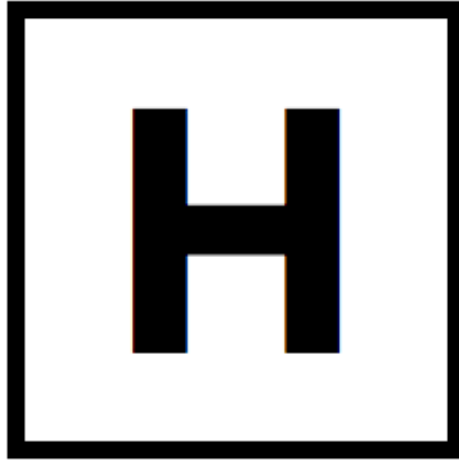


The background of the entire slide is a repeating pattern of three distinct elements: human skulls, planets with rings (resembling Saturn), and sperm cells. These elements are rendered in a grayscale, hand-drawn or etched style. The skulls are shown from various angles, some in profile and some facing forward. The planets are depicted with a textured, shaded surface and a thin, dark ring. The sperm cells are simple, elongated shapes with a single tail. The pattern is distributed evenly across the light pink background.

Historical Discourses

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Foreword

Professor Elizabeth Elbourne

There are details that jump from the archives and startle the reader, as if this old stained paper had the ability to tell a story, as if the story was all there. In 1822, four of the children of Sir Thomas Fowell Buxton, banker, brewer, British MP, and parliamentary leader of the fight to abolish slavery in the British Empire, died at home one after another. His wife, Hannah, wrote how her dying child sweetly gave her sister a candy from her mouth: of course they didn't know about germs in those days. Next year, the Buxtons' eldest son started to cough blood and the parents knew at once there wasn't much to hope for him. Thomas Fowell Buxton recalled later in his journal that he rode along a hilltop and saw below him the churchyard where his son was buried. Almost two hundred years later I travel to see the memorial plaque in a village church that he left to his five dead children. And I read in his diary that for years his wife Hannah would lie in darkness in her room mourning for her lost children: Thomas Fowell wrote religious poetry to try in vain to console her.¹ Would he have imagined that anyone else would read this?

And then there are details that might open a different kind of conversation, details that are both shocking and impenetrable. Some of them were read by Buxton, who decided that he would gather information about the abuse of Indigenous peoples in British settler colonies; they might form part of a history of violence, abuse and settler colonialism in the early nineteenth century, but they would also be part of a story about international circuits and debates over rights and what might be owed to other bodies. In what is now South Africa in 1828, for example, a household of Dutch-speaking farmers abused, tied up and horrifically beat a Khoekhoe man, Jacob Jacobs, in a dispute over cattle and land. After beatings, the family tied up Jacobs to a yoke and hung him from the ceiling,

¹ Details are scattered through Sir Thomas Fowell Buxton's private papers: Rhodes House, Oxford, MSS Brit. Emp, s.444, Papers of Sir Thomas Fowell Buxton.

where he dangled all night. According to a later witness Marthinus Scheepers stood watch over Jacobs while the family went to eat supper: he “did not eat but sat in the door way, asked for sour milk and a towel with which he wiped the perspiration from his face, he was in his waistcoat and shirt sleeves.” The sour milk and the towel and the shirt sleeves as Jacobs hung by his arms from a cattle yoke leap from the page: a tableau of suffering, fixed in time.²

Across the frontiers of white settlement, wars raged, often unacknowledged as such on the imperial side, often seen as inchoate violence and signs of “savagery”. And colonialism also (and this is hard to discuss) forced people into grey zones, or gave some of them opportunities for brutality, or offered limited choices between different forms of violence. During a frontier war, the Khoehoe man Jantje Michels, who fought on the Dutch side, sat at the fire cooking in the Commando’s camp and saw Klaas Meyer cleaning his knife: “I asked him what he had done with his knife, he answered he had cut the throat of Ourson’s child,” punishing a man who had traded goods to the British side during a war.³ These were part of the same society: a society in which Khoesan people were killed cheaply. What does a historian do with all this suffering of the dead?

The papers in this fine collection all engage in some way or other with justice. Justice might be a difficult term: it has a whiff of a western courtroom which not all the authors would agree with prioritizing. But it still seems to me that there is a moral core to these papers. Many also deal in some form with violence, whether the overt violence of civil war and SGBV (Sexual and Gender Based Violence) in the Congo sensitively explored by Nellie Gaithuma, Zachary Carson, Beement Alemayehu and Sean Dunne in their paper “War Machine: the International Political Economy of Congo”; the environmental violence that Sarah Pringle describes forcefully in “Contaminated Dirt and Colonial Terror: A History of Environmental Racism in Ahkwesahsne”; or the epistemic violence wrought by Daniel Moynihan in his infamous 1964 report on black poverty, trenchantly dissected by Yasmin Ali. In “The Interrogation” Julia Borghesi movingly experiments with

² Interview with Jacob Jacobs by Donald Moodie, 30 March 1829, transcribed and reproduced by V.C. Malherbe in Malherbe, “Donald Moodie: South Africa’s Pioneer Oral Historian”, *History in Africa* 25, 1998, pp. 182-83; original in Western Cape Archives, Cape Town, CO 2713, no. 133.

³ Enclosure number 6, J. Knobel, “Record of Examination of Jantjie Michels, 15 October 1810” in J. Cuyler to the Earl of Caledon, 25 October, 1810, in G.M. Theal (ed). *Records of the Cape Colony* (London: William Clowes & Sons, 1905), pp. 406-7.

form to tell the story of gay people victimized by the so-called “lavender scare” in McCarthy’s America. In the meantime, Noah Witte-Winnett considers the complicated politics of abortion in his “Reproductive Bodies, Naturally: The Medicalization of Women’s Bodies through Abortion in the Nineteenth-Century US”: this paper asks the crucial underlying question of who controls what bodies, when and why.

A number of papers in this collection also engage forcefully with colonialism and its ripple effects. Liam Mather describes the reception of Lajos Kossuth in the United States: as the leader of the Hungarian uprising in 1848, Kossuth sought redress against what might be seen as Habsburg and Russian colonialisms, even as Hungarians themselves would later seek to impose Magyarization on minorities within Hungarian lands. For Isabella Shraiman, colonialism shaped the experience of Puerto Rican migrants to the mainland United States, and they might be seen as living in a form of colonial “borderland”. The suffering of the Congo is an endless echo of colonialism. Arielle Baker argues that the struggle for literacy and for education by late nineteenth-century Indigenous groups was a struggle to resist colonialism and to reassert dignity. An important element of a number of these papers is indeed the effort to wrest dignity from indignity.

