During Edward’s time in Ireland the Irish experienced ‘Scarcity of Victuals, breach of promises, ill performance of covenants, & the loss of men and women.’<sup>30</sup> In declaring himself High King, and marching throughout Ireland causing a great deal of destruction, Edward guaranteed for himself the large portion of the blame for the terrible state Ireland was left in. Whilst Edward was not the primary cause of the food shortages, as an invader who did significant damage he was bound to receive most of the blame. For this, Gaelic Irish and Anglo-Irish alike would not thank him. However, the caveat to this is that the government forces acted no differently, as recognised in the Annals of Inisfallen: ‘Excepting homicide, however, deeds no less evil were done by an army drawn from different parts of Ireland to do battle with them, in the districts through which the units passed.’<sup>31</sup> It is likely, however, that Edward would be seen as the ultimate cause of the destruction. Furthermore, the English side proved themselves more competent and knowledgeable in Irish politics, another weak point of the Scottish cause that undermined attempts to build alliances.

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<sup>27</sup> *Annals of Ulster otherwise, Annals of Senat; A Chronicle of Irish Affairs A.D. 431-1131: 1155-1541, Vol. II. A.D. 1057-1131: 1378*, ed., with translation and notes, by B. MacCarthy, D.D., M.R.I.A. (Dublin: Alex Thom & Co., 1893), p.433.

<sup>28</sup> *The Annals of Clonmacnoise from the Creation to A.D. 1408*, trans. into English A.D. 1627 by Conell Mageoghagan, ed. by the Rev. Denis Murphy, S.J. LL. D., M.R.I.A. (Dublin: Dublin University Press, 1896), p.281.

<sup>29</sup> Clonmacnoise, p.282.

<sup>30</sup> Clonmacnoise, p.282.

<sup>31</sup> *The Annals of Inisfallen*, ed. with translation and indexes by Sean Mac Airt, M.A. (Dublin: The Dublin Institute for Advanced Studies, 1951), p.419.

Throughout the invasion the Bruces showed a naivety toward Irish politics. In launching the invasion, it seems there was a genuine belief the Gaelic Irish might unite behind a cause that would rid them of English rule. This belief seems also to have been held by the O’Neills, the primary allies of the Bruces during their invasion.<sup>32</sup> However, in reality, the splintered internal politics of Ireland always took precedence. Alliances with one party inevitably alienated another,<sup>33</sup> despite the O’Neill’s belief that differences could be set aside to push the English out of Ireland – a hope Frame dismisses as ‘foolish.’<sup>34</sup> This was apparent both in alliances made in Ulster and those made elsewhere such as Connacht. Chatterton-Newman describes Connacht as a ‘fratricidal’ kingdom.<sup>35</sup> In 1316 there was a great deal of warfare in Connacht and whilst some was harmful to the Anglo-Irish much of the warfare was between potential Gaelic allies,<sup>36</sup> and ultimately Feidlimidh, king of Connacht, was killed by the brother of the Earl of Ulster’s forces. Chatterton-Newman argues that all of this fighting was beneficial to Edward, as Feidlimidh was a ‘potential foe’.<sup>37</sup> However, the fact that he is not seen instead as a potential ally is indicative of Edward’s failure to martial Gaelic support. Not only was Edward not able to galvanise Gaelic support he was not the only ‘king’ seeking to gain that support.

Overt support for the Gaelic Irish also alienated Anglo-Irish figures who otherwise might have taken the chance to punish the extractive English government which had abused its position in Ireland for so long. Frame goes so far as to say Edward would have ‘absolutely nothing to offer’ Anglo-Irish who chose to support him.<sup>38</sup> This is evidenced by the Anglo-Irish of Louth, many of whom had rebelled in 1312 but during the Bruce invasion they stayed notably loyal to the English crown. Smith argues that they were keen to prove their loyalty through service against the Scots.<sup>39</sup> For men such as Walter de la Pulle and Nicholas de Verdun, this meant defending the power of the crown who only a few years

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<sup>32</sup> Frame, p.23.

<sup>33</sup> Duffy, *Colony*, p.138.

<sup>34</sup> Frame, p.25.

<sup>35</sup> Chatterton-Newman, p.110.

<sup>36</sup> Chatterton-Newman, p.112.

<sup>37</sup> Chatterton-Newman, p.114-5.

<sup>38</sup> Frame, p.37.

<sup>39</sup>Brendan Smith, ‘The Bruce Invasion and County Louth, 1315-18’, in *Journal of the County Louth Archaeological and Historical Society*, vol. 22.1 (1989), 7-15 (p.10).

previously they had fought against. In return their status was restored, with grants of land and positions. Even his ally, O'Neill, made sure to highlight to the Pope the fact that his pedigree was superior to that of Edward Bruce.<sup>40</sup>

A further example of the impossibility of uniting Gaelic Ireland behind Edward Bruce's cause can be found in Leinster. The O'Tooles and O'Byrnes immediately rose up against the government and their rivals, burning towns and finding significant initial success. Conversely, their rivals, the MacMurroughs, stood by the government.<sup>41</sup> Roger Mortimer's successful retribution against the O'Tooles and O'Briens in September 1317, when the Bruce threat had receded significantly, shows the danger present for those who chose to ally with the Scots.<sup>42</sup> Failure to protect allies from English retribution would have been badly damaging to Bruce support in Ireland.

The church also played a role in limiting Scottish support in Ireland. In excommunicating the Bruces, and those who supported them, the pope dealt a blow to the Bruce cause. In Ireland excommunication was taken seriously and an invading force, burning churches and without the clear support of the local church, was hard pressed to convince the local population that the wrath of the church was worth it.<sup>43</sup> Olive Armstrong goes further, describing the church in Ireland as a 'great unifying force',<sup>44</sup> and states that it turned opposition to the Scots into a 'holy' war.<sup>45</sup> Stronger support may have followed greater battlefield success, but while there were not any huge failures prior to Edward's death the Scots did little to convince potential supporters that the Scottish cause was the winning one, and that support would lead to protection or future benefits. Even in Ulster, where support was strongest, opposition remained, and Bruce authority had to be imposed: Edward was a high-king 'with opposition' and when the authority of superior force was broken loyalty did not remain.<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> McNamee, p.198.

<sup>41</sup> Emmett O'Byrne, 'The MacMurroughs and the marches of Leinster, 1170-1340', in *Lordship in medieval Ireland, Image and reality*, eds. by Linda Doran & James Lyttleton (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2007), p.185.

<sup>42</sup> O'Byrne, p.186.

<sup>43</sup> Chatterton-Newman, p.145.

<sup>44</sup> Olive Armstrong, *Edward Bruce's Invasion of Ireland* (London: John Murray, 1923), p.57.

<sup>45</sup> Armstrong, p.115.

<sup>46</sup> James Lydon, *The Lordship of Ireland in the Middle Ages* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2003), p.117.

The character of Edward Bruce has received blame for the failure of the invasion. John Barbour explicitly lays the blame at the feet of Edward: ‘If he could have controlled himself by discretion, and not been too self-indulgent but governed his actions with moderation, it was doubtless very probable that he could have conquered the whole land of Ireland, every bit... But his excessive arrogance and stubbornness, which was more than hardy, distorted his resolve.’<sup>47</sup> Furthermore, Barbour blames Edward for the unreliability of his Irish allies at his final battle.<sup>48</sup> Chatterton-Newman largely accepts this account at face value, stating that Edward was ‘vainglorious’, showing ‘complete disregard for the well-being of his subjects’ during his time in Ulster ruling from 1317-1318.<sup>49</sup> He also blames Edward’s decision to give battle in 1318 on his ‘impetuosity, and a desire to show Robert that he could more than equal the capture of Berwick’.<sup>50</sup> The picture painted of Edward is not positive. However, Barbour had a strong incentive to shift the blame for the Irish failure onto Edward as his work is largely concerned with the glorification of Robert the Bruce and Edward is an easy scapegoat. The image built by Barbour of Edward being left with Ireland at his feet due to Robert’s intervention is patently untrue, and arguably the Scots’ greatest successes did not even come when Robert was present. Frame strongly argues that Robert was the true director of the invasion,<sup>51</sup> further diminishing the importance of any of Edward’s possible defects.

Finally, over the course of the invasion the English administration improved their resistance significantly. Prior to the invasion, the English approach to Ireland was extractive, with food, money, and manpower often called upon and frequently used against Scotland.<sup>52</sup> Beth Hartland argues that the Bruce invasion saw a progressive change in England’s approach to Ireland, with £500 given to Ireland in March 1316 to defend the Lordship and food not exported during this time for English use.<sup>53</sup> Furthermore, Robert Mortimer, ‘one of the greatest men in England’,<sup>54</sup> was appointed Justiciar in 1317:

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<sup>47</sup> Barbour, p.596.

<sup>48</sup> Barbour, p.668.

<sup>49</sup> Chatterton-Newman, p.143.

<sup>50</sup> Chatterton-Newman, p.148.

<sup>51</sup> Frame, p.15.

<sup>52</sup> Lydon, p.105-6.

<sup>53</sup> Hartland, p.243.

<sup>54</sup> Lydon, p.117.

‘At Easter, lord Roger de Mortimer, having been made justiciar, landed at Youghal with thirty eight knights, leaving the ships, he knighted two men, and he attached to himself lord John de Bermingham and lord Nicholas de Verdun. He drove out all the nation and cognomine of de Lacy from Ireland and in the summer he forced them to flee to Scotland.’<sup>55</sup> He received strong support from the English crown and the expenses he incurred would be paid from English resources, not Irish.<sup>56</sup> In dealing decisively with the de Lacys, who had swung the balance at Kells, Mortimer ensured they could not have the same effect at Faughart, the battle in which Edward died.<sup>57</sup>

The English government in Ireland had the benefit, Hartland argues, of having been entrenched in the decades preceding the Bruce invasion. This allowed the justiciar to ‘hold crown pleas, carry out gaol deliveries, and drum up support for the government effort against the Scots in many parts of the Lordship.’<sup>58</sup> The English government in Ireland was also able to muster the support of the southern lords without going to huge expense by offering pardons – even in cases where it meant changing normal allegiances.<sup>59</sup> One example of this can be seen in County Louth.<sup>60</sup> Only one person in Louth was convicted of collaboration with the Scots during the invasion.<sup>61</sup> The English administration was able to effectively mobilise the resources of Louth during the Scots’ invasion.<sup>62</sup> In this regard the English as the incumbent power held an inherent advantage over the invading power, governmental systems for taxation and the raising and sustaining of armies already existed.

Murray highlights the importance of the Bruce invasion in the eyes of the English, using evidence of Barbour’s vision of the campaign as a continuation of the Wars of Independence, the importance given to Edward’s death by the writer of the ‘Continuation’, and the reaction of Edward II

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<sup>55</sup> The Annals of Ireland, p.166.

<sup>56</sup> Lydon, p.117.

<sup>57</sup> Smith, p.148.

<sup>58</sup> Hartland, p.225.

<sup>59</sup> McNamee, p.35.

<sup>60</sup> Smith, p.10.

<sup>61</sup> Smith, p.12.

<sup>62</sup> Smith, p.14.

to the English victory at Fochart.<sup>63</sup> As such, it could be argued that the huge importance placed by Edward II and the English on the Scottish invasion was a vital factor in the Scots' loss: if the Bruce invasion were indeed a sideshow, the English reaction would possibly fall short. However, if the Bruce invasion, as it appears to have done, was regarded as a major threat by Edward II then his response would have been that much stronger. This is evidenced by the improvements made in the English defence of Ireland in 1317-18.

The failure of the Bruce invasion of Ireland can be attributed to a number of factors: the timing of the invasion at a time of famine constrained the Scots' ability to campaign effectively, lost them local support, and increased dependency on unreliable support from the Scottish mainland. A wider failure to gain local support, due primarily to a naivety regarding Irish politics and an alienation of Anglo-Irish and Gaelic Irish alike, and a failure to demonstrate sufficient success, severely hampered all efforts outside of Ulster. Edward's character, traditionally blamed, does not hold huge significance. The English response from April 1317 provided a much stiffer resistance and managed to bring much of Gaelic Ireland onto the English side, aided by an entrenched administration.

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<sup>63</sup> Sean Murray, 'The 'Continuation' of Nicolas Trevet: A New Source for the Bruce Invasion', in *Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy. Section C: Archaeology, Celtic Studies, History, Linguistics, Literature*, vol. 91C (1991), 303–15 (p.314).

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## An Arthurian Enthusiast: Edward I's British Vision

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In 1296, following Edward I's conquest of Scotland, the Yorkshire Chronicler Langtoft wrote: 'Now the islands are all joined together, and Albany reunited to the kingships, of which King Edward is proclaimed lord. Cornwall and Wales are in his domain, and great Ireland at his will. There is no king, nor any prince, in all these countries Save King Edward, who has united them thus. Arthur never held these fiefs so fully!'<sup>2</sup> While Edward I was recognised by contemporary writers of his day for such an accomplishment, the question of whether he harboured such a vision for Britain is up for discussion. This essay aims to analyse Edward I's British vision. For example, did Edward envision himself as a new King Arthur, the only other monarch to unify Britain under his leadership, and can his actions and policies towards Wales and Scotland be underlined by an imperial vision for Britain? It will be shown that, through analysing the cases of the conquest of Scotland and Wales, there is in fact evidence of Edward's Arthurian enthusiasm and a vision of uniting Britain under his rule.

To determine whether Edward I had a British vision, it is crucial to define what Britain meant in a medieval context. The understanding of Britain as the island to which Wales, Scotland and England belonged was always commonplace, *Britannia* and *Albion* had long been established names for the island. The geopolitical concept of Britain was notable within Geoffrey of Monmouth's *History of the Kings of Britain*. Completed around 1139 AD, Geoffrey claimed his work was derived from an ancient

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<sup>1</sup> This essay was written for HI4009: The Scottish Wars Of Independence, 1286-1328.

<sup>2</sup> Pierre de Langtoft, 'The Chronicle of Pierre de Langtoft: in French verse, from the earliest period to the death of King Edward I', in *Rerum Britannicarum medii ævi scriptores*, trans. Thomas Wright (London: Longmans, 1866), p.266.

book in the British language that told, in an orderly fashion, the deeds of all the Kings of Britain spanning a two-thousand-year period.<sup>3</sup> His work not only served as the sine qua non to King Arthur but propagated the idea that all Britons share a bona fide Trojan ancestry. MacColl observes that the English swiftly embraced Geoffery's account, and a concept of a British past of the greatest antiquity became the historical cornerstone of a national identity in England and Wales.<sup>4</sup> Hay remarks that Geoffrey did more than anything else to make men conscious of the term Britain.<sup>5</sup>

As noted by Broun, by the late 10<sup>th</sup> century England and Britain became synonymous, with England being regarded as a more up-to-date name for Britain.<sup>6</sup> Henry of Huntingdon referred to Britain in his *Historia Anglorum* as 'the most celebrated of islands, formerly called Albion, later Britain, and now England'.<sup>7</sup> With this, the kings of England were hailed as rulers of Britain. Writing in the 1180s Walter Map referred to Henry I as 'King of England... Lord of Scotland, Galloway, and the whole English island'.<sup>8</sup> Gerald of Wales had also praised Henry II for 'including by his powerful hand in one monarchy the whole island of Britain'.<sup>9</sup> It is thus clear that contemporary writers not only understood Britain as a geopolitical concept but regarded the English as the rightful inheritors of the island. If this was a concept understood by Edward I it may provide context for his subsequent claims of overlordship over Wales and Scotland.

Before the Scottish guardians approached Edward I in 1286 the king had shown little interest in Scotland. Edward had maintained a good relationship with his brother-in-law, King Alexander III, until his death, with letters being exchanged between the two kings attesting to a shared affection.<sup>10</sup> This

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<sup>3</sup> Geoffrey of Monmouth, *The History of the Kings of Britain*, trans. by Lewis Thorpe (London: Penguin, 2015), p.51.

<sup>4</sup> Alan MacColl, 'The Meaning of 'Britain' in Medieval and Early Modern England', *Journal of British Studies*, vol. 45.2 (2006), 248-269 (p.249).

<sup>5</sup> Denys Hay, 'The Use of the Term 'Great Britain' in the Middle Ages', *Society of Antiquaries of Scotland*, vol. 89 (1958), 55-66 (p.58-60).

<sup>6</sup> Dauvit Broun, *Scottish Independence and the Idea of Britain from the Picts to Alexander III* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2013), p.42.

<sup>7</sup> Henry Of Huntingdon, *The history of the English people 1000-1154*, trans. by Diana Greenway (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), pp.12-13.

<sup>8</sup> Walter Map, *De nugis curialium: Courtiers' Trifles*, trans. by M.R. James. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1983), pp.472-473.

<sup>9</sup> MacColl, *The Meaning of 'Britain'*, p.259.

<sup>10</sup> Michael Prestwich, *Edward I* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997), pp.356-357.

dynamic changed in 1289 with the Salisbury Agreement, which stipulated that Alexander III's granddaughter, Maragret of Norway, would marry Edward I's son, Edward of Carnarvon, meaning that their future children would become the rulers of a United Kingdom encompassing the entirety of Britain. However, Maragret died in 1290, thus plunging Scotland into a crisis of succession. With this in 1291 King Edward was invited to choose a successor. Concerning the Great Cause all Edward had wished to do was to establish who had the proper right to succession over the Scottish throne and that, consequently, his right of jurisdiction would have to be recognised.<sup>11</sup> As Prestwich illustrates, if Edward simply had acted as an arbitrator he would have been neglecting his right of feudal overlordship as king, a right that English kings understood themselves as possessing.<sup>12</sup> However, according to the annals of Waverley Abbey, by the start of the Great Cause Edward announced his intention to bring Scotland under his control just as he had subjected Wales.<sup>13</sup> Thus, any British vision harboured by Edward I did not come to fruition until the death of his brother-in-law Alexander III.

There is clear evidence that Edward I was well acquainted with Geoffrey of Monmouth's work and that he understood the antiquity of a British past, which became the foundation of his ideological beliefs. As noted by Loomis, when Scotland appealed to the Court of Rome against the injustices inflicted upon them by England Edward commanded his secretaries to collect materials to substantiate his right over Scotland and a letter, addressed to Pope Boniface VIII, was drawn up in 1301. In this letter Edward writes: *The kings of England, by the right of lordship and dominion, possessed, from the most ancient times, the suzerainty of the realm of Scotland... and they received from the self-same kings...homage and oaths of fealty.*<sup>14</sup> Edward thus invokes the founding stories of Britain from Monmouth's work relating to how: *Brutus landed... upon a certain island called at that time, Albion... He called it, after his own name, Britain, and his people Britons... He gave to his first born, Lochrine, that part of Britain now called England... with royal dignity being reserved for the eldest.*<sup>15</sup> Edward

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<sup>11</sup> Wright, *The Chronicle of Pierre de Langtoft*, p.190

<sup>12</sup> Prestwich, *Edward I*, p.366.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid*, p.356.

<sup>14</sup> Roger Sherman Loomis, 'Edward I: Arthurian Enthusiast', *Speculum* vol. 28(1) (1953), 114-127 (pp.121-122).

<sup>15</sup> E.L.G. Stones, *Anglo-Scottish Relations, 1174-1328; Some Selected Documents*, (Oxford: Oxford Clarendon Press, 1965), p.96.

thus invokes the founding stories of Britain from Monmouth's work relating to how: *Brutus landed... upon a certain island called at that time, Albion... He called it, after his own name, Britain, and his people Britons... He gave to his first born, Lochrine, that part of Britain now called England... with royal dignity being reserved for the eldest.*<sup>16</sup>

The source goes on to provide a list of various examples of English lordship in Scotland, including that of Edward the Elder, Athelstan and Canute. Thus, Edward illustrated that he was assuming a role to unite Britain under his rule akin to Aethelstan and the Anglo-Saxon kingdoms. This letter stands as the most compelling piece of evidence explaining Edward I's British vision and his justifications for his claim to overlordship, despite being a rebuttal of Scottish claims at the curia. Edward firmly believed that 'the Scots were subject to the realm of England' by antiquity.<sup>17</sup> The letter also refers to King Arthur, whom Edward describes as being: '*King of the Britons, a prince most renowned, subjected to himself a rebellious Scotland...and afterwards installed as king of Scotland Angusel...and in succession all the kings of Scotland have been subject to all the kings of Briton.*'<sup>18</sup>

This reference is crucial as King Arthur was not only renowned in Britain but across Europe too. The fact that Arthur installed a subject king in Scotland gives immense credit to Edward's claim of overlordship. Geoffrey of Monmouth describes King Arthur as being imperial and dominant, that he '*had a claim by rightful inheritance to the kingship of the whole of Britain.*'<sup>19</sup> What is outstanding about this is that this is not the only instance where Edward I had made symbolic references to himself and the legendary king.

Edward was, in fact, a great enthusiast of an Arthurian past. Prestwich records that during Edward's time in Sicily Rustichello of Pisa borrowed a book of Arthurian romances from him which served as the basis for his work, *Meliadus*. The epilogue of this work implies that it was written at Edward's express command, and there is no other evidence of literary patronage by Edward outside of

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<sup>16</sup> Ibid, p.97.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid, p.99.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid, p.98.

<sup>19</sup> Geoffrey of Monmouth, *The History of the Kings of Britain*, p.212.

this incident.<sup>20</sup> Additionally, Edward's wife Eleanor is also documented as possessing a library of the Arthurian type, with Girard of Amiens even dedicating one of his Arthurian works to her.<sup>21</sup> Her interest in the Arthurian legends may have likely been a significant influence on Edward himself. Loomis illustrates that the previous kings before Edward did not have more than a passing interest in King Arthur. It was only Edward who exhibited a strong concern with both the historical and the romantic tradition of King Arthur.<sup>22</sup>

After achieving a decisive victory against Llwelyn ap Gruffudd during the Easter of 1278, King Edward and Queen Eleanor visited Glastonbury Abbey to reinter the remains of King Arthur and Queen Guinevere in a ceremony reminiscent of the translation of a saint's body.<sup>23</sup> Gerald of Wales records that the burial of the lost king had originally been discovered in the 12<sup>th</sup> century, by the monks of Glastonbury, after Henry II 'disclosed to the monks some evidence from his own books of where the body was to be found'.<sup>24</sup> After Henry II Edward was the first king to ever take an active interest in the grave, as Henry died before the excavation of the abbey could be completed. Every effort was made to ensure the event was memorable. Edward personally wrapped Arthur's bones in silk, while Eleanor similarly prepared the remains of Guinevere for reburial.<sup>25</sup> As Sanford illustrates, the disinterment of the bodies too occurred at twilight, a time believed to heighten ceremonial power due to the representation of light and dark. The choice of Easter for the ceremony not only drew in large crowds, but also symbolised a time of change from the normal order, in this case the end of a reign and succession of a new monarch.<sup>26</sup> As Morris illustrates, Edward thus came to Glastonbury 'not to praise Arthur, but to bury him'.<sup>27</sup> The burial undoubtedly aimed to signify English strength by connecting the English monarchy with King Arthur whilst also emphasising that Arthur would not be coming back to

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<sup>20</sup> Prestwich, *Edward I*, p.118.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid*, 123.

<sup>22</sup> Loomis, *Edward I*, pp.125-126.

<sup>23</sup> Prestwich, *Edward I*, p.120.

<sup>24</sup> Rachel Marie Sanford, *Edward I and the Appropriation of Arthurian Legend* (Bowling Green: Western Kentucky University, 2009), p.8.

<sup>25</sup> Geoffrey Ashe, *The Quest for Arthur's Britain* (London: Paladin, 1972), p.99.

<sup>26</sup> Sanford, *Edward I and the Appropriation of Arthurian Legend*, p.27.

<sup>27</sup> Marc A. Morris, *Great and Terrible King: Edward I and the Forging of Britain* (Cambridge: Pegasus Books, 2016), p.165.

save the Welsh, a prevalent prophecy at the time. With Geoffrey of Monmouth writing that King Arthur was only ‘mortally wounded and carried off to the isle of Avalon, so that his wounds might be attended to’.<sup>28</sup> The burial of King Arthur thus stands as the most compelling evidence of Edward using the legendary king as part of a British vision.

However, this was not the only instance where Edward made use of a British antiquity in Wales. Following the death of Llwelyn, Edward initiated the construction of Caernarfon Castle in 1283. It stood as an example of the many crusader-style castles Edward had built in locations significant to old British legends. Edward had instructed his architect, James of St. George, to model the castle on the legends of Magnus Maximus, who had dreamt of a beautiful maiden dwelling in a great castle, with towers echoing the walls of the city of Constantinople, by the mouth of a river flowing into the sea.<sup>29</sup> But what was remarkable about this is, like the burial of Arthur, the body of Magnus Maximus was found in Caernarfon and reburied on Edward’s order.<sup>30</sup> Thus, Edward was certainly aware of the tradition of British antiquity, and the example of Caernarfon stands as evidence that Edward knew how to appeal to a British past and could comprehend the traditions of his land.

Similarly, after Edward I annexed the principality of Wales to the English throne in 1283 he received as a token of submission the legendary crown of King Arthur. As the Waverly annalist adds, ‘*the glory of the Welsh was thus transferred to the English*’.<sup>31</sup> This act symbolised Edward’s supreme authority over Wales. Edward’s confiscation of the Stone of Scone from Scotland and the crown of John Balliol also carried a similar significance. The naming of Edward’s son as ‘Prince of Wales’ was important too as it sent a clear message to the Welsh that their old order was gone, and that England had come to replace their throne.<sup>32</sup> Both events thus symbolised that Edward believed that England had supreme authority in the isles. That it was England’s authority which granted autonomy to the kingdoms, and it was England’s authority to take it away in accordance with historical tradition.

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<sup>28</sup> Geoffrey of Monmouth, *The History of the Kings of Britain*, p.261.

<sup>29</sup> Prestwich, *Edward I*, p.120.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid*, p.78.

<sup>31</sup> Loomis, *Edward I*, p.278.

<sup>32</sup> Sanford, *Edward I and the Appropriation of Arthurian Legend*, p.43.

In 1284 Edward commemorated the conquest of Wales by hosting a roundtable event at Nefyn, strategically chosen to emphasise the extent of his victory given the area's associations with the prophecies of Merlin. Morris suggests that this event was orchestrated in the same Arthurian vein as Arthur's burial and the possession of Arthur's crown.<sup>33</sup> What is outstanding about this is that another roundtable event occurred in 1302 at Falkirk in Scotland following the smashing of the Scots. Loomis speculates that this event also marked the great victory over William Wallace at the same place four years before.<sup>34</sup> These events were most certainly political tools employed by Edward to show his newfound authority as the overlord of Britain. Additionally, they may also indicate that Edward likened himself to the legendary status of King Arthur. For example, outside of Wales and Scotland he commissioned the construction of a round table, still displayed in the Great Hall at Winchester.<sup>35</sup> Thus, it's clear that Edward actively pursued and celebrated the vision of a Britain under his jurisdiction.

Writers of Edward at the time regarded his British vision as one of his remarkable achievements. As illustrated by Sanford, a lament following Edward's death, written by a local author, presented Edward I as: *'Entirely without equal, outshining not only Arthur and Alexander but also Brutus, Solomon, and Richard the Lionheart... We should perceive him to surpass all the kings of the earth who came before him'*.<sup>36</sup> Langtoft also depicted Edward in Arthurian terms, suggesting his might exceeded Arthur's as he had effectively united Britain. With contemporary writers celebrating Edward's accomplishment of uniting Britain it is likely that Edward thus harboured a British vision himself. This is evident not only in his interest and display of the Arthurian legends but also the letter he sent to Rome justifying his actions in Scotland.

In conclusion, Edward I undeniably held a British vision and Edward likely envisioned himself as a new King Arthur given his interest and display of the Arthurian legends. Whenever Edward I had originally meant to bring Wales and Scotland under his control may never be answered. However, a British vision for Edward did come into fruition after the fact. He knew how to appeal to a British past

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<sup>33</sup> Morris, *Great and Terrible King*, p.192.

<sup>34</sup> Loomis, *Edward I*, p.283.

<sup>35</sup> Sanford, *Edward I and the Appropriation of Arthurian Legend*, p.13.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid*, p.42.



and comprehend to his own rule the traditions of his land. It is one of the reasons Edward had managed to restore to power the shattered country his father had bequeathed him. During Edward I's coronation he removed his crown and vowed to never wear it again until he had reclaimed the lands his father had lost. But by the end of his life Edward had achieved a mightier feat. He instead restored that which King Arthur had built in his lifetime: a unified Britain.

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## Exploring the British and French Mandatory Powers responsibility in the development of Kurdish Nationalism

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The mandatory powers of the French and the British played significant roles in developing Kurdish nationalism and an anti-colonial sentiment across Kurdish-occupied regions in the Middle East. Yet, it would be remiss to suggest that they were solely responsible for its fuelling. Following the collapse of the Ottoman Empire in the post-WWI context the British and French imperial powers were disposed of as mandatory powers for various regions in the Middle East at the behest of the League of Nations.<sup>2</sup> The map of the modern Middle East established by the British and French in 1916 still exists along similar lines today.<sup>3</sup> These legal trusteeships of the mandated territories, including Iraq and Syria, were arguably no more than colonial insertion into the region. The evolution of Kurdish nationalism therefore can be seen as a result of the collapse of the Ottoman Empire and its universalism<sup>4</sup> into ‘politically

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<sup>1</sup> This essay was written for HI307B: The Making Of The Modern Middle East.

<sup>2</sup> Michael Provence, *The last Ottoman generation and the making of the modern Middle East* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), pp.56-100.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Nadine Méouchy and Peter Sluglett, *The British and French Mandates in Comparative Perspectives* (Leiden: BRILL, 2003), p.590.

homogenous' nation-states<sup>5</sup> and the injection of mandatory powers in the Middle East in which their very nature would invite a sense of nationalism within indigenous people, such as the Kurds. Overall, this essay will argue that whilst the British and French mandates, and therefore colonial administrations,<sup>6</sup> were responsible for the development of Kurdish nationalism there were also other actors and frameworks present and responsible for influencing it, such as the Turkish Republic.

The new 1920 Middle Eastern borders founded by the Sykes-Picot agreement<sup>7</sup> were a form of post-war colonialism and ultimately a legal justification for the mandate system established. Despite this, the mandatory power was intended to act in "loco parentis"<sup>8</sup> until the territory could administer itself, even as the British mandate did little in the way of implementing stability, civil structures or institutions for the future society within Iraq. Perhaps their mandatory intervention was no more than a colonial-fuelled attempt at regaining economic and geographical security for the Empire with the control of the Iraqi territory and petroleum. It is also important to recognise that during this colonial engagement following the end of Ottoman rule mass tribal protests took place among the Kurds<sup>9</sup> and it is necessary to understand that the agitation itself was born out of fear and a need to establish their place in the now British colonial society of their homelands. Therefore, the fact that the British mandate system was in essence just a legal justification to colonise Iraq meant it offered no support in creating future structures for independence; this British mandatory power was responsible not only for fuelling anti-colonial sentiment among indigenous people but also for inspiring the development of nationalist discourse.<sup>10</sup> The British specifically promised the Kurdish people that they would act as guarantors for

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<sup>5</sup> Hakan Özoğlu, *Kurdish notables and the Ottoman state evolving identities, competing loyalties and shifting boundaries* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2004), p.118.

<sup>6</sup> Özoğlu, *Kurdish notables*, p.118.

<sup>7</sup> Dawn Chatty, *Displacement and Dispossession in the Middle East* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), p.233.

<sup>8</sup> Méouchy and Sluglett, *The British and French Mandates*, p.125.

<sup>9</sup> Nicola Degli Esposti, 'Land reform and Kurdish Nationalism in Postcolonial Iraq' in *Middle East Critique*, 31.2 (2022), pp.147-163.

<sup>10</sup> Méouchy and Sluglett, *The British and French Mandates*, p.590.

their autonomy, which can be seen throughout the Treaty of Sèvres in 1920.<sup>11</sup> The treaty itself made provisions for Kurdish autonomy and the expectation of an independent state. The treaty was, however, superseded by the Treaty of Lausanne in 1923, in which the Kurds and their plight for self-determination were never mentioned and parts of their land were given to the Republic of Turkey.<sup>12</sup> This proves that the Kurds' hope for rights to a nation was not in the interest of the British mandate<sup>13</sup> and therefore had no place in the 'modern' Middle East. Hence, the British mandatory power was responsible for instilling false hope and fuelling the development of nationalism amongst the Kurds. Perhaps the development of Kurdish nationalism came as a result of not wanting to rely on Western, European powers for self-determination due to their history of false promises. It is important to note, however, that although the British mandate in Iraq did recognise the tribal authority of the Kurdish people following the 1920s riots<sup>14</sup> and the ethnic identity of the Kurds, the lack of an autonomous state following the Paris Peace Conference and treaties will have had a noticeable effect on the development of Kurdish nationalism.

The French mandate in Syria was also one of colonialist origins and was an extension of their empire in the Middle East.<sup>15</sup> However, the French colonialists were more concerned about 'protecting' the 'Oriental' Christian<sup>16</sup> which had obvious historical catholic narratives attached. This perpetuates the idea that orientalism drove mandatory France and Britain's policies when intervening as administrative powers. As a result of this, the French mandate system initially favoured the minorities within its newly acquired Syrian territory.<sup>17</sup> The mandate was an evolution of Wilson's fourteen-point speech at the Paris Peace Agreements in which advocacy of self-autonomy featured heavily.<sup>18</sup> Following this, the Kurds

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<sup>11</sup> Michael Gunter, *The Kurds Ascending*, (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2008), p.12.

<sup>12</sup> Chatty, *Displacement and Dispossession*, p.256.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> Esposti, 'Land reform and Kurdish Nationalism', pp.147-163.

<sup>15</sup> Provence, *The last Ottoman generation*, pp.56-100.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> Laila McQuade and Zabil Al-Tikriti, *The First World and its Aftermath: The Shaping of the Middle East* (Gingko, 2015), pp.255- 272.

<sup>18</sup> McQuade and Al-Tikriti, *The First World and its Aftermath*, pp.255- 272.

sought to achieve independence from Syria under the French mandate. The mandatory authority recognised the religious and ethnic minorities throughout the region (arguably to ‘divide and conquer’ indigenous populations<sup>19</sup>) and they used the Kurdish people as a ‘buffer’ against neighbouring Turkey.<sup>20</sup> Initially, the Kurdish people utilised this apparent value to their advantage, and it enabled them to retain their cultural autonomy and political rights. This early tactic of Kurdish nationalism highlights an attempt to cooperate with the French mandatory power<sup>21</sup> and an awareness of national identity. However, once the French improved their relations with Turkey the French had less need for the Kurds. The Turkish were threatened by the autonomous recognition of the Kurdish and therefore the French mandate denied the Kurds autonomy for the same reason that they were once valuable to the French.<sup>22</sup> Again, much like the British mandate in Iraq, the Kurdish people were given false hope and empty promises to achieve independence as their autonomy was not in the mandatory power’s interest.<sup>23</sup> The French mandatory power in Syria, therefore, holds a level of responsibility for the expansion of Kurdish nationalism by denying the ethnic group their right to self-determination for preference of their international interests in favour of Turkey. Furthermore, it is necessary to highlight that, following the Turkish ethnonationalism developing within its borders, masses of Kurdish refugees fled to French Syria as a consequence of the Sheikh Said revolt,<sup>24</sup> which also may have influenced the development of Kurdish nationalism.<sup>25</sup> Additionally, the later discrimination against the Kurdish people by the Syrian government in the 1950s was perhaps due to the colonial administration’s failure to introduce

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<sup>19</sup> Chatty, *Displacement and Dispossession in the Middle East*, p.268.