On the other side of the world, Indigenous lives were also taken lightly in another war zone on another imperial frontier. There are particularly famous trial documents from New South Wales, Australia, that detail how in 1838 a group of stockmen massacred 28 Indigenous people, mostly women and children, beheading many of them with swords.⁴ They were trying to destroy resistance on a frontier that was really a war zone. These are details that are difficult to read. They are also details that leave the victims of violence without voice: they died and this is what the written historical record says about them. But at least this record remains. Most massacres went unrecorded, and “we” know about this one because of the shocking and highly unusual fact that the perpetrators were prosecuted, and that after a jury took twenty minutes to find them innocent in a first trial the state insisted on a second trial. I know from the surviving record that Hannah Buxton lay in a dark room and mourned for her dead children, but we

⁴ Trial documents can be most easily accessed via Macquarie University, “Decisions of the Superior Courts of New South Wales, 1788-1899”, R. v. Kilmesiter, 1838; R.v. Kilmesiter (no.2), 1838 and R.v. Lamb, Toulouse and Palliser, 1838-1839, http://www.law.mq.edu.au/research/colonial_case_law/nsw/cases/myall_creek.

have no certain record of the mother of the six-year old boy Charley, who was killed in this massacre: she was called Martha in trial records and she may or may not have been killed with her son. We only know Charley's name because that was what it took to hang his killers: the colonial state needed an identifiable victim and the first trial failed because the bodies were burned beyond recognition. In the end, seven men were hanged for the Myall Creek massacre and four went free. So what to do with these details?

Scratch the historical "record", move the needle over the vinyl, and such details start to feel not unusual but rather mundane. This is what in fact we might expect: we know that the twentieth century was capable of Stalin's manmade famines, of the Holocaust, of the Great Leap Forward. But the intimacy is still shocking: this person shot this person, or cut off her head with a sword and burned her remains. It was impossible to tell who the victims were because their bodies had all been burned and the few fragments of bone that could be picked up were not enough. In 1823 in southern Africa, beyond the colony, Andries Stoffels tried to stop the commando from killing the San women and children as they emerged from the cave, but the commando went ahead anyway. So what do we do with the intimacy of these records, and at the same time their desperate inability to give us more than the bare details of this or that killing, of this or that act of atrocity? After a while, atrocity starts to feel like the norm.

Another issue is how to read details and fragments. The history of early settler colonialism is often made up of fragments from the perspective of Indigenous people: fragments of violence, torn from much denser lives that were surely about more than moments of violence. Some stories speak with extraordinary power. Are we right to prioritize these? How to talk about suffering without slipping into a sort of pornography of violence? How also to convey hope without being naïve about the limited possibilities of redemption for many?

Coming back from the far shore of violence, however, the historian might realize that the chair is comfortable, there is coffee in the café across the street. That these people are all dead and the process by which their deaths were captured was often random. That you are having a private conversation with the records of the dead. That this is not the same thing as having a conversation with the people themselves.

One response might nonetheless be silence. In the mid 1990s a number of people descended from the Khoekhoe and San in South Africa protested against an exhibit in

Cape Town, “Miscast”, that tried to show the violence done against Khoesan bodies by colonialism. What exactly was the point of exhibiting the dismembered body parts of their ancestors, of recalling the ways in which they were dishonoured? Others felt differently: what would it do to be silent about the abuses wrought on the bodies of the San and the Khoekhoe: the ways in which colonial science, for example, preserved the bones of the dead from battlefields for exhibition and study?⁵ I am still not sure who was “right” in this dispute. The example nonetheless points to me to the necessity for caution about recognizing ways in which oppression creates legacies that are unforeseen, traumatic, ongoing.

And the question becomes in part what to do with this accumulation of evidence about the facility with which people slip into violence. Or perhaps slip is the wrong word: perhaps one might say embrace, or choose, although slip seems to be easier to absorb. I still believe, nonetheless, that witness is an important part of the task of the historian, although it needs to be a witness that is as clear as possible about multiple forms of violence and its ongoing echoes and traumas.

The excellent papers in this collection are, it seems to me, clear about the need to examine difficult subject matters. This matters: the answer is surely not to fall into silence, and to allow violence to be either normalized or rendered invisible. Historians retell the traumas of the past and in the process of retelling refuse to allow suffering to remain banal. This is not, of course, an uncontroversial view. Should historians take sides? Sometimes, however, the details speak for themselves.

The man who lost his children, Sir Thomas Fowell Buxton, sent three steamers down the river Niger in 1841 to try to persuade African chiefs to abandon the slave trade and make trade treaties with the British instead. An unpublicized aim was to acquire land for

⁵ Yvette Abrahams, “Miscast”, *South African Review of Books*, 1996, pp. 15-16; Pippa Skotnes (ed.), *Miscast: Negotiating the Presence of the Bushman* (Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press, 1998).

virtuous colonialism (although the Colonial Office itself opposed this plan at the time.⁶ In the end one might choose to judge him, this fine man with the dead children: he helped bring the virus of British colonialism down the Niger in the name of humanitarianism, albeit in three steamships that staggered back laden with dying sailors who could not withstand the diseases the mosquitoes brought. And this was hardly, Nigerian historians would suggest, a region without violence, sitting at the heart of the slave trade. None of this is simple but all of it matters.

Congratulations to the editors and authors of this terrific issue of *Historical Discourses*.

⁶ Enclosure 1, "Dr. Lushington and Sir T.F. Buxton to Lord John Russell, London, August 7, 1840", in National Archives (UK), F.O. 881/45 (Confidential print): "Lord John Russell to Her Majesty's Commissioners of the Expedition to the Niger". For an overview of the history of the expedition, see Howard Temperley, *White Dreams, Black Africa: The Antislavery Expedition to the Niger, 1841-42* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1991)

Editor's Introduction

Sajdeep Soomal and Lauren Laframboise

On March 17, 2016, we received a letter from Library and Archives Canada inquiring about the status of *Historical Discourses*. After confirming that our journal was still in print, the acquisitions technician asked us to mail in copies of older issues in order to meet legal deposit requirements. So we began the mundane task of locating lost copies of the journal. Our classmates pushed us forward: they reminded us how lucky we were to have our journal included in the national archives. Rummaging in backrooms of the University, we managed to collect over 70 copies of past issues, inadvertently forming a visual archive of undergraduate historical thinking at McGill over the past 30 years. These forgotten issues were bound with images of young men gazing into the distance, landscapes of the colonial present at McGill and the occasional red, black and white illustration that drove our imaginations to Marxist historiography. The front covers adhered to the demands of historical common sense. *Historical Discourses* existed to interrogate the ideals, struggles, and time of humanity. We desired an interruption—a volume that would pave the way for rupturing and rethinking the boundaries of historical inquiry in our department.