<sup>20</sup> McQuade and Al-Tikriti, *The First World and its Aftermath*, pp.255-272.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

<sup>24</sup> McQuade and Al-Tikriti, *The First World and its Aftermath*, pp.255-272.

<sup>25</sup> Benjamin T. White, *The Emergence of Minorities in the Middle East: The Politics of Community in French Mandate Syria* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2011), p.111.

substantial governance and civil systems which, in turn, played a significant role in the development of Kurdish nationalism.<sup>26</sup>

The mandates can therefore be described as orientalist:<sup>27</sup> where ‘parental advisory’ aid was needed for the new and ‘undeveloped’ nation-states.<sup>28</sup> The lack of development and the post-colonial history of frequent military regimes, authoritarian dictatorships, instability, and lack of civil society,<sup>29</sup> especially within Iraq and Syria, emphasises how little the mandatory powers aided their ‘child’ territories.<sup>30</sup> Thus, it can be considered responsible for the development and inciting of nationalist discourse amongst indigenous people, such as the Kurds. Furthermore, the newly divided nation-states were not partitioned based on shared cultural identity, political or religious affinities. The emergence of the modern nation-state within the Middle East as a by-product of the Sykes-Picot agreement and the formation of states by Western imperial powers created the conditions for the development of ethnic minorities,<sup>31</sup> such as the Kurds. These ‘minorities’ themselves had been divided in their indigenous lands and scattered across separate nations, with the Kurds being spread across Turkey, Syria, Iraq and Iran.<sup>32</sup> As such they held little to no loyalty to these new states – nationalism developed out of necessity to protect their weaker positions in society and culture. Moreover, any minority ethnic group is vulnerable to persecution and/or forced assimilation,<sup>33</sup> and this will influence the exponential development of nationalism: this can be seen amongst the Kurds after the establishment of Turkey in the 1920s. Overall, the colonisation and orientalist approach to the conquest and partitioning of the

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<sup>26</sup> Méouchy and Sluglett, *The British and French Mandates*, pp.120-595.

<sup>27</sup> Provence, *The last Ottoman generation*, pp.56-100.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

<sup>31</sup> Méouchy and Sluglett, *The British and French Mandates*, pp.120-595.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

<sup>33</sup> McQuade and Al-Tikriti, *The First World and its Aftermath*, p.268.



Ottoman territories by employing the British and French mandate systems in the region was extensively responsible for developing Kurdish nationalism, and nationalism across the entire Middle East.

In recognising the real and substantial impact the mandatory powers had on the expansion and development of Kurdish nationalism it is important not to ignore the other actors and frameworks in place which influenced Kurdish nationalist movements. Doing so would give Western powers too much credit. It is critical to acknowledge the influence of ethnonationalism and the policy of forceful Turkification within the Republic of Turkey and the successive effects on the development of Kurdish nationalism. Firstly, following the Treaty of Lausanne in 1923 and the Franco-Syrian Treaty of 1936 the Kurds lost land to Turkey and did not gain their autonomous state, instead they were defined as ‘mountain Turks’.<sup>34</sup> This was a denial of the Kurdish people as an ethnic group or culture by the Turkish government,<sup>35</sup> which can further be highlighted in the Turkish 1924 constitution.<sup>36</sup> This constitution demonstrates the extent to which forced assimilation was the central policy in Turkish nationalistic discourse. Moreover, the Turkish national identity was arguably based on the cultural, linguistic, and religious assimilation of the communities within their borders, and the repression of the defiant, notably the Kurds and the Armenians.<sup>37</sup> This can be seen in the suppression, and the following executions and persecutions, of the Sheikh Said independence revolt of 1925.<sup>38</sup> The revolt was instigated due to strong anti-Kurdish policies suppressing Kurdish culture, education, and the exploitation of their land within Turkey to avoid Kurdish existence (and the potential for a Kurdish nation) within the Turkish borders.<sup>39</sup> Moreover, the secularisation and centralisation of policies and authority in the Turkish Republic further

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<sup>34</sup> McQuade and Al-Tikriti, *The First World and its Aftermath*, p.268.

<sup>35</sup> Méouchy and Sluglett, *The British and French Mandates*, p.591.

<sup>36</sup> Robert W Olson, *The emergence of Kurdish nationalism and the Sheikh Said Rebellion, 1880-1925* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1989), p.91.

<sup>37</sup> Hisyar Ozsoy, ‘Introduction: the Kurds’ ordeal with Turkey in transforming the Middle East’, *Dialectical Anthropology*, 37.1 (2013), p.106.

<sup>38</sup> Olson, *the Sheikh Said Rebellion*, pp.43-45.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*

threatened to marginalise the Kurds.<sup>40</sup> The staunch persecution and repression of the Kurds at the hands of the Turkish government were clear signs of ethnic cleansing and assimilation at the expense of the Kurds so the Turkish could achieve a new, homogenous, state.<sup>41</sup> The Turkish government and its policies during its formation had a serious effect on the development of Kurdish Nationalism, which arguably stemmed from the Sheikh Said rebellion and its subsequent suppression.

In conclusion, this essay has argued that the British and French mandate systems of the Middle East, particularly regarding Iraq and Syria, emphasised the development of the Kurdish nationalist movement. Once the idea of a Kurdish autonomous state no longer 'suited' Western European imperialist agendas they would ignore the right of self-determination for the Kurds in favour of their fluctuating strategic narratives within the region. Moreover, the mere existence and implantation of mandates was colonialist and orientalist and therefore inherently incites nationalism as an ideology. However, the collapse of the Ottoman Empire followed by subsequent colonial interventions and the western division of the Middle East was considerable in creating ethnic minorities. These events threatened the new 'minority's' social positions within the developing nation-states, allowing for the development of their nationalism out of a fear of losing standing. Additionally, the persecution of newfound minorities in the hopes of achieving a homogenous state following the partitions (such as in Turkey) is another significant factor at play. Lastly, Turkish nationalism and a denial of the Kurdish right to self-determination and ethnic distinction only proved to further ignite the Kurdish nationalist movement.

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<sup>40</sup> Denise Natali, 'Ottoman Kurds and emergent Kurdish Nationalism', *Critique: Critical Middle Eastern Studies*, 13.3 (2004), pp.383-387.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*

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## The Significance of the First World War for Black Intellectuals

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One month into the First World War, British Prime Minister, Asquith, asserted that the conflict was ‘shaking to its foundations the whole European system’.<sup>2</sup> Three years later, upon US entry, President Wilson declared before Congress that ‘The world must be made safe for democracy [...] We desire no conquest, no dominion.’<sup>3</sup> The principles of European system, democracy, conquest and dominion, professed by the leaders of the two powers would prove to be fundamental in the significance that Black intellectuals perceived the War to have. Whilst a significant body of historical literature has analysed the work of individual Black intellectuals, such as W.E.B Du Bois, and historians such as Marable and Robinson have considered multiple Black intellectuals in relation to the Marxist tradition, little literature has focussed solely on the significance the First World War had for both Black male and Black female intellectuals, and that will therefore be the orientation of this essay. This essay will analyse some of the wartime work of three US-based Black intellectuals: W.E.B Du Bois, Hubert Harrison and Ida B. Wells in order to establish the significance that they perceived the War to have. This essay will also consider the significance that the War had for Black intellectuals in terms of how it shaped the characteristics of

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<sup>1</sup> This essay was written for HI406C: The Black Radical Tradition.

<sup>2</sup> H. H. Asquith, *Address to His Majesty*, (London: House of Commons, 1914) in House of Commons API <[https://api.parliament.uk/historic-hansard/commons/1914/aug/27/address-to-his-majesty#S5CV0066P0\\_19140827\\_HOC\\_319](https://api.parliament.uk/historic-hansard/commons/1914/aug/27/address-to-his-majesty#S5CV0066P0_19140827_HOC_319)> [Last Accessed: 29/10/2023], p. 1.

<sup>3</sup> W. Wilson, *Wilson Before Congress*, (Washington DC: Congress, 1917) in Library of Congress <<https://www.loc.gov/exhibitions/world-war-i-american-experiences/about-this-exhibition/arguing-over-war/for-or-against-war/wilson-before-congress/>> [Last Accessed: 24/10/2023], p. 1.

their intellectual output, including consideration of the work of Jane Nardal. It will be argued that whilst key concepts such as democracy and imperialism underscored the significance that Black intellectuals perceived the War to have, there were differences in their perceptions. It will also be argued that the First World War was significant for Black intellectuals because it led to the rise of anti-imperialist, Pan-Africanist, and internationalist thinking among them, but that this was not universal.

In order to analyse the significance that the First World War had for Black intellectuals, it is essential to determine which definition of ‘the intellectual’ is being employed. Marable highlights Edward Said’s ‘radical’ definition which advances that an intellectual is ‘an individual endowed with a faculty for representing, embodying, articulating a message, a view, an attitude, philosophy or opinion to, as well as for, a public.’<sup>4</sup> This definition allows for the incorporation of analysis of figures such as Harrison who did not have a university education, and Wells, whose intellectual output was rooted in her journalism and activism. Thus, this essay adopts the ‘radical’ definition of ‘the intellectual’.

Emphasised by Robinson as one of two male scholars that are imperative to any study of the significance of the Black Radical Tradition,<sup>5</sup> and highlighted by Marable as ‘the most significant and enduring’ Black radical,<sup>6</sup> W.E.B. Du Bois was arguably the most influential Black intellectual of the period. By the advent of the First World War Du Bois had, among other pursuits, become the first African American to achieve a doctoral degree from Harvard; been employed as both a professor of Greek and Latin and of Economics and History; made his landmark speech on the Color Line; co-led the Niagara Movement; and co-founded the NAACP.<sup>7</sup> Robinson highlights that Du Bois analysed the imperialist basis of the First World War<sup>8</sup> and it was through an anti-imperialist lens that Du Bois perceived the significance of the War in ‘The African Roots of War’. In this article, Du Bois situated Africa as central to the racialised capitalist global system that European powers created and which he

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<sup>4</sup> M. Marable, *W.E.B. Du Bois: Black Radical Democrat*, (London: Routledge, 1986), p. xxx.

<sup>5</sup> C. J. Robinson, *Black Marxism*, (United States: University of North Carolina Press, 2000), p. 185.

<sup>6</sup> M. Marable, ‘Marxism, Memory, and the Black Radical Tradition’, *Souls*, 13.1 (2011), 1-16, pp. 6-7.

<sup>7</sup> H. Adi, and M. Sherwood, *Pan-African History: Political Figures from Africa and the Diaspora Since 1787*, (London: Routledge, 2003), pp. 48-49.

<sup>8</sup> Robinson, p. 195.

highlights operated through the imposition of despotism in Africa (and the Global South) to bolster capitalist democracies in the Global North. Under this system, he contended that ‘the ownership of materials and men in the darker world is the real prize that is setting the nations of Europe at each other’s throats to-day.’<sup>9</sup> Therefore, the significance of the War for Du Bois was the effect it would have, as an imperialist war, of deepening and reinforcing European exploitation not only in Africa but in all oppressed nations. This highlights that Du Bois perceived the importance of the War not only for the African diaspora but that his view of its significance was transnational. He further connected the oppressed nations in what he proposed as the solution to the War: ‘If we want real peace and lasting culture, however, we must go further. We must extend the democratic ideal to the yellow, brown, and black peoples.’<sup>10</sup> This also indicates that the War was significant for Du Bois because it demonstrated the necessity of establishing democracy in the Global South in order for future conflicts to be avoided.

Whilst the transnational connection of different races was not a new practice in Du Bois’ work, with Slate highlighting that in 1900, Du Bois ‘globalized the color line’<sup>11</sup>, numerous historians have indicated that the First World War sparked the centralisation of anti-imperialism in his intellectual output. In tracing Du Bois’ abolitionism, Olsavsky emphasises that from World War One onward, Du Bois turned from illusions of benevolent empire toward anti-imperialism, situating abolitionism within an extensive chronology of capitalist accumulation and imperialist revolt.<sup>12</sup> Getachew states that ‘in the context of World War I and its immediate aftermath, he left behind this concern with incorporation to consider why democratic states had embraced imperial expansion.’<sup>13</sup> Moreover, Mullen specifically cites ‘The African Roots of War’ as marking a decisive point in his adoption of a ‘programmatic anti-

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<sup>9</sup> W.E.B. Du Bois, ‘The African Roots of War’, *Atlantic Monthly*, (1915), p. 711.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 712.

<sup>11</sup> N. Slate, *Colored Cosmopolitanism: The Shared Struggle for Freedom in the United States and India*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2012), p. 65.

<sup>12</sup> J. Olsavsky, ‘The Abolitionist Tradition in the Making of W.E.B. Du Bois’s Marxism and Anti-Imperialism’, *Socialism and Democracy*, 32.3 (2018), 14-35, p. 27.

<sup>13</sup> A. Getachew, ‘Democracy and Empire: An Introduction to the International Thought of W.E.B. Du Bois’, in *W.E.B. Du Bois: International Thought*, ed. by Adom Getachew and Jennifer Pitts (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2022), pp. xv-lvii, p. xxiii.

imperialism'.<sup>14</sup> Therefore, it is clear that following the First World War, Du Bois more broadly incorporated an anti-imperialist analysis into his work. With his wartime perception of the significance of conflict being rooted in anti-imperialism, it can be highlighted that his perception of the significance of the War influenced the analysis that he would adopt in his post-war work. The First World War was therefore highly significant in shaping the anti-imperialist character of Du Bois' intellectual output in the post-war era.

Moreover, whilst Du Bois' internationalism was already evident prior to the First World War, Slate notes a change in Du Bois' conception of 'colored unity' by highlighting that in November 1914, his conception was partly based on racial essentialism but in 1919, his defence of solidarity among people of colour had expanded from an understanding based on racial roots to one which incorporated a collective history of oppression.<sup>15</sup> It can be suggested that the First World War, and Du Bois' perception of its significance, shaped this adaptation of his conception of 'colored unity'. 'The African Roots of War' was published only six months after Slate indicates Du Bois' conceptualisation was based on racial essentialism, however, in the May 1915 article, Du Bois clearly emphasised the collective history of oppression shared by non-European nations under the capitalist system. The War was therefore significant in altering the characteristics of Du Bois' internationalism. Moreover, following the First World War, Du Bois was fundamental in organising the four Pan-African congresses that occurred in the interwar period, indicating the significance of the War in shaping the prominence of Pan-Africanism in his work. A growth in the prominence of internationalism in the post-War period is also evident in the work of Hubert Harrison.

Contrary to Du Bois' educational attainment and employment in academic institutions, Hubert Harrison attained the top level of education he could in St Croix before completing his high school education in New York City. Prior to the war, his endeavours had centred around involvement in public politics both in the lyceum scene and in the Socialist Party USA, where he challenged the party's

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<sup>14</sup> B. V. Mullen, *Un-American: WEB Du Bois and the Century of World Revolution* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2015), p. 24.

<sup>15</sup> Slate, p. 70.



attitude to race.<sup>16</sup> However, 1914 saw his break from the party and, as Heideman describes, Harrison's turn towards race.<sup>17</sup> Harrison's race consciousness emanates through two articles from which the significance of the First World War for him can be ascertained: 'The White War and the Colored World', published in 1917 and 'The White War and the Colored Races', written in 1918 and described by Perry as Harrison's primary editorial concerning the war.<sup>18</sup> Similarly to Du Bois, Harrison's perception of the significance of the war was underscored by an anti-imperialist analysis of the global event: 'The War in Europe is a war of the white race wherein the stakes of the conflict are the titles to possession in the lands and destinies of this colored majority in Asia, Africa, and the islands of the sea.'<sup>19</sup> Not only did Harrison emphasise the significance of the war as an imperial endeavour but he united the subjects of European dominion under the title of 'the colored majority', indicating, as Du Bois did, the shared significance it had for all those upon which European dominion was inflicted.

This emphasis proceeds in his advancement of 'fratricidal strife', a concept which distinguishes Harrison's perception of the significance of the War from Du Bois'. In a strategic deployment of 'race science', Harrison argued that as the war waged, the quality of the stock of the white race would be reduced, shrinking its ability to oppress the 'darker nations' and leading to an ease of the oppressive grip of control that imperial powers had in those nations, creating room for the eventual security of self-determination by the citizens of those nations.<sup>20</sup> Harrison therefore viewed the First World War as an event which was significant as it would directly lead to the downfall of imperialist rule and to the autonomy of the oppressed Global South. Moreover, distinctly from Du Bois' wartime thought, which saw him urge African Americans to forget their grievances and support the war effort,<sup>21</sup> for Harrison, the War was significant domestically because it highlighted the disconnect between the US' professions

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<sup>16</sup> P. M. Heideman, 'Hubert Harrison: The Voice of Harlem Radicalism, 1883-1918', *Historical Materialism*, 21.3 (2013), 165-177, pp. 166-169.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 172.

<sup>18</sup> H. Harrison, *A Hubert Harrison Reader*, ed. by Jeffrey Perry (Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 2021), p. 202.

<sup>19</sup> H. Harrison, 'The White War and the Colored World', in *A Hubert Harrison Reader*, ed. by Jeffrey Perry (Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 2021), pp. 202-203.

<sup>20</sup> H. Harrison, 'The White War and the Colored Races', in *A Hubert Harrison Reader*, ed. by Jeffrey Perry (Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 2021), p. 208.