After informing the acquisitions technician about the whereabouts of *Historical Discourses*, we found ourselves staring starkly at the last line of her response: “Thank you for helping build and preserve Canada’s Heritage.” Heritage, which comes from the old French word *iritage*, means “something that is passed down from previous generations; a tradition.” More recently, it has come to refer to those traditions and relics of the past that are worth preserving for future generations – including our student journal. Occupying a place in the national archives of Canada, *Historical Discourses* has long been a small thread in the archival fabric of the Canadian settler-colonial state. Thinking through history and our journal as technologies and instruments of imperialism – ones imbued with epistemic violence – we struggled to reconcile the questions about violence and injustice raised in this volume with its disciplinary style and predetermined

archival home. How would we participate in the projects of de/colonization? Weary of how the language of decolonization had been mobilized around the university in order to transform the post-secondary classroom, we reflect on Tuck and Yang's "Decolonization is not a metaphor." In the unsettling article, they aptly point out that "[d]ecolonization brings about the repatriation of Indigenous land and life; it is not a metaphor for other things we want to do to improve our societies and schools."¹ While Historical Discourses can not actively serve the project decolonization, we desire to highlight the racial anxieties that underlie our history department. How would our department contend with black and indigenous governmentality? How would the intellectual work of our department change? How would our classrooms transform?

The post-secondary classroom is dangerous. We hear the *n word* recited from passages from the past without regard for its lasting violence. Watch as white students scoff at calls for reparations while supporting humanitarian aid. It is the same brunt voices that actively defend our heteropatriarchal state and ignore the voices of resilience that interrupt the cycles of violences. When this discursive violence immobilizes the most resilient voices, we activate our own fearless speech – struggling to stand in solidarity. We find ourselves reflecting on the work of solidarity and its deeply contested terrain. Tuck and Yang emphasize the intellectual labour necessary for solidarity to work in favour of decolonization, explaining that "solidarity is an uneasy, reserved, and unsettled matter than neither reconciles present grievances nor forecloses future conflict."² On the ground, solidarity operates quite differently. Quick to add #solidarity to our Facebook posts without a second thought, the possibilities that Tuck and Yang find in solidarity appear far-sighted. Here, the logic of solidarity instructs us to stay in our lane, guides us to know our kind and teaches us to remain divided along colonial lines. It lends itself to a passive form of support – a series of half-hearted attempts to break the variegated cycles of violence that mark our contemporary moment. Most insidiously, it tends to the anxieties of the white settler by offering a pass. The logic instructs them: "Perform the spectacle of solidarity and you are free." Under this rationale, how will the capital stolen through the institutions of settlement, slavery, and bonded labour be returned?

¹ Eve Tuck and K. Wayne Yang, "Decolonization Is Not a Metaphor," *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education & Society* 1, no. 1 (2012): 1.

² *Ibid.*, 3.

And what about the Cucumber Magnolia or the Eastern Elk or the Atlantic Grey Whale? As we turned the maple leaf, beaver and loon into national symbols, we forgot about the forms of life rendered extinct by our settlement. We wait impatiently until our performance of solidarity becomes robust enough to incorporate life at both planetary and microbial levels. Dipesh Chakrabarty reminds us that “the geologic now of the Anthropocene has become entangled with the now of human history.”³ Reflecting on how the age of man is coming to an end, we wait for our lives, struggles, and histories to be subsumed into the story of Earth. Plagued by the violence of our contemporary moment, we mobilize our own fearless voices to produce new ethics of living and dying in the Anthropocene. We desire cycles of debt that will bind us in everlasting love and ecstasy. Cycles that will run out control until the earth is no longer wretched, until we all become one – animate and inanimate. We end by reflecting on the futility of this volume. Saidiya Hartman tells us to think about how grand visions and dreams quickly become the “ruins of another age.”⁴ We wait impatiently until the day when this volume—with its dreams, possibilities and dangers—finds its way into the dustbin of History. We use this issue to interrupt and disrupt its own violent destiny by calling for its own destruction. We wait impatiently for the beginning of another age.

We divided this year’s volume of Historical Discourses into four sections. The first, “On the land of *Kanien’kehá:ka*,” opens up the pages of history to reflect on the violences of colonialism on Turtle Island, framing the geopolitics of our volume at the onset. The second section, “im/mobile bodies,” thinks through the body as a site where power relations are enacted, resisted and negotiated, asking historians to reflect on the ways in which bodily im/mobility structures their analyses. In “Authoring the Family,” we bring together papers that interrogate the ways in which families and households are governed by nation-states and offer new entry points into the past. We end the volume by contemplating on the disciplinary structures of historical methodology. Let us embrace alternative modes of writing, presenting, and embodying the past.

The making of this journal would not have been possible without the many forms of support we have received from several individuals. We would like to thank the McGill History Students Association Executive for providing us the space and freedom to produce a journal such as this one. Members of the Arts Undergraduate Society (AUS)

³ Dipesh Chakrabarty, “The Climate of History: Four Theses,” *Critical Inquiry* 35.2 (2009): 212.

⁴ Saidiya Hartman, *Lose Your Mother: A Journey Along the Atlantic Slave Route*, (Farar, Straus, and Giroux, 2008).

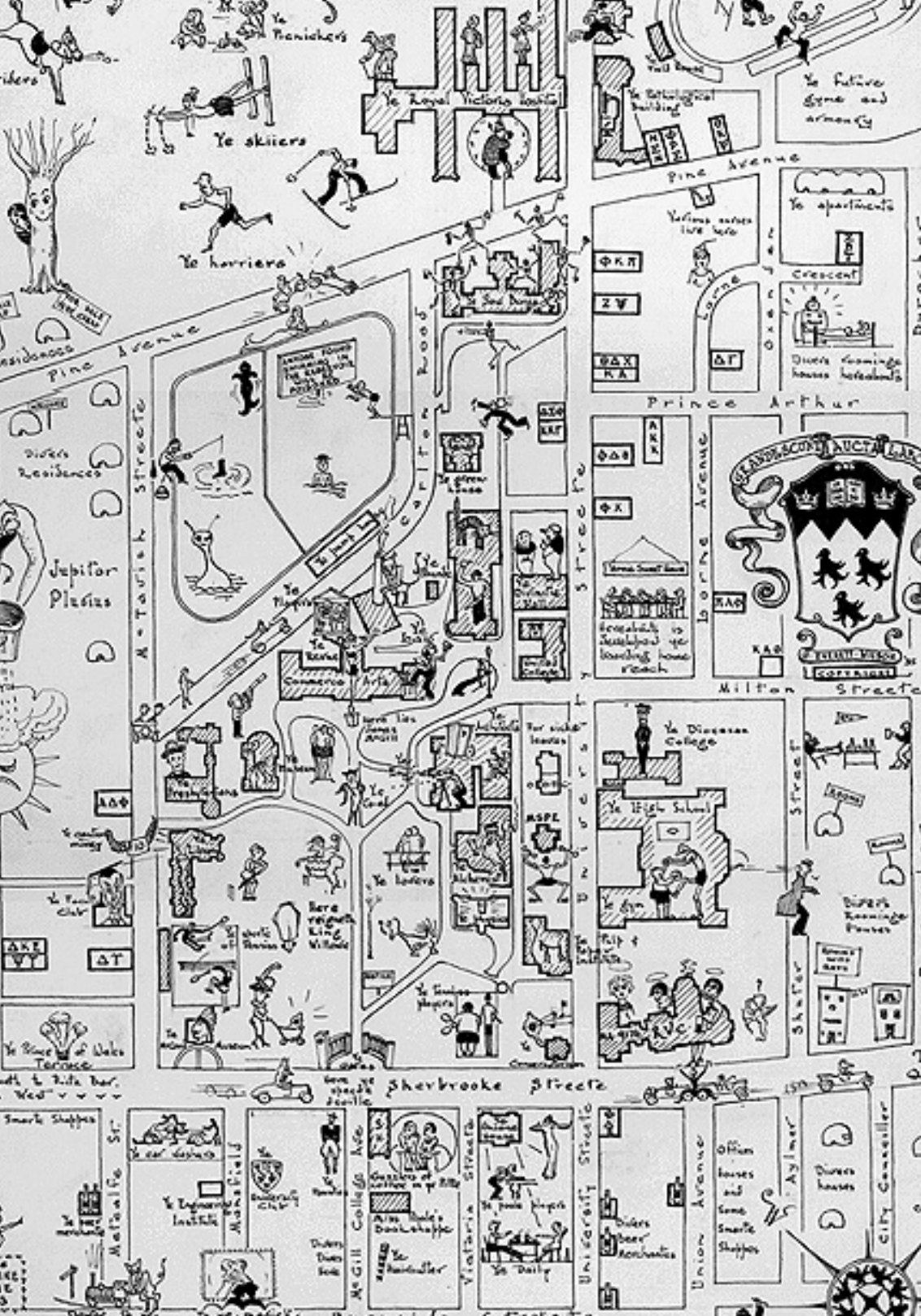
have also been exceedingly helpful in navigating the University's bureaucracies. Particularly, we extend our gratitude to AUS VP Finance Mirza Ali Shakir for patiently explaining our financial situation, as well as Faraz Oman for his efforts to streamline the University's student journals.