<sup>21</sup> W.E.B. Du Bois, 'Close Ranks', *The Crisis*, 1918.

of democracy and its treatment of people of African descent within its borders. It is with Harrison's emphasis of 'the sham of democracy'<sup>22</sup> that his opposition to Du Bois' 'close ranks', which Heideman highlights,<sup>23</sup> can be understood, as for Harrison, exposing the lie of the extension of democracy as a war aim not only reinforced the root cause of the War as imperialism, but indicated an even greater necessity for African Americans to secure Civil Rights at home.

The race consciousness, internationalism, and anti-imperialism which Perry advances emerge throughout Harrison's wartime articles,<sup>24</sup> continued in Harrison's post-War activities. Upon referencing Harrison's wartime criticism of Du Bois, Marable highlights that as Harrison's resistance to Du Bois and the NAACP grew stronger, he became increasingly drawn to Garvey and the Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA).<sup>25</sup> With Harrison becoming editor of *The Negro World* less than two years after the end of the conflict, his turn towards Garveyism, with its ideology rooted in key concepts such as Black nationalism, Pan-Africanism, self-determination, Black pride, and a 'Back to Africa' doctrine, indicates the internationalist and increasingly race-first nature of Harrison's thought in the post-War period. This is evident merely through the comparison of his organisational affiliation with the Socialist Party USA prior to the War and his affiliation with the UNIA following it. The War was therefore significant in shaping the direction of Hubert Harrison's work as in the interwar era he became affiliated with an organisation which promoted self-determination and Pan-Africanism, concepts which Harrison clearly engaged with in his anti-imperial assessment of the significance of the War. However, whilst Garvey's movement was primarily concerned with connecting the African diaspora, in the interwar period Harrison emphasised not only the unification of people of African descent but continued to promote the solidarity of all oppressed races, as he had done in his wartime articles. Slate highlights his contribution to *The Negro World* in December 1920 when he encouraged his readers that African Americans must join with the world's other colored races.<sup>26</sup> Together with the trajectory of Du Bois'

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<sup>22</sup> Ibid., pp. 204-205.

<sup>23</sup> Heideman, p. 175.

<sup>24</sup> H. Harrison, *A Hubert Harrison Reader*, p. 202.

<sup>25</sup> Marable, 'Marxism, Memory, and the Black Radical Tradition', p. 10.

<sup>26</sup> Slate, p. 71.

work, this indicates that the First World War was significant for the emergence of internationalism among Black intellectuals.

To limit the exploration of the significance that the First World War had for Black intellectuals to a study of Du Bois and Harrison, however, would ignore the work of Davies, who emphasises the contributions of women to the Black radical intellectual tradition.<sup>27</sup> And, whilst existing literature indicates there was a greater prevalence of Black male intellectuals during the period, Marable notes Ida B. Wells for her anti-lynching campaign, her role in the women's suffrage movement, and her role in co-founding the NAACP.<sup>28</sup> By the First World War, Ida B. Wells' long-standing articulation of Civil Rights issues affirmed her status as an intellectual. Wells did not theorise about the causes and significance of the First World War in the same way that Du Bois and Harrison did, however, the only chapter in her autobiography that specifically relates to the conflict is titled 'World War I and the Negro Soldiers'. In the chapter, Wells recounted her opposition to the hanging of twelve African American soldiers following the Houston Riot of 1917: 'It seemed to me a terrible thing that our government would take the lives of men who had bared their breasts fighting for the defense of our country.'<sup>29</sup> For Wells, the significance of the War was therefore a domestic one which centred on the plight of African Americans under American democracy. The significance for Wells becomes clearer in a letter she wrote to President Woodrow Wilson only twenty days following his profession that the world should be made safe for democracy. In the letter, Wells requested Wilson to withdraw a directive which encouraged African American servicemen to avoid public locations where they would face racial discrimination.<sup>30</sup> Wells premised this request on Wilson's democratic ideal, stating: 'No order so vicious or undemocratic has been issued in armies fighting Germany. Protect American soldiers in Democracy at home before

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<sup>27</sup> C. B. Davies, 'A Black Left Feminist View on Cedric Robinson's *Black Marxism*', *Black Perspectives*, (2016), <<https://www.aaihs.org/a-black-left-feminist-view-on-cedric-robinsons-black-marxism/>> [Last Accessed: 28/10/2023], p. 1.

<sup>28</sup> Marable, 'Marxism, Memory, and the Black Radical Tradition', p. 10.

<sup>29</sup> I. B. Wells, *Crusade For Justice: The Autobiography of Ida B. Wells*, ed. by Alfreda M. Duster (United States: The University of Chicago Press, 2020), p. 313.

<sup>30</sup> I. B. Wells, 'Letter from Ida B. Wells-Barnett to President Woodrow Wilson Protesting General Ballou's Bulletin Number 35 for the 92<sup>nd</sup> Division, Camp Funston, Kansas' in *National Archives Catalog* <<https://catalog.archives.gov/id/7455575?objectPage=2>> [Last Accessed 29/10/2023], p. 1.

sending them abroad in Democracy's War.<sup>31</sup> Therefore, the First World War was significant for Wells because it exposed the hypocrisy of the US' practice of democracy and shaped her advancement of Civil Rights issues. This indicates a similarity between Harrison and Wells' perceptions of the importance of the War domestically. For Wells, the primary significance of the War was not rooted in anti-imperialism and Pan-Africanism but in the ideal of democracy, and her post-War work continued to focus on securing Civil Rights for African Americans.<sup>32</sup> The War was therefore less significant in changing the fundamental characteristics of Wells' work in the post-war period, and instead constituted a re-orientation of Wells' existing fight for Civil Rights.

One Black female intellectual whose work was shaped by the transnational race relations emerging in Black intellectual spheres after the First World War was Afro-Martinican intellectual Jane Nardal, notable for her post-war essay entitled 'Internationalisme Noir'. The trend, previously emphasised, that emerged in Du Bois', Harrison's, and other Black intellectuals' work in the interwar period was significant for Nardal's theorising in the era. Farmer highlights how Nardal 'documented a new understanding of blackness and collectivity among post-World War I globalization [...] focused on black people's efforts to rhetorically and ideologically link the African diaspora while also reconciling these new identities with the "ancient traditions" of Africa.'<sup>33</sup> Not only does this reiterate the significance that the First World War had for fostering greater emphasis on racial unity by Black thinkers, but it indicates that these emerging trends sparked new theorising among intellectuals, and Farmer emphasises Nardal's role in generating one of the first definitions of Black internationalism.<sup>34</sup> The First World War was therefore significant for Nardal as the globalisation of racial unity, which was fostered during the conflict and afterwards, shaped her intellectual output. Her defining of Black internationalism in the wake of the war indicates its significance in producing new theoretical exploration amongst Black intellectuals.

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<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

<sup>32</sup> Wells, *Crusade for Justice*, pp. 349-357.

<sup>33</sup> A. D. Farmer, 'Black Women's Internationalism: A New Frontier in Intellectual History', *Modern Intellectual History*, 19 (2022), 625-637, p. 625.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid.

To conclude, the significance that the First World War had for Black intellectuals, in terms of how they perceived the War's significance as it was being waged, differed between them but there were some overlaps in their perceptions. Both Du Bois and Harrison emphasised the significance of the War as imperialist in character as well as indicated the significance it had for all of those oppressed by European imperialism, and both Harrison and Wells emphasised the War's significance in exposing the hypocrisy of US democracy. The War was also significant for Black intellectuals because it shaped the characteristics of their work, and it has been shown that for Du Bois and Harrison, their perceptions of the significance of the War influenced their post-War thinking. The War was significant in influencing Du Bois' adoption of anti-imperialism and his greater emphasis on Pan-Africanism, as well as in reshaping his understanding of racial unity. For Harrison, the War was significant in shaping his Pan-African and internationalist approach to his work. Together, this demonstrates that overall, the War was significant for the promotion of internationalist thought among Black intellectuals and this is evident in Nardal's work to define this post-War trend as Black internationalism. Nardal's work also reinforces the significance that the First World War had for the generation of new thought among Black intellectuals. However, acknowledgement of Ida B. Wells' work demonstrates that the internationalist thought emerging out of the First World War was not universal among all Black intellectuals. Therefore, inclusion of Black female intellectuals is paramount to understanding the nuances of the significance that the First World War had for Black intellectuals, and further research could identify and explore the wartime and post-War work of further Black female intellectuals in order to generate a fuller understanding of the significance that the First World War had for Black intellectuals.

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## **A New Generation? An investigation of changing gender roles and sexuality in interwar Weimar Germany**

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Historiography of the Weimar Republic is often overshadowed by the wars that preceded and succeeded it. Post-WW2 historiography was uncomfortable with comparisons between the old democracy and the new, so focused on political history, examining the rise and fall of democracy and synthesising the ‘Sonderweg’ (‘special path’) theory, arguing that the demise of the Republic was inevitable.<sup>36</sup> As Germany approached reunification there was a historiographical shift when historians like Penhert presented a more balanced picture of Weimar where economic strife and cultural factors were given equal weight to politics.<sup>37</sup> The study of gender has long been linked to Weimar history, but Lybeck has noted that such studies tend to focus either on women in cultural history or through the political history of suffrage and emancipation.<sup>38</sup> This essay will link the experience of women in the Weimar Republic with the simultaneous masculine gender crisis to show that the Weimar era represented a major shift in gender norms. In terms of wider historiographical context, it will also examine the Sonderweg argument through the lens of gender and will criticise previous historiography for excluding some aspects of male

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<sup>35</sup> This essay was written for HI356J: Thinking History.

<sup>36</sup> Nadine Rossol and Benjamin Ziemann, *The Oxford Handbook of the Weimar Republic* (Oxford: Oxford Academic Press, 2022), p.2.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid*, p.4.

<sup>38</sup> Marti Lybeck, ‘The Return of the New Woman and Other Subjects of Weimar Gender History’, *Contemporary European History*, vol. 14.1 (2015), 127-137 (p.127).



gender norms and those existing outside the gender binary by proposing my own ‘New Generation’ theory.

## THE WAR

Even before the First World War, there had been anxieties about masculinity in German society. War was initially viewed as an opportunity to rejuvenate Germany’s young male population,<sup>39</sup> but it soon became clear that prolonged trench warfare was having a detrimental psychological effect on the men, shattering the bourgeois perception that masculinity is bolstered by conflict.<sup>40</sup> Germany lost almost two million soldiers in WW1, with a further four million returning home injured.<sup>41</sup> These men had been sent to the trenches with the expectation that they would deliver victory for their country with their strength and valour, and to return to an expectant nation in defeat was incredibly emasculating. Those who did not return with visible souvenirs of their wartime experiences were often haunted by the invisible spectre of their mental trauma instead. Moore points out that although mental problems were very common at the end of the war they were not well understood, and the men afflicted by them were looked down upon. She quotes Sutton’s study of mental illness in the wake of the war when she raises the theory that such men were disapproved of because they were not acting “stoic and proud” as gender customs demanded, but rather behaved like ‘hysterical females’: “men were not supposed to complain or have emotions, but in the cases of war neurosis and trembling, their bodies were doing this for them without their control. It was an unconscious protest against the war and against the prescribed masculinity which they were supposed to live up to.”<sup>42</sup> This shows how men were expected to repress their trauma because emotional outbursts were perceived as a sign of weakness and femininity. Crouthamel identifies this traumatised veteran as the ‘new man’, in contrast with the ‘new woman’ that

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<sup>39</sup> Alexandra Evalita Moore, *Babylon Berlin: Weimar Gender Crises as a Modern Warning* (Walla Walla: Whitman College Press, 2020), p.17.

<sup>40</sup> Jason Crouthamel, ‘Male Sexuality and Psychological Trauma: Soldiers and Sexual Disorder in World War 1 and Weimar Germany’, *Journal of the History of Sexuality*, vol. 17.1 (2008), 60-84 (p.61).

<sup>41</sup> Robert Weldon Whalen, ‘War Losses (Germany)’, *International Encyclopedia of the First World War* (2014), <[https://encyclopedia.1914-1918-online.net/article/war\\_losses\\_germany#:~:text=A%20summary%20of%20World%20War,Germany%20mobilized%20for%20the%20war](https://encyclopedia.1914-1918-online.net/article/war_losses_germany#:~:text=A%20summary%20of%20World%20War,Germany%20mobilized%20for%20the%20war)> [accessed 12/03/2023].

<sup>42</sup> Moore, p.21.

so epitomised Weimar culture.<sup>43</sup> This masculine gender crisis was worsened by the fact that their weakness and the loss of so many of their comrades led to Germany's patriarchal society becoming more dependent on women, a reversal of gender roles that only served to rub salt into the wound of male insecurity. It can be argued that this made a conservative backlash against female emancipation inevitable as men wanted to reclaim their former domination. Such inevitability can be tied into the Sonderweg theory as the gender divide would only widen over time and place strain upon the Weimar state to choose between liberal emancipation or the restoration of traditional gender norms.

## THE NEW WOMAN

Just as the end of the war marked a new era for masculinity, so too did it for femininity. The Weimar Republic marked a change from the old regime on day one; its Constitution gave women the right to vote and proclaimed gender equality, a decision backed by all major political parties.<sup>44</sup> Women had stepped into men's shoes during the war and proved capable of working in formerly male-dominated spaces. Entry into these male workplaces then allowed them access into male leisure spaces, such as cafes and pubs,<sup>45</sup> places which women would have been frowned upon for frequenting before the war. Women were perceived as becoming somewhat 'masculinized' by accessing these spaces, as they were leaving feminine norms behind and stepping into 'masculine' locations.

Women also flocked to the political sphere, with over 100 women being elected to the Reichstag in 1919.<sup>46</sup> Elsa Herrmann gleefully proclaimed the 'New Woman' as "the modern woman who refuses to be a lady and a housewife, preferring to depart from the ordained path and go her own way," disparaging the "people of yesterday" who tried to depict such women as unfeminine.<sup>47</sup> It is here where we can see the generational divide appearing – Herrmann labels all those who held traditional values as "the people of yesterday" while placing the New Woman firmly in the present, implying that she is

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<sup>43</sup> Crouthamel, p.62.

<sup>44</sup> Birgit Lang, 'Violent Women: Photographic Evidence, Gender and Sexology in Wilhelmine and Weimar Germany', *Gender & History*, vol. 31.2 (2019), 284-303 (p.290).

<sup>45</sup> Jill Suzanne Smith, *Berlin Coquette Prostitution and the New German Woman*, (New York: Cornell University Press, 2014), p.110.

<sup>46</sup> Marie Silva, 'The Rise and Fall of the Weimar Woman', *The Compass*, vol. 1.5 (2018), 37-47 (p.38).

<sup>47</sup> Elsa Herrman, 'This Is The New Woman' (1929), *German History in Documents and Images*, <[https://ghdi.ghi-dc.org/sub\\_document.cfm?document\\_id=3887](https://ghdi.ghi-dc.org/sub_document.cfm?document_id=3887)> [accessed 14/03/2023].

replacing the woman of the past. Pennington argues that this generational difference is fundamental to analysing the changing gender norms of the period, pointing out that to the post-war generation, the traditional militaristic worldview upheld by patriarchal gender norms was “odious.”<sup>48</sup> The New Woman knew she was changing gender norms by embarking upon economic and political independence and began to show this through her appearance. The stereotypical New Woman wore androgynous clothes, dispensing with the literal restraints placed upon her by Victorian corsetry, and sported the daringly short “Pageboy” haircut.<sup>49</sup> Shorter hair, shorter skirts and no corsetry indicated that women were beginning to appear more masculine, offering a physical embodiment of their growing confidence. With the increasing visibility of the New Woman transforming the way that Germany perceived femininity, it is perhaps only natural that gendered histories of Weimar have focused so much on her impact.

### **THE NEW MAN?**

However, as alluded to by Pennington, it was a whole generation that turned its back on wartime ideals, not just women. Yet comparatively little attention has been paid to the changing gender roles of men outside of a military context. Crouthamel uses the term ‘new man’ to describe the returning veterans of the war,<sup>50</sup> but what of the men too young to fight, who stayed at home to shape part of a new generation? These men are bound to have had different experiences and formed different values than their older brothers but have remained largely absent from historiography. Sara Hall has praised the work of McCormick for dealing with both young men and women’s changing gender roles,<sup>51</sup> but his and Pennington’s are some of the only works that mentions the real ‘New Man’ (who can be defined as a man embracing changing gender norms as a true counterpart to the New Woman, rather than traumatised veterans who harked back to pre-war gender roles). It is clear that this is an understudied aspect of the field that has plenty of scope for development in the future. McCormick believes that conservative revulsion at “phallic mothers and effeminate sons” contributed to the rise of fascism just

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<sup>48</sup> Joseph Pennington, *Made for Love: Marlene Dietrich, the Comedian Harmonists, and performances of gender at the end of the Weimar Republic*, (Los Angeles: ProQuest Dissertations Publishing, 2010), p.2.

<sup>49</sup> Joshua Adair, ‘Dawn of the New Women in Sports, Fashion, and Employment: Challenging Gender Roles in the Weimar Republic’, *Legacy*, vol. 15.1 (2015), 21-33 (p.25).

<sup>50</sup> See Footnote 9.

<sup>51</sup> Sara Hall, ‘Emancipatory Entertainments; Gender in Weimar Mass Culture’, *German Politics & Society*, vol. 21.3 (2003), 120-129 (p.126).

as much as the ‘New Woman.’<sup>52</sup> Sutton has defended this blind spot by arguing that the media placed more emphasis on the New Woman and that she was viewed as more of a threat,<sup>53</sup> but Pennington disagrees with this, stating that conservatives “were just as concerned with the New Man.”<sup>54</sup> The importance of the New Woman cannot be dismissed, but the historiography would benefit by talking of the rise of a ‘New Generation’ which turned its back on traditional gender norms, rather than focussing almost entirely on women. Additionally, with many women rejecting the ideals of the New Woman, and with women in general being more likely than men to support conservative religious parties,<sup>55</sup> the Sonderweg theory of inevitable collapse is better explained by a theory of widening generational ideological gaps rather than solely gender-based differences.