A number of staff and faculty have additionally made the publication of this journal possible. We asked professors and graduate students to work with the authors and the editorial board to improve the level of historical inquiry in the papers included in this volume. We would like to sincerely thank Professors Allan Downey, Catherine Desbarats, Brian Lewis, Shanon Fitzpatrick, Faith Wallis, Laila Parsons, Jason Opal, Allan Greer, and Suzanne Morton as well as Graduate Students Paris Swanson and Erin Bell for their time and insightful commentary. We have received indispensable support and guidance from Professors Laura Madokoro, Shanon Fitzpatrick, and Elizabeth Elbourne. We infinitely appreciate Professor Elbourne's thoughtful words that make up the foreword to *Historical Discourses*, not only illustrating the violences and the ambiguities of history, but also forcing us to consider our positions and roles as historians. We end by thanking Professor Jeremy Tai for agreeing to an interview for this year's journal, as well as one of the members of our editorial team, Kelly Liu, for conducting it. We are happy to welcome him to our department.

But above all, we would like to thank our fellow students for their hours of collective work on this journal. It is not often that we have the privilege to recognize and celebrate the written work of students. The authors of these papers have proved to write thoroughly critical and engaging papers that have truly been a pleasure to read and edit. Of course, we could not possibly have done the editorial work alone. We would like to sincerely thank the members of our editorial board who have participated in the paper selection process, and have dedicated hours of their time to collaborate with the authors and professors for the technical editing of the papers. Sara Sebti, Sumaya Ugas, Emily Jacobi, Nadir Khan, Kate Bauer, Max Binks-Collier, Emilie Cornellis: the importance of your critical voices cannot be overstated.

And of course, a publication such as this one would not be possible without the generous funding provided by the University. Specifically, we would like to thank Dean Hudson Meadwell, the Students Society of McGill University, and the Arts Undergraduate Society for their financial support.

on the land of the
Kanien'kehá:ka



Contaminated Dirt and Colonial Terror: Environmental Racism in Ahkwesáhsne

Sarah Pringle

Calling attention to the violent clash between Mi'kmaq anti-fracking activists and a militarized RCMP, Ojibwe activist Winona Laduke powerfully declared, "Someone needs to explain to me why proposing to destroy water with chemical warfare doesn't make a corporation a terrorist."¹ LaDuke offers a shift in perspective, one that considers terrorists as the toxic industries invading each cell of our bodies, our water, and our atmosphere. Her statement particularly resonates with Ahkwesáhsne, or "Land Where the Partridge Drums," a Kanien'kehá:ka territory that lines the St. Lawrence River and stretches across the borders of what has come to be known as New York State, Ontario, and Quebec.² Often, when we hear of 'terrorism' in Ahkwesáhsne, it refers to tobacco smuggling across the international border; a message propagated by the reserve's neighboring settler states.³ Yet, after just over two centuries of occupation by settler industry, it is not only the most polluted reserve in Canada, but ranks as one of the most severely poisoned regions of North America.⁴ The border community's history of industrialization has left the bioregion contaminated with toxins that continue to endanger a multiplicity of lives, both human and nonhuman.

In this paper, I hope to draw attention to the historic and ongoing colonial eco-violence in this region, arguing that the intensified molding of ecological space into terrains of

¹ Winona Laduke, "When Drones Guard the Pipeline: Militarizing Fossil Fuels in the East," Indian Country. July 13, 2013. Accessed December 2, 2015.

² Winona Laduke, *All Our Relations: Native Struggles for Land and Life*, (Cambridge, MA: South End Press, 1999), 11.

³ Audra Simpson, *Mohawk Interruptus: Political Life across the Borders of Settler States*, (Duke University Press, 2014), 123.

⁴ Bruce Johansen, "Akwasasne's Toxic Turtles," in *Ecocide of Native America*, 1st ed. (Sante Fe, New Mexico: Clear Light Publishers, 1995), 171.

extraction and profit is an act of terrorism against the inhabitants of Ahkwesáhsne. I will begin by tracing the history of industrialization and contamination in the bioregion so as to demonstrate the critical implications this has had on the community of Ahkwesáhsne, as well as on the spiritual, cultural, and economic foundations of the Kanien'kehá:ka in the area. Then, I will show that these ecological conditions gave rise to commercial tobacco as a mode of sustenance in Ahkwesáhsne, which settler states construct as a danger to national security on both sides of the border. This foregrounding of the "threat" of Indigenous tobacco works to mask the real terror in the region: colonial industry's continued contamination of Haudenosaunee soil, water, and bodies. To conclude, I move away from the historical violences of contaminated dirt and toward the transformative, regenerating, reworldings presented by the Akwesasne Task Force on the Environment, as a testament to the nation's enduring resilience in the face of colonial terror.

The Kanien'kehá:ka have long occupied the eastern region of the continent, known as the "Keepers of the Eastern Door" of the Haudenosaunee Confederacy.⁵ Though becoming intimate with the contours of land surrounding the St. Lawrence over centuries, the Kanien'kehá:ka first permanently settled in the territory now known as Ahkwesáhsne in 1755.⁶ At this time, the area was a "natural wonderland:" it contained rich soil for farming, an abundance of water, diverse forests, as well as a variety of thriving wildlife.⁷ Unfortunately, newcomers soon greatly coveted the region's resources and profitable location on important seaways.⁸

Settlers saw the residing Indigenous inhabitants' sustainable use of the land as "uncivilized;" they claimed that the area was pristine, unworked, and therefore not 'property' according to English legal tradition.⁹ Occurring under the guise of the "civilizing mission," this thinking justified the expropriation of Indigenous land and the colonization

⁵ Laduke, *All Our Relations*, 13 ; The Rotinoshonni or Haudenosaunee people are the Mohawks (Kanien'kehá:ka), the Oneidas, Onondagas, Cayugas, and Senecas. Alternatively called the Iroquois Confederacy by the French and the League of Five Nations by the English. The Confederacy of these nations is properly called the Haudenosaunee Confederacy meaning People of the Longhouse. "Haudenosaunee Confederacy." Haudenosaunee Confederacy. Accessed December 3, 2015. <http://www.haudenosauneeconfederacy.com/whatisconfederacy.html>.

⁶ Johansen, "Akwesasne's Toxic Turtles," 171.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Edmund Danzinger Jr., "We have no spirit to celebrate with you the great [1893] Columbian Fair': Aboriginal Peoples of the Great Lakes respond to Canadian and United States policies during the nineteenth century." In *Lines drawn upon the water: First Nations and the Great Lakes borders and borderlands*. Waterloo, edited by Wilfrid Karl S. Hele, 1-19, Ontario: Laurier University Press, 2008.

⁹ Danzinger, "We have no spirit to celebrate with you the great [1893] Columbian Fair,'" 2.

of Indigenous people.¹⁰ Edmund Danzinger Jr. points out that since contact with European settlers, a “cyclone of civilization” driving westward and northward has moved through the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence region spurred by a desire to transform land into profit.¹¹ At various historical junctures, the cyclone has been composed of “colonial explorers and fur traders, bio-contaminants (such as small pox, cholera, and tuberculosis), white farmers and laborers, entrepreneurs, a transportation revolution, federal policy-makers and their coercive field agents, evangelistic school teachers and missionaries.”¹²

Significantly, the storm gained unprecedented force when the American-British border was created at the end of the War of 1812.¹³ This ushered in a new period of Indigenous-Newcomer relations, which would ultimately cede much of Haudenosaunee homeland to colonial extraction projects.¹⁴ Settlers on either side of the border believed that Great Lakes resources were “essential to the future prosperity of Canada and the United States.”¹⁵ By the 1850s, merchants, farmers, lumbermen, miners, fishers, town builders, tourists, and federal bureaucrats quickly moved into the northern hinterlands.¹⁶ Significantly, starting in 1903, large industrial corporations, like Aluminum Company of America (ALCOA), began flocking to the region to take advantage of the bountiful resources available.¹⁷

The 1950s accelerated the already rapid industrialization of the region with the completion of the St. Lawrence Seaway and the Moses-Saunders Power Dam in 1958 and 1959 respectively.¹⁸ The completion of the Seaway provided a route for the import and export of raw products and processed commodities to global markets¹⁹ and the Power Dam brought a new supply of ‘cheap’ hydroelectric power to the St. Lawrence.²⁰ Predictably, the new industrial infrastructures lured more giant corporations to the region;

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Ibid., 5.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Laduke, *All Our Relations*, 15.

¹⁸ Michael Mascarenhas. “The Neoliberalism of Nature,” in *Where the Waters Divide: Neoliberalism, White Privilege, and Environmental Racism in Canada*, (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2012), 84.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Ibid.

companies such as General Motors, Reynolds Metals, and Domtar swarmed the St. Lawrence, building factories a few miles upstream to Ahkwesáhsne.²¹

This marked only the beginning; presently, one fourth of all North American industry takes place on or near the Great Lakes, all of which drain into the St. Lawrence River.²² The most recent expression of the industrial project occurred in 2012, when the community became home to the Enbridge pipeline.²³ Pipelines are spreading across the land with little forethought paid to the toll that time will take on their infrastructure: rust, disintegration, chaotic weather, technological failures, and profit oriented engineering projects can all potentially collude to create ecological disaster. This pipeline, creeping through the grasses of the Ahkwesáhsne landscape, not only reveals that there is no end in sight for industrial expansion in this area; it also represents yet another ecological hazard in Ahkwesáhsne.

The development projects dramatically altered the ecosystem, plunging a variety of lives into increasingly toxic ecological conditions. Though Indigenous activists had long contested the eco-violence of industrialism in the area, it was not until the 1970s that colonial scientists considered the scope of ecological harm.²⁴ It is now widely known that this industrial activity allowed toxicants including, but not limited to, “PCBs, dibenzofurans, dioxins, polyaromatic hydrocarbons, fluorides, cyanide, aluminum, arsenic, chromium, and styrene” to be released into the atmosphere, penetrating Kanien'kehá:ka land, air and water.²⁵ Contaminated dirt has now been located at General Motors, Reynolds Metals, and ALCOA; each location designated as a federal/state Super-Fund site, as well as ranking on the National Priorities list of contaminated sites in the United States.²⁶

Up until 1978, every company in the region used carcinogenic polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs), a chemical now known to cause a variety of serious health defects and labeled “one of the most lethal poisons of industrialized society.”²⁷ By the early 1980s, it became

²¹ Laduke, *All Our Relations*, 15; Johansen, "Akwasasne's Toxic Turtles," 173.

²² Laduke, *All Our Relations*, 15.

²³ "Akwasasne Agreement." Enbridge Inc. 2012. Accessed December 3, 2015. <http://www.enbridge.com/Viewer?id=F5BDBC4F6099486295CCC56ACE083E06>.

²⁴ Johansen, "Akwasasne's Toxic Turtles," 175.

²⁵ Mascarenhas, "The Neoliberalism of Nature," 84.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Laduke, *All Our Relations*, 15.

apparent that this chemical was heedlessly leaked or dumped by factories across the region.²⁸ For example, in 1981, it came to light that General Motors was dumping PCB contaminated materials into ground waters, less than one hundred yards from several Kanien'kehá:ka homes.²⁹ In 1984, the United States Environmental Protection Agency required General Motors to disclose a report, which revealed that their factories have dumped PCBs and other toxic wastes in the Ahkwesáhsne area since 1959, as well as routinely leaving poisonous materials "not containerized."³⁰ This was only the beginning of what would establish Ahkwesáhsne as one of the worst PCB-pollution sites in North America, transforming what was once a 'natural wonderland' into a toxic playground.³¹

Commenting on the PCBs, insecticides, and other toxins found to be leaking from industrial dumpsites in the region, wildlife pathologist Ward Stone noted that Ahkwesáhsne is just about "the worst place in the world to be a duck."³² It soon became clear that industrial toxins were affecting many species in the area. For instance, in 1984, scientists discovered that beluga whales of the St. Lawrence River carry some of the highest percentages of toxic chemicals in the world.³³ In 1987, young ducks were discovered at Reynolds Cove with PCBs in their body fat at 300 parts per million.³⁴ Soon after, in an area later referred to as 'Contaminated Cove,' Ward Stone discovered a turtle with 3067 parts per million of PCB in its body fat; fifteen times the amount necessary to qualify the body as hazardous waste.³⁵ Colonial toxicities had invaded the flesh and organs of all life forms in Ahkwesáhsne, blurring the boundary between animal and waste. As Bruce Johansen eloquently describes in *Life and Death in Mohawk Country*, in the 'Land Where the Partridge Drums', "Any partridge left alive is more likely to be worrying about its heartbeat rather than its drumbeat."³⁶ Nonhuman bodies may not matter in the colonial assessment of risk, but they are still terrorized by the toxic presence of industrialism.