## SEXUALITY IN WEIMAR GERMANY

If the ‘New Man’ is somewhat hard to pin down in the historiography, those who perceived themselves to exist outside the traditional gender binary are even more elusive. It is important not to place current perceptions of gender onto the past, as those in the 1920s had different ideas about gender identity. For instance, Magnus Hirschfeld’s Scientific-Humanitarian Committee concluded that homosexuality was not only natural but represented a ‘third sex’.<sup>56</sup> As such, the discussion of non-normative sexualities is relevant in the discussion of Weimar gender norms because they were regarded as being intrinsically linked with sex and gender. Discussions about homosexuality were surprisingly progressive; even the acknowledgement that there may be something beyond the traditional sex binary shows that notions of sex and gender were more fluid in Weimar Germany than the eras that preceded and succeeded it. Hirschfeld led the charge to convince the public that same-sex relationships should be decriminalised. His colleague Kurt Hiller took to the pages of *Der Weltbuhne* (“the most influential journal of the non-partisan left intelligentsia”<sup>57</sup>) to defend the rights of gay men, pointing out the

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<sup>52</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>53</sup> Katie Sutton, *The Masculine Woman in Weimar Germany*, (New York City: Bergahn Books, 2011), p.9.

<sup>54</sup> Pennington, p.8.

<sup>55</sup> Manfred Kuechler, ‘The NDSAP vote in the Weimar Republic: An assessment of the state-of-the-art in view of Modern Electoral Research’, *Historical Social Research*, vol. 17.1 (1992), 22-52 (p.36).

<sup>56</sup> Javier Samper Vendrell, *Danger at the Newsstand: Homosexuality, Youth, and Mass Culture in the Weimar Republic* (Madison: ProQuest Dissertations Publishing, 2015), p.3.

<sup>57</sup> Willem Melching, ‘A New Morality: Left-Wing Intellectuals on Sexuality in Weimar Germany’, *Journal of Contemporary History*, vol. 25.1 (1990), 69-85 (p.72).

appearance of homosexuality throughout history and its innateness as a biological, not sociological, factor.<sup>58</sup>

Running parallel to this movement was another campaign for the recognition of transvestites, a cause which also had the backing of Hirschfeld's Committee. Transvestites<sup>59</sup> had been recognised even before the war, with the government issuing 'Transvestite Certificates' in 1908 to exempt holders from persecution from gross indecency laws.<sup>60</sup> *Der Weltbühne* even published an article coming to the defence of a male transvestite who wished to be registered as a woman, arguing that it was in breach of her rights to prevent her from doing this.<sup>61</sup> There is no doubt that these opinions, while not in the majority view, show that gender roles changed significantly during the Weimar period and were more progressive than other western nations at the time; indeed, similar legislation would not return to German statute books until the 1980s, and with self-identification for transgender people only being introduced in 2022.<sup>62</sup> Both the homosexual and transvestite campaigns were incredibly middle-class, with those lying outside of bourgeois respectability excluded.<sup>63</sup> This shows that the campaigners acknowledged the fact that they had to ingratiate themselves with societal norms in other ways in order to be accepted. However, respectability was ultimately impossible to achieve in a society that was so defined by normative heterosexuality,<sup>64</sup> so the effectiveness of these campaigns was minimal; by 1933 homosexuality remained a crime and transvestite rights had not progressed much further than the aforementioned certificates.

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<sup>58</sup> Ibid.

<sup>59</sup> NB: *Hirschfeld seems to have referred to 'transvestites' in much the same way as we would refer to transgender people today; that is, people that wish to live their lives as another gender rather than just wearing clothes traditionally ascribed to the other sex. I have decided to continue to refer to these people as transvestites so as not to place modern-day understandings of gender onto the historical period.*

<sup>60</sup> Livia Gershon, 'Gender Identity in Weimar Germany', *JSTOR Daily* (2018), <<https://daily.jstor.org/gender-identity-in-weimar-germany/>> [accessed 15/03/2023].

<sup>61</sup> Melching, p.82.

<sup>62</sup> Giulia Castagnaro, 'Self ID: Germany introduces a law that will enable trans people to self-identify', *Gender GP* (2022), <<https://www.gendergp.com/germany-introduces-a-law-which-allows-trans-people-to-self-identify/#:~:text=The%20proposed%20law%20is%20expected,and%20gender%20on%20official%20documents>> [accessed 25/01/2024].

<sup>63</sup> Gershon, *Gender Identity*.

<sup>64</sup> Vendrell, p.3.

This reveals the more conservative side of Weimar. While pockets of society successfully overthrew traditional perceptions of gender those in power remained less than supportive, and so little institutional change to pre-war gender norms was enacted. These campaigns show that it was not only women challenging gender norms, strengthening my argument that Weimar historiography would benefit from referring to the ‘New Generation’ rather than just the ‘New Woman’. This theory would also embrace the experiences of lesbians in the Weimar Republic. Hirschfeld did not campaign for lesbian rights as lesbianism had never been criminalised but they were still constrained by heteronormativity and the stigmas associated with it, though they benefited from a new “toleration and openness”<sup>65</sup> during the interwar period. Due to lesbians often embracing more ‘masculine’ traits, they have often been lumped together with the New Woman with regards to masculine fashion trends<sup>66</sup> rather than being studied alongside homosexual men as part of Hirschfeld’s third sex. With a study of a ‘New Generation’ lesbians and heterosexual women can both be viewed as part of a larger transformation and blurring of gender norms which angered traditionalists, making a clash between progressives and conservatives inevitable. However, as mentioned earlier, Hirschfeld’s campaigns achieved very little legislative change. The ‘third sex’ was largely left to its own devices and pursued less by the police<sup>67</sup> but received no additional legal protections, making them vulnerable if conservatives were to regain the upper hand in German politics.

## CONSERVATIVE BACKLASH

That moment occurred after the financial catastrophe of 1929, worsening the fragile state of the German economy. This led to a strengthening of conservative factions which sought a return to Wilhelmine values, with Silva suggesting that voters began to turn to the right because they “were looking for any change that would bring them back to their past, because they most likely believed things could not get any worse.”<sup>68</sup> Many of those harking for traditional values were women, which arguably undermines the importance of progressive changes in female gender norms, but I would argue

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<sup>65</sup> Laurie Marhoefer, *Among abnormals: The queer sexual politics of Germany’s Weimar Republic, 1918-1933*, (New Brunswick: ProQuest Dissertations Publishing, 2008), p.4.

<sup>66</sup> Sutton, p.13.

<sup>67</sup> Marhoefer, p.5.

<sup>68</sup> Silva, p.42.

that this just highlights the generational divide. It would inevitably be those with strong memories of before 1914 who wanted to return to those values, while those growing up in the new era (those born around the start of the war would be entering adulthood by the 1930s) would feel much less attachment to these values. The left-wing domination of politics that had endured since 1919 ended in 1932, with the Nazis displacing the SPD as the Reichstag's largest party,<sup>69</sup> but this was not a sudden upheaval. Concern at the perceived moral decline of Germany had been brewing since the turn of the century. This sense of degeneracy was accelerated by the trauma of losing the war and the transformation of gender roles. The leader of the West German Morality Club believed that "military collapse was followed by the economic collapse, and the two together allowed the moral collapse."<sup>70</sup> The State became the mediator between conservatives and progressives, with both factions demanding the State take action to either to extend liberalisation or to reverse it and restore the morality of the Wilhelmine Era.<sup>71</sup> Conservatives wished to force women to return to domestic duties and allow men to return to economic dominance and thus restore Germany's masculinity. There was an increased effort to convince women to return to the Victorian trinity of 'Kinder, Kirche, Kuche'<sup>72</sup> (children, church, kitchen). With women being bombarded with propaganda shaming them for not conforming to traditional gender roles and encouraging them to give up their jobs in favour of men,<sup>73</sup> a majority of women returned to jobs in 'female industries'<sup>74</sup> (clothing, confectionary, etc.) and female representation in the Reichstag fell to 6%<sup>75</sup> (down from almost 10% in 1919).<sup>76</sup> Melching has criticised existing historiography for focusing exclusively on the backlash of conservatives to the perceived promiscuity of Weimar society, ignoring the rest of the political spectrum. His explanation is simply that the left-wing parties did not care much about gender and sexuality.<sup>77</sup> Herzer refutes this by pointing to a

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<sup>69</sup> Jerome Kerwin, 'The German Reichstag Elections of July 31, 1932', *The American Political Science Review*, vol. 26.5 (1932), 921-926 (p.922).

<sup>70</sup> Marhoefer, p.3.

<sup>71</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>72</sup> Adair, p.26.

<sup>73</sup> Jaime Alexandra Gaudet, *The cultural assault on the female gender during the Weimar years*, (Boston: ProQuest Dissertations Publishing, 2012), p.2; Amy Young, *"Das gesprengte Korsett": Gender in lesbian periodicals in Berlin, 1924-1933*, (Lincoln: ProQuest Dissertations Publishing, 2004), p.10.

<sup>74</sup> Young, p.11.

<sup>75</sup> Gaudet, p.14.

<sup>76</sup> Young, p.12.

<sup>77</sup> Melching, p.70.

contemporary article by Kurt Hiller, where he identifies the SPD as being somewhat supportive of progressive values and says that the “party which has represented the Scientific-Humanitarian standpoint without any reservations... is the Communist Party.”<sup>78</sup> This shows that the moral divide was mirrored in the political sphere. This can be used to argue in favour of the Sonderweg approach, with one faction applauding the progress made to advance equality and the other being increasingly angered by these reforms and calling for their reversal. A clash between these two ideological opposites was inevitable. The Weimar State, as the middleman in this moral tug-of-war, would be the ultimate victim of such a conflict. Therefore, it can be argued that the change in gender norms and perceived moral degeneracy associated with these changes were just as important as economic and political factors in contributing to the end of the Weimar Republic.

## CONCLUSION

Shifting gender norms in Weimar Germany can be identified in many ways. The post-war masculine gender crisis marked a new era when veterans returned to a society where there was a new ambiguity about what it meant to be a man. While the old guard was left reeling in the aftermath of Germany’s defeat, a New Generation rose and began to challenge traditional gender roles. Young women swept into ‘male’ spaces and began to masculinise their appearance and the men who welcomed women into these areas were viewed as being ‘feminized’, rejecting the old-fashioned views on masculinity which had sent millions of men to their deaths. Those perceived to constitute a ‘third sex’ were also an important part of the New Generation and prompted incredibly progressive discussions about gender and sexuality. In terms of wider historical context, this discussion of gender norms can be brought into the wider discourse about the rise of fascism. When conservative factions regained their footing and began pushing to suppress this new generation and restore traditional gender norms the moral generational divide met with political and economic factors to confirm the Sonderweg theory, that Weimar democracy was bound to split due to this factionalism and allow a dominant power such as the Nazis to take control.

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<sup>78</sup> Manfred Herzer, ‘Communists, Social Democrats, and the Homosexual Movement in the Weimar Republic’, *Journal of Homosexuality*, vol. 29.2-3 (1995), 197-226 (p.205).



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## **‘To Be Reconciled Is to Be Set Free’: The Political and Historical Development of Black Liberation Theology**

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In 1966 Stokely Carmichael famously called for ‘Black Power’ as a new and revolutionary response to American racism.<sup>2</sup> Three years later James Cone published his pivotal text *Black Theology and Black Power*, outlining a radical theology of Black liberation.<sup>3</sup> From these two events the enthusiastic and complex relationship between the secular Black Power movement and the newly formed Black Theology developed exponentially. The nature of this relationship remains contested and, with this in mind, this work will evaluate the extent to which Black Theology coated a ‘vogue nationalist ideology’ with ‘a veneer of Christianity’.<sup>4</sup>

Before continuing however, this analysis must also make clear the nature of its study as predominantly historical and political, and not as a vehicle for theological judgement or evaluation of Black Theology itself. It will engage with a variety of primary and secondary scholarship, notably

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<sup>1</sup> This essay was written for HI406C: The Black Radical Tradition.

<sup>2</sup> Peniel E. Joseph, ‘Introduction: Toward a Historiography of the Black Power Movement’, in *The Black Power Movement: Rethinking the Civil Rights-Black Power Era*, ed. by Peniel E. Joseph (Milton Park: Routledge, 2007), 1-25 (p.1).

<sup>3</sup> James H. Cone, *Black Theology and Black Power* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1997).

<sup>4</sup> Micah W. Kubic, ‘Between Malcolm and Martin: James Cone’s Black Theology as Pragmatic Ideological Alternative’, *Souls*, 11.4 (2009), 448–67 (p.452).

extensive primary works by James Cone and J. Deotis Roberts.<sup>5</sup> It will then posit that while prevailing political ideas of Black Power played a key role in the development of Black liberation theology it stands as a movement of its own, rooted in historical Black religious tradition and with a unique ideology of its own. In closing, it will examine the critiques and debates offered by feminist, particularly Womanist, and global liberation scholars.

To properly evaluate this relationship this work must first offer working definitions of ‘Black Power’ and ‘Black Theology’, acknowledging that scholars of both movements often contest such concrete definitions. These definitions will largely rely on primary definitions by Cone supported by secondary scholarship. Cone defines ‘Black Power’ simply as ‘an affirmation of the humanity of blacks in spite of white racism’ and emphasises the dominant role Black people must take in American society.<sup>6</sup> Such an affirmation highlights the cultural heritage of African Americans, paving the way for the establishment of Black Power organisations that celebrate black empowerment in practical ways.<sup>7</sup> In defining Black Power, Cone acknowledges its political and economic implications, pointing to Carmichael and Hamilton’s emphasis on electoral control and Black nationalism. At the same time, he emphasises the role that ‘freedom from the structures of white society’ plays within Black Power beliefs.<sup>8</sup> In holding these strands of Black Power together Cone stresses hope as the key attribute that allows Black people to survive in a hostile world.<sup>9</sup> For Cone this hope lies in his belief in Christianity as a religion of liberation.

In this way Cone’s belief in such a hope led to his development of ‘Black Theology’. Cone lays out the theology as an analysis of Black people’s condition ‘in light of God’s revelation in Jesus Christ’ with a liberating ‘purpose of creating a new understanding of black dignity’.<sup>10</sup> In other words, as Kubic

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<sup>5</sup> Cone, *Black Theology*; J. Deotis Roberts, *Liberation and Reconciliation: A Black Theology* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1971).

<sup>6</sup> Cone, *Black Theology*, p.2, 36-7.

<sup>7</sup> Anthony B Pinn, ‘Religion and “America’s Problem Child”’: Notes on Pauli Murray’s Theological Development’, *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion*, 15.1 (1999), 21–39 (p.26); Kerry Pimlott, *Faith in Black Power: Religion, Race, and Resistance in Cairo, Illinois* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2016), p.3.

<sup>8</sup> Cone, *Black Theology*, p.82-3.

<sup>9</sup> Andre Johnson, ‘The Prophetic Persona of James Cone and the Rhetorical Theology of Black Theology’, *Black Theology*, 8.3 (2010), 266–85 (p.280).

<sup>10</sup> Cone, *Black Theology*, p.117.

outlines, Christianity serves a liberating purpose that applies primarily to Black people and their experiences.<sup>11</sup> Expounding on this theology, McCall paints Black Theology as an attempt to bring theology away from theoretical abstracts to the practical experiences of Black people.<sup>12</sup> At the centre of Black Theology lies a divine love that privileges Black experiences and creates a framework for the exploration of ‘Blackness’ as a liberating device.<sup>13</sup> While Cone first concretely conceptualised Black Theology many Black theologians quickly joined him in seeking to understand their Christian faith in light of their experiences. Largely unaware of similar stirrings of a liberating theology elsewhere in the post-colonial world<sup>14</sup> these Black theologians built on historical traditions of Black and African American religion to create a new way for Black Christians to reconcile their faith with the injustice of white oppression.

### **Beyond the Veneer: The Historical Origins of Black Theology**

Black Theology roots itself in historical and religious traditions that stem from centuries of African American Christian practice, thus demonstrating that it encompasses much more than the prevailing political ideology of Black Power. In this way, Black Theology, such as that espoused by Cone and his contemporaries, existed well before the theologising of the Black Power era. At its core, Black Theology roots itself in biblical beliefs about the very nature of God, creating a distinct theology from the inside out. Cone posits that the biblical God ‘is the author of justice’<sup>15</sup> who intervenes in the historical process ‘for the purpose of human liberation’ because of this just character.<sup>16</sup> Accordingly, Cone believes that the true liberation desired by Black people will come through a revolution of divine

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<sup>11</sup> Kubic, p.450.

<sup>12</sup> Emmanuel McCall, ‘Black Liberation Theology: A Politics of Freedom’, *Review & Expositor*, 73.3 (1976), 323–33 (p.323).

<sup>13</sup> Marvin E. Wickware, ‘The Labour of Black Love: James Cone, Womanism, and the Future of Black Men’s Theologies’, *Black Theology*, 19.1 (2021), 3–17 (p.5); Gary Dorrien, ‘Race, Gender, Exclusion, and Divine Discontent: Pauli Murray and the Intersections of Liberation and Reconciliation’, *Cross Currents*, 67.2 (2017), 373–99 (p.392).

<sup>14</sup> Gary Dorrien, *Breaking White Supremacy: Martin Luther King Jr. and the Black Social Gospel* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2018), p.453.