The attacks on nature are also attacks on Indigenous women's bodies, and by extension,

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Ibid., 17.

³⁰ Bruce Johansen, *Life and Death in Mohawk Country*, (Golden, Colo.: North American Press, 1993), 8.

³¹ Johansen, "Akwasasne's Toxic Turtles," 186.

³² Ibid., 173-174.

³³ Laduke, *All Our Relations*, 19.

³⁴ Johansen, "Akwasasne's Toxic Turtles," 185.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Johansen, *Life and Death in Mohawk Country*, 1.

attacks on the bodies of Indigenous children. In subsequent years, research determined that PCBs and other toxins also contaminated women's breast milk. In a study organized by locals in the late 1980s, Kanien'kehá:ka mothers were found to have two hundred percent greater concentration of PCBs in their breast milk compared to the general population.³⁷ Katsi Cook, a Kanien'kehá:ka activist and midwife heavily involved in the breast milk study, was the face of growing concerns in the community about women's reproductive health. Her work later showed that other pollutants may be linked with increased birth defects among Ahkwesáhsne children, including cleft palates, deafness, and intestinal abnormalities, as well as high numbers of miscarriages among Kanien'kehá:ka women.³⁸ Future generations continue to feel the impacts of Ahkwesáhsne's toxic grounds; recent reports have drawn attention to higher levels of carcinogenic pollutants at a nearby former GM plant, despite the area's classification as an Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Superfund Cleanup site.³⁹ Clearly, the winds of the "cyclone of civilization" continue to coil around, and be felt by, those living in the region.

Toxicity continues to poison the spiritual, cultural, and economic fabric of the Mohawk community. The turtle discovered in 'Contaminated Cove' shook many in Ahkwesáhsne to the core as the animal holds a special place in the spiritual traditions of the Haudenosaunee. Their creation story speaks of our world taking shape on a turtle's back and many Kanien'kehá:ka still refer to North America as 'Turtle Island.'⁴⁰ Thus, for many, a turtle sickened by pollutants symbolizes the earth falling apart.⁴¹ In an interview with a Kanien'kehá:ka woman named Sherry Bonaparte concerning the PCBs contamination of Kanien'kehá:ka women's breast milk, she said: "We trusted that the gifts the Creator gave us will not harm us... We began to fear our own land... to fear our plants, animals, and fish... This fear, in turn, has disconnected us from the land and caused people to move away from those traditional practices."⁴² This illuminates the way that toxicity not only impacts the corporeal materialities of Ahkwesáhsne; it also undermines the bearing of Haudenosaunee spirituality and tradition. Moreover, it targets those most pivotal to the

³⁷ Laduke, *All Our Relations*, 19.

³⁸ Johansen, "Akwesasne's Toxic Turtles," 189.

³⁹ Charles Kader. "Outrage Builds in Akwesasne over PCB Contamination Reality • Regional • Two Row Times." Two Row Times. February 12, 2014. Accessed December 3, 2015. <http://www.tworowtimes.com/news/regional/outrage-builds-akwesasne-pcb-contamination-reality/>.

⁴⁰ Johansen, *Life and Death in Mohawk Country*, 11.

⁴¹ Johansen, *Life and Death in Mohawk Country*, 11.

⁴² Mascarenhas, "The Neoliberalism of Nature," 86.

maintenance of cultural tradition: scholar Michael Mascarehas points out that Kanien'kehá:ka elders have been disproportionately affected by environmental illnesses, like cancer or asthma. This has significant consequences, as elders are largely responsible for holding and sharing cultural knowledge, as well as teaching and guiding the community.⁴³ Pollutants continue to threaten the resilience and reproduction of these knowledges, laying bare the colonial nature of industrial toxicity. This led one Kanien'kehá:ka woman to ask, "When the circle of life is broken, how can traditional cultural practices survive?"⁴⁴

In a similar fashion, community members and researchers have shown how various industries using Kanien'kehá:ka lands as dumping grounds currently endanger the community's economic survival. As early as 1834, Ahkwesáhsne Chiefs told Canadian officials that control structures built to channel the flow of the St. Lawrence River were destroying important fish spawning grounds.⁴⁵ Despite their efforts, Bruce Johansen points out in *Ecocide of Native America*, "The Mohawk's traditional economy," based on fishing, hunting and agriculture, "has been literally poisoned out of existence."⁴⁶ Though fish have been a staple of the Kanien'kehá:ka diet for centuries, as well as pivotal to the economic organization of Ahkwesáhsne since the perforation of industrial capitalism, the fear of contaminants has devastated the stock available in the St. Lawrence.⁴⁷ In 1986, the tribal government issued an advisory recommending that pregnant women, women of childbearing age, and children under fifteen should not eat fish from the river.⁴⁸ Soon afterward, all residents were advised not to consume fish caught in certain regions of Ahkwesáhsne.⁴⁹ This inevitably resulted in a waning fish industry, one of the few traditional modes of sustenance left in Ahkwesáhsne. By 1990, fewer than ten commercial fishermen remained.⁵⁰

Likewise, the devastating impacts of the industrial complex rendered hunting and agriculture unavailable to the reserve's inhabitants. Before the 1950s, Ahkwesáhsne's

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Johansen, "Akwasasne's Toxic Turtles," 173.

⁴⁶ Johansen, "Akwasasne's Toxic Turtles," 174.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Elizabeth Hoover, "Cultural and health implications of fish advisories in a Native American community," *Ecological processes* 2, no. 1 (2013): 2

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Johansen, "Akwasasne's Toxic Turtles," 4.

wetlands were home to many trappers with diverse animals available in the bioregion.⁵¹ However, the construction of the St. Lawrence Seaway resulted in mass drowning of animals like muskrats and beavers, which relied on particular river levels to create their hutches.⁵² Additionally, the increasingly toxic food chain in the area had an adverse impact on the remaining ground animals, effectively destroying the traditional trapping industry in the area.⁵³ Likewise, contaminated dirt made agriculture a dangerous pursuit. For instance, Kanien'kehá:ka farmers lost large numbers of dairy herds in the mid-1970s due to various forms of fluoride poisoning, undoubtedly related to the nearby Reynolds aluminum plant which until 1973, emitted fluorides into the air at a rate of 400 pounds an hour.⁵⁴

The loss of fish, game, and cattle does not just devastate the traditional economy in Ahkwesáhsne; it shatters a way of life. Johansen points out that Kanien'kehá:ka fishers did not just catch and eat fish: "They gave thanks to the fish for allowing itself to be caught and eaten and to nature for providing the catch."⁵⁵ The toxic fish represent far more than declining food supply and industry; it reveals the magnitude of terror inherent in the industrial toxicities, which continue to seep into and disturb Kanien'kehá:ka cultural and philosophical foundations. Henry Lickers, an employee of the Mohawk Council at Ahkwesáhsne commented, "Desperation sets in when year after year you see the decimation of the philosophical center of your society."⁵⁶

The destruction of Ahkwesáhsne's traditional economic base left many with increasingly dismal economic opportunities. These conditions were further aggravated in the 1970s with the decline in ironworking employment due to post-industrialization processes.⁵⁷ By 1990, eighty percent of adults were unemployed or under employed, with seventy percent relying on public assistance.⁵⁸ For some, desperate times called for desperate

⁵¹ Johansen, *Life and Death in Mohawk Country*, 12.

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Laduke, *All Our Relations*, 15.

⁵⁵ Johansen, *Life and Death in Mohawk Country*, 19.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ George-Kanentiio points out the bitter series of events in which Mohawk ironworkers helped raise the World Trade Towers, were among the first on the scene after their collapse, only to return home to Akwesasne to find a community under intense scrutiny. Douglas George-Kanentiio. *Iroquois on fire: A voice from the Mohawk nation*, (Greenwood Publishing Group, 2006), 133; Woodland Indian Cultural Educational Centre, *Skywalkers: A history of Indian ironworkers*, (Brantford, Ont.: Woodland Indian Cultural Educational Centre, 1987); Johansen, *Life and Death in Mohawk Country*, 1-170.

⁵⁸ Johansen, *Life and Death in Mohawk Country*, 13.

measures. It is in this economic environment that other industries, like tobacco and gambling, developed in Ahkwesáhsne.⁵⁹ Considering environmental degradation and its impact on the reserve's economy, Ruth Jamieson argues: 'It conduces to participation in the cash economy through 'trade' in a variety of otherwise taxed (Cigarettes, alcohol), controlled (weapons, people), or prohibited commodities (drugs) or the opening of high-stakes gambling casinos.'⁶⁰ The emerging gambling industry and the alleged 'smuggling' of tobacco across the border in Ahkwesáhsne is a result of big industry's assault on the local environment and corresponding traditional economic activities.⁶¹ Given that Kanien'kehá:ka inhabitants can no longer survive off the land, there was little choice but to survive on commercial tobacco and casinos.⁶²

Beginning in the late 1980s, Ahkwesáhsne's neighbor settler states grew increasingly apprehensive of Ahkwesáhsne's rising tobacco and gambling industries. Both Canada and the United States fixated on the border bifurcating Ahkwesáhsne, imagining it to be fertile grounds for 'tobacco smuggling.'⁶³ In some instances, smuggling of weapons and drugs did take place; however, it was mostly by non-native criminal gangs, not by local Kanien'kehá:ka.⁶⁴ Furthermore, what Canadian and American governments identified as 'tobacco smuggling,' Kanien'kehá:ka traders considered routine, legitimate trading.⁶⁵ The Kanien'kehá:ka of Ahkwesáhsne have established claims to border-crossing rights from both Canada and the United States. For instance, the 1713 Treaty of Utrecht and the Jay Treaty of 1794,⁶⁶ elucidates free travel across the international border for trading with other Kanien'kehá:ka.⁶⁷ Nonetheless, inter-Indigenous tobacco trading in Ahkwesáhsne conflates with criminal activity in the public consciousness, justifying a swelling settler security system encroaching on Indigenous bodies in Ahkwesáhsne.

In the years since the collapse of the World Trade Towers in 2001, Ahkwesáhsne's 'tobacco smuggling' transformed from 'criminal activity' into an act of terrorism. For example, in 2013, the MacDonald-Laurier Institute published a study titled *Border*

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ Ruth Jamieson, "'Contested Jurisdiction Border Communities' and Cross-Border Crime: The Case of Akwesasne," *Crime, Law and Social Change* 30, no. 3 (1998): 268.

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ Ibid., 265-267.

⁶⁴ Johansen. *Life and Death in Mohawk Country*. 109.

⁶⁵ Ibid., 260.

⁶⁶ Jamieson, "'Contested Jurisdiction Border Communities,'" 260.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

Integrity, Illicit Tobacco, and Canada's Security, which identifies 'contraband tobacco' amongst Aboriginals in Ahkwesáhsne as a major threat to Canadian national security.⁶⁸ Notably, criticisms have been waged concerning the Institute's close ties to governing elites and industry and there is no question that their study cleared the way for the expansion of colonial power on Indigenous territory.⁶⁹ Deploying the threat of "terrorism" creates an emotional atmosphere of urgency that calls for the setting up of a surveillance culture. In 2014, citing the threatening presence of tobacco smuggling in Ahkwesáhsne, the Canadian State allocated over ninety million dollars for the implementation of a heightened technological, infrastructural, and militaristic security system on the reserve.⁷⁰ Likewise, since 2001, the American Department of Homeland Security has increased the number of Border Patrol Agents, as well as deployed additional technology, including thermal camera systems, mobile surveillance systems, two drones, and an accompanying operations center on the Northern border.⁷¹ According to Homeland Security, this protects the United States against the threat of terrorism, in particular that made possible by cross-border activity.⁷² Settler security infrastructure continues to intensify on both sides of the Canada-US border in Ahkwesáhsne, targeting the 'terrorizing' movements of the tobacco trade and continuing to identify Indigenous bodies as "the illegal alien, the always-possible terrorist."⁷³

The current colonial panic concerning the risks posed by Ahkwesáhsne tobacco smuggling draws on earlier colonial imaginaries of the Kanien'kehá:ka and the

⁶⁸ Jean Daudelin, Stephanie Soiffer, and Jeff Willows, *Border Integrity, Illicit Tobacco, and Canada's Security*, (Ottawa, ON: Macdonald-Laurier Institute for Public Policy, 2013).

⁶⁹ Gustein, Donald. "Harper's Crime Floggers." *The Tyee*, March 21, 2011. Accessed December 15, 2015. <http://thetyee.ca/Opinion/2011/03/21/CrimeFloggers/>.

Donald Gustein reveals several of the corporate ties between the Conservative government and the think-tank; Dean Beeby, "Canada Revenue Agency Denies Bias in Audit Selections." *Toronto Star*, August 3, 2014. Accessed December 15, 2015. http://www.thestar.com/news/canada/2014/08/03/canada_revenue_agency_denies_bias_in_audit_selections.html.

Deen Beeby interrogates the biased irregularity of recent agency audits by the Canadian Revenue Agency. In the Toronto Sun article, he notes that most charities targeted by the Canadian Revenue Agency were opponents of the Harper government's energy and pipeline policies, while, well-known conservative think-tanks registered as charities, such as the MacDonald-Laurier Institute, were left alone.