<sup>15</sup> Cone, *Black Theology*, p.64.

<sup>16</sup> James H. Cone, ‘Black Consciousness and the Black Church: A Historical-Theological Interpretation’, *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 387.1 (1970), 49–55 (p.52).

reconciliation.<sup>17</sup> Thus, in a sense Black Theology existed from the very beginning as it finds its roots in an eternal and divine liberating God.

Building on this biblical basis the Black Christian tradition persisted through the tumultuous and oppressive years of enslavement, even factoring in white attempts to weaponize Christianity as a tool of oppression. The liberating sense that underpins Black Theology reveals itself in the faith of enslaved people over the centuries. Cone points out that in this way Black Theology existed in Black people's refusal 'to accept slavery as consistent with religion'.<sup>18</sup> This refusal manifested in resistance such as rebellions of enslaved people, with leaders such as Nat Turner and Gabriel Prosser, who drew motivation from the conception of a liberating God.<sup>19</sup> McCall further emphasises this historical foundation by highlighting the faith constructed by enslaved people as a 'concrete' faith dealing in a reality where Jesus joined enslaved people in their suffering.<sup>20</sup> As such, the faith of enslaved people secured the foundation for Black Theology and offered a legacy of resistance for Black theologians to advance into the modern era.

With such a foundation, Black churches formed post-emancipation and contributed significantly to the development of Black religion. This subsequently provided the framework for Black Theology to emerge in the 1960s and 70s. Ruether points out that while the establishment of the Black church served as 'the earliest institution of black power', it simultaneously struggled to respond to the secular cry of 'Black Power'.<sup>21</sup> Cone claims similarly, pointing out that Black churches existed as a place of safety from the dehumanisation of white oppression but eventually 'lost their zeal for freedom'.<sup>22</sup> Accordingly, while the development of Black Theology stems from the Black church it also presented a radical and revolutionary way of confronting oppression in its echoing of Black Power.

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<sup>17</sup> James H. Cone, 'Black Theology on Revolution, Violence, and Reconciliation', *Union Seminary Quarterly Review*, 31.1 (1975), 5–14 (p.8, 13).

<sup>18</sup> James H. Cone, 'Black Theology and the Black Church: Where Do We Go from Here?', *Cross Currents*, 27.2 (1977), 147–56 (p.150).

<sup>19</sup> Kubic, p.453.

<sup>20</sup> McCall, p.329.

<sup>21</sup> Rosemary Radford Ruether, 'Black Theology and Black Church', *Religious Education*, 64.5 (1969), 347–51 (p.347).

<sup>22</sup> Cone, *Black Theology*, p.125.

The turn of the twentieth century brought a new perspective to the Black liberation struggle and further solidified the roots of Black Theology through the work of Social Gospel theologians. Specifically, the Black Social Gospel stood apart from its white counterpart and advocated for social justice and Black dignity while setting forth an extensive antiracist social justice agenda. This agenda continued to thrive after the First World War, despite the decline of the white Social Gospel.<sup>23</sup> Dillard argues that this Black gospel served as a predecessor to Black liberation theology.<sup>24</sup> Activists and radicals such as WEB Du Bois and Max Yergan challenged the ‘whiteness’ of Christianity and related Black people’s struggles to the Christian faith.<sup>25</sup>

Perhaps the most influential thinker of the Black Social Gospel was Howard Thurman, who published *Jesus and the Disinherited* in 1949 as a pivotal text in the development of Black Theology.<sup>26</sup> Thurman’s example demonstrates the early development of Black Theology, highlighting its philosophical roots as a theology well before the political Black Power movement. Thurman establishes his concept of liberation with a specific concern for the oppressed and poor, calling on them to heed Jesus’ reconciliatory command to ‘love your enemy’.<sup>27</sup> Black theologians, such as Roberts, will later expound on this concept of reconciliation in the face of oppression as an idea distinct to Black Theology.

As the popularity of the Black Social Gospel gave way to the Civil Rights Movement Martin Luther King, Jr. rose to prominence as a Black religious activist and leader. Cone’s 1991 *Martin & Malcolm & America* argues that one can interpret King as ‘the first liberation theologian’ despite his integrationist views.<sup>28</sup> King’s desire to create ‘the beloved community’ stemmed from his desire to mesh political traditions of freedom with biblical conceptions of liberation and justice and infuse them

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<sup>23</sup> Gary Dorrien, *A Darkly Radiant Vision: The Black Social Gospel in the Shadow of MLK* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2023), p.3, 189.

<sup>24</sup> Angela D. Dillard, *Faith in the City: Preaching Radical Social Change in Detroit* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2007), p.14.

<sup>25</sup> Kubic, p. 453; Sarah Azaransky, *Spiritual Recognition of Empire* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), p.29.

<sup>26</sup> Azaransky, p. 16.

<sup>27</sup> Gary Dorrien, ‘True Religion, Mystical Unity, and the Disinherited: Howard Thurman and the Black Social Gospel’, *American Journal of Theology & Philosophy*, 39.1 (2018), 74–99 (p. 93); Howard Thurman, *Jesus and the Disinherited*, 2nd edn (Boston: Beacon Press, 1996), p. 100.

<sup>28</sup> Dorrien, *Breaking White Supremacy*, p. 464.



with New Testament ideas of suffering and love.<sup>29</sup> This informs the concepts presented by Black theologians in the next decade as they sought to reconcile their oppression with their liberating faith. Moreover, the Black church at this time motivated the movement and, as Pinn terms it, ‘obligated them to fight for freedom’.<sup>30</sup> In this way, the Black church and the leaders it produced spurred the Civil Rights Movement, giving way to the emergence of Black Theology as both a religious form of and an alternative to the secular Black Power movement.

### **A Theology of Black Power: An Ideological and Historical Analysis**

Having established the firm historical foundation for Black Theology as a movement of its own, this analysis argues that Black Theology goes further than Black Power politics in establishing key concepts: liberation, reconciliation, radicalism, nationalism, and ‘Blackness’. This section will utilise the differing conceptions of Black Theology offered by Cone and Roberts to illustrate the complexity of opinions within Black Theology and their various relationships to Black Power.

First, liberation unequivocally stands at the core of both Black Power and Black Theology. Cone emphasises this and posits that the liberation of Black Power makes it ‘a manifestation of God himself actively involved in the present-day affairs’ of Black people.<sup>31</sup> For Cone, this liberation links the Christian gospel to Black Power and indicates the dignity of Black people and their experiences.<sup>32</sup> While Cone conceptualised this liberation as a separatist ideal, Roberts proposes liberation in conjunction with reconciliation as the ultimate goal. Black people must be liberated with an ‘inner freedom’ in order to reconcile with each other and with white oppressors.<sup>33</sup> In this way, Robert’s theology of liberation clashes with Black Power political ideas of solely material and separatist liberation. While Cone’s idea of liberation may fall in line with Black Power beliefs, Robert’s goes beyond it. Thus, Black Theology both follows and deviates from Black Power and as such one cannot couch Black Theology as mere political ideas in disguise.

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<sup>29</sup> James H. Cone, ‘Black Theology in American Religion’, *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*, 53.4 (1985), 755–71 (p. 760).

<sup>30</sup> Anthony B. Pinn, ‘Jesus and Justice: An Outline of Liberation Theology within Black Churches’, *Cross Currents*, 57.2 (2007), 218–26 (p. 220).

<sup>31</sup> Cone, *Black Theology*, p. 58.

<sup>32</sup> Cone, ‘Black Theology on Revolution’, p. 9.

<sup>33</sup> J Deotis Roberts, ‘Black Theology in the Making’, *Review & Expositor*, 70.3 (1973), 321–30 (p. 327).

In addition to liberation, Black Theology also holds reconciliation as a core value of its theology. Roberts first introduces reconciliation as “costly grace” – a move beyond liberation and towards unity between equals.<sup>34</sup> Ruether comments similarly, painting Black Theology as ‘reconciling rather than alienating’ and as a ‘way of proclaiming the heart of the gospel itself’.<sup>35</sup> While Cone may disagree on the means to arrive at reconciliation he echoes Roberts in focusing on Biblical reconciliation as a way of setting free Black people.<sup>36</sup> The National Committee of Black Churchmen, a self-described ‘informal group’ of Black clergy, readily supported Black Power while calling for reconciliation and unity.<sup>37</sup> Philosophically, Black theologians gather around the idea of reconciliation, and it remains central to understanding the political implications of Black Theology. In calling for reconciliation Black Theology stepped beyond Black Power and stood as a uniquely religious concept.

In addition to liberation and reconciliation, Black Theology embodies a sense of radical revolution that mirrors Black Power politics but draws from a distinctive religious source. Black Theology is inherently political and activist.<sup>38</sup> Both Roberts and Cone call for Black Christians to act in the radical way of Jesus and fight against injustice.<sup>39</sup> Again, they differ on the means to achieve this radical way. For Cone, this means fully accepting Black Power as a revolutionary Black consciousness.<sup>40</sup> Roberts, however, calls for restorative revolution that acts on Black Power motives but roots itself in biblical principles, such as nonviolence and reconciliation.<sup>41</sup> As such, these differing conceptualisations of radical revolution indicate that while Black Theology echoes Black Power ideas of revolution, it does not merely conform to them.

Moreover, Black Theology does not conceptualise nationalism in the same way Black Power does. Instead, it primarily emphasises liberation. While Cone offers support for nationalism and indicates a move away from Western theological tradition, he does so reluctantly.<sup>42</sup> Notably, Roberts

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<sup>34</sup> Roberts, ‘Black Theology in the Making’, p. 326, 328-9.

<sup>35</sup> Ruether, p. 348.

<sup>36</sup> Cone, ‘Black Theology on Revolution’, p. 13.

<sup>37</sup> “‘Black Power’ Statement by National Committee of Negro Churchmen’, *New York Times*, 31 July 1966.

<sup>38</sup> Kubic, p. 451.

<sup>39</sup> Dorrien, *Breaking White Supremacy*, p.446; Johnson, p. 267.

<sup>40</sup> Cone, ‘Black Theology on Revolution’, p. 5.

<sup>41</sup> Dorrien, *Breaking White Supremacy*, p. 446, 463.

<sup>42</sup> Dorrien, *Breaking White Supremacy*, p. 452.

condemns black nationalism as a rhetorical ‘fantasy’ and warns Cone against nationalism, claiming that ‘his radicalism may be blunted by his provincialism’.<sup>43</sup> To varying degrees, both Cone and Roberts distance themselves from Black nationalism. Kubic, however, points out that despite this distance Black Theology does not directly oppose Black Power nationalism and the two ideologies can inherently coexist.<sup>44</sup> Despite coexisting in this way Black Theology and Black Power continue to diverge on the idea of ‘Blackness’ and its defining role of establishing Black consciousness.

For Black theologians Blackness takes on a new theological meaning stemming from shared oppression and divine intervention. While Black nationalists conceived of Blackness as a racially defined cultural construct, Black theology sets forward Blackness as a moral construct.<sup>45</sup> For Cone, to identify as Black meant pursuing human justice and divine liberation for Black people.<sup>46</sup> He conceives of blackness in an ontological sense that allows anyone to enter into the condition of the oppressed and join them in their liberation.<sup>47</sup> This theological idea of Blackness extends to the person of Jesus, as Roberts considers a Black Messiah: the ‘liberating religious symbol of a universal reality, Jesus Christ’.<sup>48</sup> As such, Blackness constructs itself within the person of Jesus. When applied to Black people this construct of Jesus frees them from bondage. Ruether claims similarly, indicating that the cry ‘Black is beautiful’ restores the integrity of Blackness when held in light of divine redemption.<sup>49</sup> In this way, Black Theology continues to move beyond the politics of Black Power as it extends its own unique conception of Blackness.

### **Critiques of the Movement**

While Black liberation theology finds its roots both in the historical Black church and in the Black Power movement, while standing as its own revolutionary theology, it has encountered significant critique from Feminist and Womanist scholars, who posit that, especially in its formative

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<sup>43</sup> Roberts, *Liberation and Reconciliation*, p. 27; J. Deotis Roberts, *Black Religion, Black Theology: The Collected Essays of J. Deotis Roberts* (Harrisburg: Trinity Press International, 2003), p. 42.

<sup>44</sup> Kubic, p. 454.

<sup>45</sup> *ibid*, p. 463.

<sup>46</sup> Wickware, p. 4.

<sup>47</sup> James H. Cone, ‘Black Consciousness’, p. 55.

<sup>48</sup> Dorrien, *Breaking White Supremacy*, p. 459.

<sup>49</sup> Ruether, p. 350.

years, the movement contained misogyny and sexism. Such thinkers have set forward a more intersectional theology that utilises Black liberation theology as a basis but goes beyond its sometimes-narrow conceptions.

Pauli Murray, an activist, scholar and priest, problematised this theology early on and wrote formatively in the early years of Womanist theology.<sup>50</sup> Criticising Cone specifically, Murray points out that Cone's early theology reeked of arrogance and parroted the sexism of the Black Power movement.<sup>51</sup> While Cone would address these critiques later on, and move towards a more intersectional view, Murray's criticism sheds light on the flaws of early Black Theology. In response to Cone Murray offers 'a theology of relationship'. This theology emphasises Black women's experiences and suffering, putting forward an intersectional view that veers away from the uniquely male perspective of Cone and his contemporaries.<sup>52</sup>

Beyond Murray, however, other scholars have criticised Black liberation theology for its covert sexism. In 1973, as the movement developed, Mary Daly painted Cone's theology as a vindictive and patriarchal 'cry for vengeance'.<sup>53</sup> Despite accepting the theology as biblically sound Daly criticised it as damaging to women.<sup>54</sup> Similarly, Delores Williams critiques Black Theology for 'invisiblising' the experiences of Black women.<sup>55</sup> In this way, Cone and his contemporaries neglected to offer a theology that included emancipation for all. These feminist theologians argued that if Black Theology truly embodied the Christian gospel, as Black theologians claim, it must wholly include Black women and their unique experiences.

Furthermore, Black Theology faced criticism for its abstract focus on 'Blackness' and its failure to address forms of oppression other than racism. Critically, Rosemary Ruether argued that despite Cone's rejection of white theology, his intellectual background in Western theology caused him to base his ideas of 'Blackness' in abstract theory, rather than the lived experiences of Black people.<sup>56</sup> This

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<sup>50</sup> Pinn, 'Religion and "America's Problem Child"', p. 39.

<sup>51</sup> Dorrien, 'Race, Gender, Exclusion, and Divine Discontent', p. 392.

<sup>52</sup> Pinn, 'Religion and "America's Problem Child"', p. 30.

<sup>53</sup> Dorrien, *Breaking White Supremacy*, p. 458.

<sup>54</sup> Dorrien, *A Darkly Radiant Vision*, p. 212.

<sup>55</sup> Wickware, p. 7.

<sup>56</sup> Dorrien, *Breaking White Supremacy*, p. 458.

reflects the feminist critique that Black Theology fails to hold space for the experiences of Black women. Moreover, liberation theologians in the Global South, who concurrently developed a similar theology of liberation, criticised Black theologians for fixating only on racism and neglecting to critique capitalism as a form of oppression. In response, Cone argued racism existed as intensely in Communist states as in the West and claimed a critique of capitalism would hold little value.<sup>57</sup> The criticism levelled by feminist and liberationist theologians pushed Black theologians to deeply consider the foundations of their theology and propelled the movement forward towards a more intersectional approach. As the movement evolved through the years of Black Power and well beyond Black liberation theology took on a unique form that responded to these critiques and formed new arms of perspective.

As a whole, Black liberation theology can stand independently from Black Power politics as it developed into a distinct religious ideology. Rooted in biblical characteristics and historical traditions reaching back centuries Black Theology has evolved to fit the needs and experiences of Black people, culminating in the Black liberation theology movement of the 1960s and 70s. By tracing key concepts of Black Theology, largely through the work of Cone and Roberts, this study has further established the distinctiveness of Black Theology and its ability to expand beyond prevailing political ideas. Engaging with critiques of this movement as narrow and misogynistic, this argument has pointed out the weaknesses of Black Theology and highlighted the steps it has taken to evolve beyond a simple understanding of Black Power and Black Theology. Black Theology's emphasis on offering a gospel specifically on the side of the poor and oppressed, allowed it to persist long after the Black Power movement dissipated.<sup>58</sup> Black liberation theology 'was a long time in coming'<sup>59</sup> as it developed over centuries, and it will continue in this historical legacy as it evolves for the twenty-first century.

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<sup>57</sup> Dorrien, *A Darkly Radiant Vision*, p. 217.

<sup>58</sup> Dorrien, *Breaking White Supremacy*, p. 464.

<sup>59</sup> Angela D. Dillard, 'Black Power/Black Faith: Rethinking the "De-Christianization" of the Black Freedom Struggle', in *The Religious Left in Modern America: Doorkeepers of a Radical Faith*, ed. by Leilah Danielson, Marian Mollin, and Doug Rossinow (Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2018), 185–210 (p. 202).

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## **Beyond the Margins of the West: Sexuality, Gender, and Mechanisms of Control in The History of Sexuality**

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The study of human sexuality and gender throughout history have remained frequently controversial subjects as these fields of research have developed. Often works such as Michel Foucault's foundational *The History of Sexuality* have focused on the ways societies have exerted control over what is and is not sexually acceptable. Through this process it labels people which fall outside of that standard as "deviants", othering them from those considered more acceptable. However, does this focus leave those who may have existed beyond these mechanisms of societal control out of the picture? As a result, do historians instead write histories of sexuality and gender which are preoccupied with marginalisation and repression instead of exploring other ideas of historical sexuality and gender identity? This essay will seek to analyse this question.

It will analyse this question by examining Michel Foucault's discussion of the "repressive hypothesis". It will then look to examine the treatment of "deviant" actions and existences found outside of the west. This analysis will focus on the examples of the Fang people in West Africa, the hijra community from the Indian subcontinent, and on third gender Two-Spirit Indigenous Americans, with a specific focus on the Diné. It will then conclude that a focus on mechanisms of control and repression found in *The History of Sexuality* are a limiting view, one which often excludes non-western and pre-

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<sup>1</sup> This essay was written for HI356J: Thinking History.

colonial ideas of sexuality and gender. However, they do remain key factors to discuss when writing these histories, especially when interacting within colonialism and how it affects conceptions of sexuality and gender.

Firstly, one of the formative academic works which directly explored a history of sexuality was the French philosopher Michel Foucault's *The History of Sexuality*. It was published across three volumes, vol. 1 in 1976 and both vol. 2 and 3 in 1984, with the draft of a fourth published in 2018.<sup>2</sup> In volume 1 Foucault puts forward and then refutes the idea of the "repressive hypothesis", the idea that 19<sup>th</sup> century Victorian society hid sexuality as much as possible. Instead, he states that through repression, sexuality started to permeate Victorian society even further.<sup>3</sup> This focused Foucault's study of sexuality directly on how the perceived sexual repressiveness of Victorian society instead brought out sexuality, pulling it out of the social undercurrents and positioning it in more direct public discussion than ever before. Foucault argued that the very idea of sexuality itself became more pronounced and present in the Victorian mind as a specific object of inquiry in comparison to previous generations.

To further reinforce this point, according to Alison M. Downham Moore, there was an extensive discussion of sexuality and sexual pleasure in Victorian era medical texts and in early histories of sexuality.<sup>4</sup> There were even discussions of what were termed "abnormal" sexualities, often focusing on individuals who were asexual or homosexual.<sup>5</sup> This emphasises how a focus on the history of repression regarding sexuality presents only a section of a larger picture, ignoring the growing academic interest in sexuality. The interest in so-called "abnormal" sexualities adds to this, emphasising that sexuality was a hot topic in 19<sup>th</sup> century Europe. This indicates that an emphasis on repression, or at least in the concept of sexuality in an academic sense, during the Victorian age is flawed. It ignores that it was an age when interest was beginning to focus onto the analysis of sex and its so-called "deviations".

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<sup>2</sup> Alison Flood, 'Key' fourth book of Foucault's *History of Sexuality* published in France', *The Guardian*, 12 February 2018, <<https://www.theguardian.com/books/2018/feb/12/key-fourth-book-of-foucaults-history-of-sexuality-published-in-france>> [accessed 11/03/2023].

<sup>3</sup> Ian Buchanan, 'Repressive Hypothesis', *A Dictionary of Critical Theory* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010)

<sup>4</sup> Alison M. Downham Moore, 'The Historicity of Sexuality: Knowledge of the Past in the Emergence of Modern Sexual Science', *Modern Intellectual History*, 18 (2021), 403-426 (p.403).

<sup>5</sup> Moore, 'The Historicity of Sexuality', p.403.

Overall, these analyses made by both Foucault and Moore indicate that in an age often considered sexually repressive there was a growing field of academic analysis surrounding sex. These discussions, ranging from medical texts to early historical examinations of sexuality, even seemed to include discussions surrounding so-called “deviant” sexualities. This shows a growing consideration of sexuality as worth analysing, at least in some academic circles. However, these sexualities were still treated as deviant, as an abnormality to be studied and not as a typical experience the average human being might have.

It also does not address the question of the treatment of perceived “deviants” and the mechanisms of control present within the wider Victorian era. For example, acts of sodomy were still illegal in most of the world well into the 20<sup>th</sup> century, with only 60 countries having legalised it by 1975.<sup>6</sup> This factor stresses that sodomy was still legally classified as “deviant” in this era. Generally, this highlights that even if the actual analysis of sexuality was becoming a little less repressive, the people engaging in “deviant” acts were often still being criminalised and marginalised. Therefore, this indicates that a history of sexuality which is not centred on heterosexuality does largely have to deal with mechanisms of control and repression.

There is however a major flaw with the focus of Foucault’s *History of Sexuality*; it is largely centred on western ideas of sexuality and excludes those found elsewhere. For example, anthropologist Stephen O. Murray has criticised the work. He claims that passages from the book have “clouded the minds of a goodly number of social historical theorists and researchers” to conceptions and conflicts surrounding sexuality that exist beyond the 19<sup>th</sup> century western European and North American forms.<sup>7</sup> This criticism identifies a key flaw in Foucault’s work. It focuses not on a global history of sexuality but rather on a specifically focused history of sexuality centred on 19<sup>th</sup> century western European thought.

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<sup>6</sup> Victor Asal and Udi Sommer, *Legal Path Dependence & The Long Arm of the Religious State: Sodomy Provisions and Gay Rights Across Nations and Over Time* (Amsterdam: SSRN, 2017), p.2.

<sup>7</sup> Stephen O. Murray, ‘Southwest Asian and North African Terms for Homosexual Roles’, *Archives of Sexual Behaviour*, 24.6 (1995), 623-629 (p.623).

To counteract this focus on western ideas of sexuality it is best to analyse the way sexuality is presented and discussed in cultures outside of western European thought. For example, in 1921 German ethnologist Günther Tessman recorded that Fang men, living in what is now Gabon and Cameroon, engaged in homosexual behaviour, viewing it as a “medicine for wealth”.<sup>8</sup> Through sex, the dominant partner gained a greater likelihood of prosperity from the receiver.<sup>9</sup> This added a mystical significance to homosexual acts by allowing one participant to gain spiritually from the experience of homosexual sex. Methods of control are still present, with something being taken from one partner and transferred to another, however this spiritual importance showcases a more favourable, or at least less marginalising view, of homosexual sex amongst the Fang.

Tessman emphasises this point when he records that male homosexuality was prevalent, with older men having sex with young men and boys frequently.<sup>10</sup> To further this point, Tessman records rituals, not only carried out by the Fang but by other surrounding cultures, used by young men to initiate sexual relationships with one another.<sup>11</sup> That there were institutionalised rituals surrounding homosexual sex further stresses that there was a role for what a western observer considered “deviant” amongst the Fang.

Yet, simultaneously, Tessman states that the Fang believed the disease yaws was a spiritual penalty given to them for engaging in homosexual sex.<sup>12</sup> This indicates there was still a stigmatising, controlling presence over non-heterosexual behaviour through the threat of disease. Perhaps this highlights that there was a view of deviancy amongst the Fang associated with male homosexuality and with homosexual sex. However, by pairing this with the idea that sex between men could bring wealth

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<sup>8</sup> Stephen O. Murray, ‘Part III: Central Africa Overview’ in *Boy-Wives and Female Husbands: Studies in African Homosexualities*, ed. by Stephen O. Murray and Will Roscoe (Albany: University of New York Press, 1998), 176-186 (p.177).

<sup>9</sup> Murray, ‘Central Africa Overview’, p.177.

<sup>10</sup> Murray, ‘Central Africa Overview’, p.177.

<sup>11</sup> Günther Tessman, ‘Homosexuality among the Negroes of Cameroon and a Pangwe Tale (1921, 1911)’ in *Boy-Wives and Female Husbands: Studies in African Homosexualities*, ed. by Stephen O. Murray and Will Roscoe (Albany: University of New York Press, 1998), 187-200, (pp.191-192).

<sup>12</sup> Murray, ‘Central Africa Overview’, p.177.

the source emphasises the Fang's complex relationship with male homosexuality, one which had room for attitudes of both acceptance and deviancy.

Furthermore, the fact that it would be considered "deviant" by a western observer is an important point. It highlights a wider factor, that the history of sexuality and historically "deviant" behaviour has often been written from the limited perspective of western sources. For example, the above source on the Fang is written by the German anthropologist Günther Tessman, who places his own ideas around deviancy onto the Fang. This can be seen in his language and in his contrast of the "primitive negroes" who engage in same-sex acts and the "civilised and Christianized coastal negroes" who are restricted from doing so.<sup>13</sup> This focus on western conceptions, attitudes, and treatment of sexuality therefore does limit a historian's view. It does this by not only centring a historian's ideas of sexuality on repression and marginalisation, which is often a focus of western historical discussion, but by itself marginalising the myriad of views which existed beyond the western world.

This study of the history of sexuality can often interlink with histories of gender. This factor is highlighted by the experiences of the hijra community who primarily live in the Indian subcontinent. Hijra individuals often defy western conceptions of gender and sexuality, largely categorised similarly to intersex and transgender people by western observers and placed in a "liminal space" between men and women.<sup>14</sup> The traditional role of hijra people was to perform dances and sing at the birth of a male child or at a marriage, expressing their connection to the Hindu Goddesses Parvati and Bahuchara Mata.<sup>15</sup> These are roles which are still fulfilled in the Indian subcontinent to this day.<sup>16</sup> Hijra roles and the conception of a third gender have seemingly existed in India for millennia, being described in 5<sup>th</sup> century Vedic writings and in religious debates amongst Jains.<sup>17</sup> That these prominent festive and religious roles dated back centuries highlights behaviours and persons who existed outside of western ideas of sex and gender could still have prominent roles in a society. This challenges the idea of studying

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<sup>13</sup> Tessman, 'Homosexuality among the Negroes', p.197.

<sup>14</sup> Gayatri Reddy, *With Respect to Sex: Negotiating Hijra Identity in South India* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005), p.2.

<sup>15</sup> Serena Nanda, *Neither Man Nor Woman: the Hijras of India* (Boston: Cengage Learning, 1990), pp.1-5.

<sup>16</sup> Serena Nanda, *Neither Man Nor Woman*, pp.1-5.

<sup>17</sup> Reddy, *With Respect to Sex*, pp.19-21.

sexuality and gender solely with a focus on mechanisms of control and of a focus solely on those at the edges of society. The central role the hijra community has played in Indian histories and cultures confronts this focus head on.

However, it should be emphasised that hijra communities have been subject to widespread discrimination in modern history. After the British colonisation of India, and especially after the passage of the 1871 Criminal Tribes Act in the North West Province (now mainly Uttar Pradesh), hijra people were increasingly marginalised in an attempt to cause their “extinction”.<sup>18</sup> This was due to the British Raj viewing hijra individuals as criminal and as a “deviant” sexuality who would kidnap and castrate children to turn them into new hijra people.<sup>19</sup> When these westernised ideas of what is and is not deviant were established in India under colonial rule the actions and attitudes by the British authorities centred methods of control and repression. The hijra community was rapidly relegated to a “deviant” and criminal minority responsible for mutilation who should be made extinct. These developments showcase both how methods of control and repression could take hold quickly and the fluid nature of gender and sexuality’s position in a culture and society, flowing from acceptance to rejection so quickly.

Discrimination has had lasting effects on the hijra population, and they remain marginalised to this day, often treated as criminals or as a “backward” group in need of help.<sup>20</sup> This often means that the lived reality of many modern hijra individuals involves being driven, through discrimination and lack of options, into sex work.<sup>21</sup> This position in sex work places hijra people in an even more precarious position, with frequent violence against them going unreported or ignored to police, or carried out by the police themselves.<sup>22</sup> These factors further indicate how the position and situation of gender and sexuality in a society can radically shift if new ideas and people move into a historical space, turning a history of expression into one of repression. It also emphasises how those who do exist outside of

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<sup>18</sup> Jessica Hinchy, *Governing Gender and Sexuality in Colonial India* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019), pp.1-3.

<sup>19</sup> Hinchy, *Colonial India*, pp.1-2.

<sup>20</sup> Hinchy, *Colonial India*, pp.255-6.

<sup>21</sup> Rekha Pande, ‘Being Eunuch, the Violence Faced by Hijra’s Involved in Sex Work – A Case Study’ in *Marginalities in India*, ed. by Asmita Bhattacharyya and Sudeep Basu (Singapore: Springer Singapore, 2018),. 207-228, (p.215).

<sup>22</sup> Pande, *Being Eunuch*, pp.215-220.

“deviancy” or “marginalised” categorisations of sexuality can be manoeuvred into them as ideas change. Furthermore, they highlight how sexuality can be weaponised against these marginalised communities, with many hijra individuals working in sex work being exposed to extreme violence which is ignored, or perpetrated, by legal authorities. Overall, this underlines the shifting nature of thought on sexuality and gender and how deviancy and mechanisms of control can be enforced on people in ways that they previously did not exist.

Further emphasising how radical shifts in concepts of sexuality and gender can occur is illustrated by a third example found within many Indigenous North American societies. In 1990 the word ‘Two-Spirit’ was created as an umbrella term to include the myriad of third and fourth genders found in different North American Indigenous societies under one banner.<sup>23</sup> For example, throughout history Diné, or Navajo, societies have had a fluid relationship with gender and sexuality. The Diné word *nádleehi* is used to define individuals who ascribe to the gender roles not typically associated with their sex, or a male and female spirit co-habiting one body.<sup>24</sup> Outside of this specific cultural example there are numerous other identities that fall under the ‘Two-Spirit’ term in North America. These can be dated back through oral traditions and early written records taken by European missionaries.<sup>25</sup>

With these examples of fluid gender identities amongst Indigenous North Americans, so numerous that it led to the creation of an umbrella term, the prevalence of different ideas surrounding both gender and sexuality outside of western ideals is underscored. These modes of thought seemingly existed beyond the types of mechanisms of control and ideas of “deviancy” which were prominent in the places and times Foucault was focused on, 19<sup>th</sup> century western Europe. Because of this, identities falling within the ‘Two-Spirit’ term further emphasise that there are global histories of sexuality which developed cultural importance beyond the margins of western thought.

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<sup>23</sup> Kylan Mattiasde Vries, ‘Berdache (Two-Spirit)’, in *Encyclopedia of Gender and Society*, ed. Jodi O’Brien (Thousand Oaks: Sage Publishing, 2008) 63-66 (p.65).

<sup>24</sup> Maia Sheppard and J. B. Mayo Jr, ‘The Social Construction of Gender and Sexuality: Learning from Two Spirit Traditions’, *The Social Studies*, vol. 104 (2013), 259-270 (p.262).

<sup>25</sup> Kai Pyle, ‘Naming and Claiming: Recovering Ojibwe and Plains Cree Two-Spirit Language’, *Transgender Studies Quarterly*, vol. 5.4 (2018), 574-588 (pp.577-579).

Despite this, historical changes within North America have resulted in a similar situation for ‘Two-Spirit’ people as the treatment of the hijra community in the Indian subcontinent. With the colonisation of North America and marginalisation of indigenous peoples there has been a marginalisation of “deviant” behaviour in line with the ideas of western people of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. For example, the Navajo Nation criminalised gay marriage in 2005 with the Diné Marriage Act, a ban which has not been repealed.<sup>26</sup> This has been prominent mainly in the generation born in the 1940s and 50s, when the United States government implemented programmes to assimilate Indigenous people more directly into mainstream US society.<sup>27</sup> This has led older people in these Indigenous communities to be more widely accepting of the so-called “deviancy” amongst Indigenous people.<sup>28</sup>

The above factors underline some important points. Like the attitudes of Indians towards hijra individuals, the attitudes of Indigenous North Americans towards “deviant” sexuality and gender seems to have shifted under the influence of western colonisation. It also emphasises that mechanisms of control and ideas of “deviancy” can quickly develop, even within a single generation. Overall, this highlights how fast histories of gender and sexuality are lost when those views can be quickly overwritten by another mode of thought.

To conclude, how historians choose to analyse the history of sexuality and gender is complex. In 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century Europe there was a marked increase in the academic discussion of sexuality at a time where “deviant” behaviour was criminalised across most of the globe. This is argued by Foucault when he pushes against what he termed the “repressive hypothesis”. However, Foucault’s writings ignore the fact that “deviant” behaviour was not consistent across the globe. Outside of western societies people like the Fang of West Africa had an open and complex relationship with male homosexuality. These attitudes were commented on by European observers and contrasted with those expressed by the more extensively colonised people along the West African coast. Furthermore, the two examples of hijra people and various Two-Spirit communities emphasise how writers like Foucault, with their

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<sup>26</sup> Sheppard, Mayo, ‘Two Spirit Traditions’, p.262.

<sup>27</sup> Laurel Morales, ‘LGBT Navajos Discover Unexpected Champions: Their Grandparents’, *NPR*, 26 January 2019, <[www.npr.org/2019/01/26/687957536/lgbt-navajos-discover-unexpected-champions-their-grandparents](http://www.npr.org/2019/01/26/687957536/lgbt-navajos-discover-unexpected-champions-their-grandparents)> [accessed: 20/03/2023].

<sup>28</sup> Morales, ‘Their Grandparents’.



primary focus on Western history, can overlook how the history of gender and sexuality has existed in the rest of the world. Instead of existing at the margins of society, controlled and repressed, both communities played important roles in their respective cultures. This stresses how solely focusing on methods of control and of repression when talking about sexuality and gender is flawed and ignores cultures which acknowledged variations outside of what Western conceptions considered acceptable. These examples also highlight how Western ideals still came to overturn this thinking through processes of colonisation, exerting repression and control over the ideas of sex and gender expressed by colonised peoples.

Overall, these examples illustrate that there are entire histories of sexuality which grew beyond the margins of Western thought. These various histories have many different attitudes, beyond ideas of repression and the mechanisms of control and labelling of “deviancy”, outlined in Foucault’s work, and these outlooks deserve to be investigated. Maintaining a focus on repression and mechanisms of control when studying the history of sexuality therefore limits what historians can research when considering the topic, and often ignores the varied experiences found across the globe.

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# Unveiling Visual History: Analysing the Opportunities and Pitfalls of Using Images as Historical Sources

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Images have been an integral part of human history, from the images found on ancient Greek vases to the Bayeux Tapestry to current day photographs which we take with our smartphones.<sup>2</sup> As such, images in all their forms present many opportunities to the historian by providing depictions and visual insights into particular historical scenarios and periods. However, there are factors which must be taken into consideration when analysing images as historical sources. These include, but are not limited to, the agenda behind the images and issues of historical representation. This essay seeks to explore both the opportunities and the pitfalls of using images as historical sources through analysing and comparing mainly secondary sources and selected primary sources. Through careful examination, this essay aims to understand the implications these factors have upon the understanding of historical events presented by visual history.

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<sup>1</sup> This essay was written for HI356J: Thinking History.

<sup>2</sup> Peter Burke, *Eyewitnessing: The Uses of Images as Historical Evidence*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edn (Cornwall: Reaktion Books, 2019), p.13.

The major opportunity images offer to the historian is that they provide the physical visual representations of historical events, objects and characters. For example, Peter Geimer has noted how, with the exclusion of staged images, the style of clothing in photographs almost inevitably indicates and represents the period in history when the picture was taken.<sup>3</sup> Rodney Allen and Randall Felton further describe the importance of photographs as providing useful raw materials which prompt answers to several questions.<sup>4</sup> As such, they present pictures as substantial sources for presenting ideas and concepts in history. This is echoed by Arthur Woodward who noted the importance of images in our society.<sup>5</sup> Additionally, images can tell us a story from a particular point of view of a historical event or moment. This notable opportunity is especially present in the case of paintings, where the placement and inclusion of certain objects and placement of characters and the way they are presented can offer many insights into the historic environment surrounding the image. As Erna Auerbach notes, with regards to *The Armada Portrait* of Elizabeth I of England painted in 1588, the painting as a whole represents a queen at the top of her reign and the sanctity of her power while celebrating her victory.<sup>6</sup> The meaning behind the inclusion of the props in the painting supports this image. The presence of the globe upon which Elizabeth rests her hand symbolises power and conquest, her rich clothes, the ornate fan and pearls represent wealth and chastity which was significant in supporting the image of Elizabeth as the virgin queen married to her people.

This attention to representation and the story behind the image is reflected in papers by Edgar Wind and Geimer regarding the licence which the idea of distant glory provided to artists, such as the painter Benjamin West who painted *The Death of General Wolfe*.<sup>7</sup> This licence offered the opportunity to develop a style which Wind notes as a form of mitigated realism in that academics of the time accepted and sought to justify what are arguably not directly accurate representations of heroism. *The*

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<sup>3</sup> Peter Geimer, 'Photography as a "Space of Experience": On the Retrospective Legibility of Historic Photographs', *Getty Research Journal*, vol. 7 (Getty Research Journal, 2015), 97–108 (p.102).

<sup>4</sup>Rodney Allan and Randall Felton, 'Photographs as Historical Documents', *Organization of American Historians Magazine of History*, vol. 7.3 (1991), 7-12 (p.7).

<sup>5</sup> Ibid, p.7.

<sup>6</sup> Erna Auerbach, 'Portraits of Elizabeth I', *The Burlington Magazine*, (1953) 196–205 (p.205).

<sup>7</sup> Edgar Wind, 'The Revolution of History Painting', *Journal of the Warburg Institute*, vol. 2.2 (1938), 116–127 (p.116); Benjamin West, 'The Death of General Wolfe' [online]

<<https://www.gallery.ca/collection/artwork/the-death-of-general-wolfe-0>> [accessed 19 March 2023].

*Death of General Wolfe* provides such a case. This fear was founded in the idea that presenting the heroic death of such a deemed significant historical character in everyday dress would negatively affect the standing and respect for said character in the public eye.<sup>8</sup> In other words, this inaccurate but arguably just representation would garner the appropriate status as well as the desirable effect that the image was due and in order to achieve this, as Geimer states, it would have been proper to portray the General in classical dress.<sup>9</sup> As such, there is an opportunity to observe values behind the painting and how there seems to be a revived passion for patriotism at the time when it was created in 1770. However, West decided not to conform to this tradition and instead paint the General in contemporary costume. Wind illustrates that the image provides an opportunity to historians by suggesting possible motivations that influenced the painter. West had roots in Pennsylvania, American loyalties and he was a supporter of democracy during a time where being an American in London was socially advantageous.<sup>10</sup>

Other examples where images can be seen to provide invaluable information to a considerably distant past can be seen in the images present on vases from ancient Greece. Martin Robertson and Mary Beard have noted how there are hundreds of surviving drinking cups and vessels depicting male activities, hetairai at symposia and accepted female roles.<sup>11</sup> In their analysis, Robertson and Beard identify how these consistent repetitive images on Athenian pots present an opportunity to the historian, although there has been some difficulty regarding the cultural decoding of the images.<sup>12</sup> The images illustrate how Athenian women were supposed to behave and how this highlights the division between wives and hetairai. Thus, these images act as valuable historical sources to observe established cultural values and behaviours which were considered the norm to the people whose times these images belong. However, both authors have recognised the limitation of this decoding, as there are minimal resources available to reference the significance of the involvement of these images in this craft to the

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<sup>8</sup> Ibid. p.117.

<sup>9</sup> Geimer, (2015), p.102.

<sup>10</sup> Wind, p.125.

<sup>11</sup> Martin Robertson and Mary Beard. 2005. 'Adopting an Approach', in *Looking at Greek Vases*, ed. by Nigel Spivey and Tom Rasmussen (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 1–37 (pp.26-27).

<sup>12</sup> Ibid, pp.26-27.

contemporaries of the time. Therefore, certain assumptions are required in the process of examining these historical sources.<sup>13</sup> However, the importance of images, especially with regards to researching ancient or prehistory, is further emphasised by Peter Burke, who argues history would be significantly poorer without images such as the cave paintings of Altamira and Lascaux or the tomb paintings in Egypt.<sup>14</sup> Thomas Kemnitz, while analysing cartoons as historical sources, also argues for the practicality of images because of their representation of social attitudes, architecture, street scenes and dress.<sup>15</sup> Providing insight into popular attitudes that influence public opinion.

Art by definition is subjective, thus what qualifies as such will depend largely on individual perceptions and experiences which will be influenced by the environment and time in which they find themselves. Michael Hatt and Charlotte Klonk in referencing Johann Herder state that no piece of art can be judged by the standards of another time, which coincides with Hegel's view that an image is always specific to the age and society which produced it.<sup>16</sup> Other examples where representation of historic events may prove fairly dubious are explored by Geimer. One of these is the painting *The Battle of Issus between Alexander the Great and Darius III* by Albrecht Altdorfer, painted in 1529.<sup>17</sup> Geimer notes how Altdorfer depicted the Macedonians and Persians who fought in the battle, which happened in 333 BCE, in the dress of his own time. This has also been addressed by Reinhart Koselleck, who has stated the scene painted according to Altdorfer was both historical and contemporary.<sup>18</sup> A similar case can be seen in *The Siege of the City of Alesia* by Melchior Feselen in 1533, in which the characters are depicted in contemporary clothing alongside contemporary weaponry.<sup>19</sup> Both of the paintings were part of the same collection commissioned by the Duke William IV of Bavaria. Likewise,

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<sup>13</sup> Ibid, p.4.

<sup>14</sup> Burke, p.12.

<sup>15</sup> Thomas Kemnitz, 'The Cartoon as a Historical Source', *The Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, vol. 4.1 (1973) 81–93 (p.83).

<sup>16</sup> Michael Hatt and Charlotte Klonk. 2018. *Art History, A Critical Introduction to Its Methods* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2018), p.24.

<sup>17</sup> Albrecht Altdorfer, 'The Battle of Issus between Alexander the Great and Darius III' [online] <<https://www.gettyimages.co.uk/detail/news-photo/the-battle-of-issus-between-alexander-the-great-and-darius-news-photo/587489362?adppopup=true>> [accessed 19 March 2023].

<sup>18</sup> Geimer, (2015), p.97.

<sup>19</sup> Melchior Feselen, 'The Siege of Alesia' <<https://artsandculture.google.com/asset/the-siege-of-the-city-of-alesia-melchior-feselen/WAGHEGIAR-d-aA?hl=en>> [accessed 21 March 2023].

the presence of German eagle emblazoned on the Roman troops and the French lily on the defeated Gauls further exemplifies the meaning behind this representation of power in a similar fashion to that of *The Armada Portrait*. Friedrich Schlegel further supports Hatt and Klonk by exemplifying how different perspectives are influenced by the time in which they are observed. Schlegel comments that Altdorfer's painting is a depiction of the legacy of past glory, similar to the concept of distant glory, during the age of chivalry.<sup>20</sup> Geimer and Peter Schneemann highlight the complex relationship between representation and interpretation. They emphasise the paradox encountered by an artist striving to completely and accurately depict a historical event as they can, in an attempt to bring the past closer, instead illustrate and accentuate the distance between the past and the present.<sup>21</sup> Hegel further argues the more precisely and faithfully an image of the past is depicted, the more aware the observer will be of its historical distinctiveness and unrepeatability.<sup>22</sup> These representations present visual history as inherently subjective with its qualification relying on individual perceptions influenced by the surrounding environment and time.

As filmmaker Claude Lanzmann has identified with photographs taken at concentration camps during World War II, one of the issues of using images as historical sources is that, despite the fact they offer a visual record, images are limited in that they do not provide a total representation of a moment in the past.<sup>23</sup> Roth has identified in reference to books by Didi-Huberman and Michael Fried that photography has become a field where questions of “history, truth and authenticity are being explored with particular acuity.”<sup>24</sup> There is a lack of representation of other senses and emotions in images such as touch, smell, hearing, fear and more general situational awareness which would be necessary to provide an accurate representation of a historic moment. Even then, questions of who is taking the picture or painting the portrait, their agenda and relation to the subject they are painting are not always clear. Although emotions can be gleaned from expressions with a degree of authenticity in some cases,

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<sup>20</sup> Ibid, p.97.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid, p.100.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid, p.100.

<sup>23</sup> Michael Roth, ‘Review Essays: Why Photography Matters to the Theory of History’, *History and Theory*, vol. 49 (2010), 90–103 (pp.94-96).

<sup>24</sup> Ibid, p.90.



such as the soldiers' expressions in the picture taken by Tim Page from the Vietnam war titled *US Airborne Troops After the Battle for Zulu Zulu*, the agenda behind the depicted emotions can provide a biased or inaccurate account of a situation.<sup>25</sup> Burke illustrates this with the example of living soldiers who apparently posed as casualties for a picture displaying the carnage of Gettysburg.<sup>26</sup> Also, as Roth notes, just because one can observe a historic moment in a photograph does not mean that the experience is shared with those depicted in the image.<sup>27</sup> This is similarly backed by the dilemma that Geimer identifies regarding photographs of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries in that they presented images of the world largely in black and white, quite different to the naturally colourful world.<sup>28</sup> Furthermore, Koselleck has stated how there is no experience which can be chronologically calibrated, however it is datable by occasion "since at any one time it is composed of what can be recalled by one's memory and by the knowledge of other's lives."<sup>29</sup> Images offer an insight into the past and remind us of events but they are not memories and neither should they be perceived as such. In the majority of cases, the historian is provided with an image of a particular moment isolated from its original circumstance and those such as Siegfried Kracauer have specified the importance of associating a photograph and or other image with the moment in time at which it came into existence.<sup>30</sup> Not least due to the fact that photographers, like creators of other images, choose what part of the real world to portray. Thus, images are not ever evidence of history but rather they are themselves historical.<sup>31</sup> However, Didi-Huberman offers a contrasting perspective, stating that in order to remember it is important if not necessary for one to imagine.<sup>32</sup> Peter Miller shares this stance and argues that the value of objects and images as historical sources is that they require those who observe them to use their

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<sup>25</sup> Tim Page, 'US Airborne Troops After the Battle for Zulu Zulu, Vietnam' [online] <<https://www.gettyimages.com.au/detail/news-photo/battle-weary-soldier-from-the-173rd-airborne-division-is-news-photo/615206782>> [accessed 20 March 2023].

<sup>26</sup> Burke, p.29.

<sup>27</sup> Roth, p.92.

<sup>28</sup> Peter Geimer, 'The Colors of Evidence: Picturing the Past in Photography and Film', in *Documenting the World: Film, Photography, and the Scientific Record*, ed. by Gregg Mitman and Kelley Wilder (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2016), 45–64 (p.45).

<sup>29</sup> Geimer, (2015), p.100.

<sup>30</sup> Burke, p.27.

Geimer, (2015), p.101.

<sup>31</sup> Burke, p.29.

<sup>32</sup> Roth, p.93.

imagination to both give them meaning and to allow the observer to seek “our common humanity with the people who created and used them.”<sup>33</sup> Similarly, Roth proposes images should stimulate thought and not merge into a complete image which keeps the observer from thinking about the details behind it.<sup>34</sup> As such, these deductions suggest that using images as historical sources presents challenges due to their inherent limitations in providing a complete representation of past moments.

Furthermore, despite this lack of accurate representation, Carol Sawyer and David Butler have identified how sequences of images can be used to illustrate changes to a landscape while analysing the use of picture postcards as sources for tracing environmental change.<sup>35</sup> Similarly, postcards were used by Corkery and Bailey to study social dynamics and cultural changes in Boston, especially with regards to changes in tourism imagery.<sup>36</sup> Max Debussche, Jacques Lepart and Alain Dervieux also used both postcards and photographs to illustrate changes in landscape and vegetation patterns around the Mediterranean.<sup>37</sup> Thus, this illustrates how images can provide the historian with a valuable insight into a sequence of events or changes.

Nevertheless, the lack of a totally accurate representation leads to another issue when using images as sources in that they can be changed, retouched, edited and manipulated to fit a biased narrative fuelled by an agenda to rewrite and reimagine history. In a review of *The Commissar Vanishes: The Falsification of Photographs and Art in Stalin's Russia* by David King, Leah Dickerman states how manipulated photographs were at the core of Joseph Stalin’s ideological scheme.<sup>38</sup> Not only were certain characters removed from images entirely, Dickerman notes how this photo editing was further used to make Stalin look more attractive by smoothing any imperfections on his face as well as adding text to banners in photographs which promoted his aims. Stalin himself was inserted into the

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<sup>33</sup> Ruth McAdams, ‘Book Review: History and Its Objects: Antiquarianism and Material Culture since 1500’, *European History Quarterly*, vol. 49.1 (2019), pp.145–47.

<sup>34</sup> Roth, p.93.

<sup>35</sup> Carol Sawyer and David Butler, ‘The Use of Historical Picture Postcards as Photographic Sources for Examining Environmental Change: Promises and Problems’, *Geocarto International*, 21.3 (2006), 73–80 (p.73).

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid*, p.73.

<sup>37</sup> Max Debussche, Jacques Lepart, and Alain Dervieux, ‘Mediterranean Landscape Changes: Evidence from Old Postcards’, *Global Ecology and Biogeography*, vol. 8.1 (1999), 3–15 (pp.3-4).

<sup>38</sup> Leah Dickerman, 1998. ‘Reviewed Work(s): The Commissar Vanishes: The Falsification of Photographs and Art in Stalin’s Russia by David King’, *The Art Bulletin*, 80.4 (1998), 755–57 (p.755).

revolutionary narrative. Another example provided by King is the 1933 painting by Isaak Brodskii which transformed the 1919 photograph of Lenin speaking from a podium to a rather passive crowd into an image where the crowd is cheering and where Leon Trotsky and Leve Kamenev are removed from the stairs behind Lenin.<sup>39</sup> An edit was also made of the original photo which removed the two characters. This proves the need to address the question that must be asked when analysing images: who is not present and what is the meaning of their absence. Another aspect to consider is the material nature of images, be they paintings or photographs. Besides from the fact they can be altered the material nature of these presents an issue in that images can be lost, destroyed, or carefully selected, which in turn means there must be a consideration for what is missing.

In order to address the issues mentioned, Burke offers “ten commandments” or rules to follow when using images as historical sources.<sup>40</sup> First, one needs to ascertain if an image originates from direct observation or from another image. Second, to pinpoint images in their cultural traditions. Thirdly, meticulous attention to detail, such as those discreetly placed in the background, are more likely to be reliable having not been subjected to the artist's primary focus. Fourth, examine the reception and re-employment of images to gain understanding of their functions in the past. Fifth, always be aware of the possibility of manipulation. Sixth, recognise who created the images and question whether they were in a good position to portray what they are representing. Seventh, compare many different images concerning the same object or event. Eighth, to analyse the context of the image. Ninth, be conscious of the agency of images and their effect. Finally, tenth, to recognise there are no rules, because of the vast variety of images and the questions asked about them.<sup>41</sup> Although these rules do not resolve all of the pitfalls associated with using images, they do provide a useful guideline to gain the most accurate an analysis as possible to enable the use of images as historical sources. In turn, this will facilitate further understanding of an event or object of the past.

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<sup>39</sup> Ibid, pp.756-757.

<sup>40</sup> Burke, p.8.

<sup>41</sup> Burke, p.9.

To conclude, imagery is a defining feature of our literacy and culture and as such images as sources provide a historian with numerous opportunities. However, as explored, these opportunities are not without their pitfalls. Images provide a wealth of historic information, from details of environments and material culture to social norms and values, while also creating a link between the past and the present. Nevertheless, the historian needs to recognise the limits of these sources and observe them carefully as they can be manipulated, misinterpreted and misleading. Images are historic in themselves, and it is important for the historian to acknowledge this. Furthermore, images can be subject to conscious or unconscious bias and to understand them in their own context is a necessity. Thus, there is a requirement for a vigilant and critical approach when using images as historical sources to ensure they can be employed to contribute and enhance understanding on the particular subject being researched. As such, using images in conjunction with other historical sources where possible is a potential solution to this dilemma.

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