⁷⁰ The Government of Canada. "Enhancing Support to Combat Contraband Tobacco." Canada's Economic Action Plan. Accessed December 3, 2015. <http://actionplan.gc.ca/en/initiative/enhancing-support-combat-contraband-tobacco>.

⁷¹ The United States Department of Homeland Security. "Homeland Security." DHS Northern Border Strategy. Accessed December 3, 2015. <http://www.dhs.gov/dhs-northern-border-strategy>. 4.

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ Simpson, *Mohawk Interruptus*, 123.

environment as “lawless and savage.” The colonial states’ desire to police tobacco smuggling revitalizes an understanding of Kanien’kehá:ka territory as a ‘wild and lawless’ frontier, which requires ‘governing and civilizing.’ Historian Philip Deloria argues that reservations, Indian agents, and state surveillance act as a historically generated “colonial dream” in which “fixivity, control, visibility, productivity, and most importantly, docility” are realized.⁷⁴ Citing his work, Simpson argues that the realization of this dream in the present “requires that Indigenous economic activities be watched, that there be a state-police presence in their community, and that Indians be passive in the face of this surveillance, regulation, scrutiny, and possible intervention.”⁷⁵ The post 9/11 securitization of Ahkwesáhsne territory speaks to the relentlessness of this colonial dream. Yet, Mohawk communities and Mohawk bodies have persistently rejected colonial rulings and land shapings: Indigenous tobacco “smuggling” is a tremendous refusal of settler dominion over territory and colonial expectations that Indigenous bodies disappear.⁷⁶

Yet, the settler states’ propagation of Indigenous tobacco as ‘terrorism’ not only justifies the surveillance of Indigenous bodies; it renders the violence of colonial industry less visible in the public sphere. This strategy was successful before: despite the immediacy of environmental concerns in Ahkwesáhsne in the early 1990s, only the violence of gambling feuds and so-called smuggling made mainstream headlines.⁷⁷ Kanien’kehá:ka leaders had to call a press conference to remind the public about the continuing ecological violences incurring on the people of Ahkwesáhsne.⁷⁸ In *Slow Violence and the Environmentalism of the Poor*, Rob Nixon captures how “politically and emotionally, different kinds of disaster possess unequal heft.”⁷⁹ He movingly paints the urgency of disasters frequently ignored by the public, calling attention to a world where:

Stories of toxic buildup, massing greenhouse gases, and accelerated species loss due to ravaged habitats are all cataclysmic, but they are scientifically convoluted cataclysms in which casualties are postponed, often for generations ... The fiery spectacle of the collapsing towers were burned into the national psyche as the

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ Ibid., 127.

⁷⁶ Simpson, *Mohawk Interruptus*, 127.

⁷⁷ Johansen, *Life and Death in Mohawk Country*, 18.

⁷⁸ Ibid., 18-19.

⁷⁹ Rob Nixon, *Slow Violence and the Environmentalism of the Poor*, (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2011), 13.

definitive image of violence, setting back by years attempts to rally public sentiment against climate change, a threat that is incremental, exponential, and far less sensationally visible.⁸⁰

While these long-lasting, incremental disasters may not prick the appetites of post 9/11 spectacle driven media consumers, many communities are unable to ignore the blistering heat and toxic rivers of industry-induced climate change. The terrorism ongoing in Ahkwesáhsne is not ‘contraband tobacco,’ rather, it is the leaching, protracted, and enduring environmental toxicities of colonialism, which continue to inflict a slow violence on Indigenous inhabitants.

Corporations and industry, like those slowly penetrating the soils of Ahkwesáhsne, are responsible for the destruction of lands across the world, the displacement of Indigenous communities from their homes, and the creation of toxic landscapes that adversely impact communities of color.⁸¹ Lives on the underside of globalized capitalism face a disproportionate amount of toxic risk.⁸² This historic and ongoing industrialization in Ahkwesáhsne can only be described as environmental racism: while the settler population benefits from ‘cheap’ electricity, jobs, and commodities outflowing from the area, colonial toxicities violently seep through the atmosphere, occupying the hearts and the veins of Ahkwesáhsne, while also dismantling culture and tradition. The sensationalization of the so-called “threat” of Indigenous efforts to remain resilient despite colonial terror obscures the true horrors inflicted on the region – the poisons of colonial industrialism.

By writing about the Ahkwesáhsne ecology, I am ignited by a hope that there are means through which we may “turn the long emergencies of slow violence into stories dramatic enough to rouse public sentiment and warrant political intervention.”⁸³ The necessity of telling stories of “slow disturbance” branches from a comprehension of the way humans are disturbing forces persistently entangled in the ecological, an understanding vital to ending this history of violence. The Kanien’kehá:ka have invoked this knowledge in their

⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁸¹ See Andrea Smith, *Conquest: sexual violence and American Indian genocide*. Vol. 3. (Cambridge, MA: South End Press, 2005).

⁸² See Mel Chen, *Animacies: Biopolitics, racial mattering, and queer affect*, (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2012); Nixon, *Slow Violence and the Environmentalism of the Poor*, 3; Smith, *Conquest: sexual violence and American Indian genocide*; Ward Churchill, *Struggle for the land: Native North American resistance to genocide, ecocide, and colonization*, (City Lights Books, 2002).

⁸³ Nixon, *Slow violence and the environmentalism of the poor*, 3.

resistance to industry throughout history. The Akwesasne Task Force on the Environment and their partners are one facet of the community's resilience and resurgence in the face of ecological and colonial harms. Their co-authored article, "Holistic Risk-Based Environmental Decision Making," demands the movement towards a form of risk assessment that "holistically examines impacts on the natural world, and on cultural, social, subsistence, economic, and spiritual practices."⁸⁴ Branching from this holistic approach, Taiaiake Alfred illustrates one community-led response to colonial industry's assault on Kanien'kehá:ka culture, a program that provides youth the opportunity to learn traditional, land-based, cultural practices.⁸⁵ This example makes clear that Kanien'kehá:ka are far from victims; they continuously refuse colonial encroachment, banding together with the lands, the rivers, and the ecosystems of Ahkwesáhsne to protect their world from colonial terror.

In *Red Skin, White Masks*, Glen Coulthard powerfully declares: "For Indigenous nations to live, capitalism must die. And for capitalism to die, we must actively participate in the construction of Indigenous alternatives to it."⁸⁶ By thinking with and turning to the Akwesasne Task Force on the Environment, as well as the other creatures of the bioregion, perhaps we can imagine a different, and hopefully less toxic, future.

⁸⁴ Mary Arquette, et al., "Holistic risk-based environmental decision making: a Native perspective." *Environmental health perspectives* 110, no. Suppl 2 (2002): 262.

⁸⁵ Taiaiake Alfred, "The Akwesasne Cultural Restoration Program: A Mohawk approach to land-based education," *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education & Society* vol. 3, no. 3 (2014): 134-144.

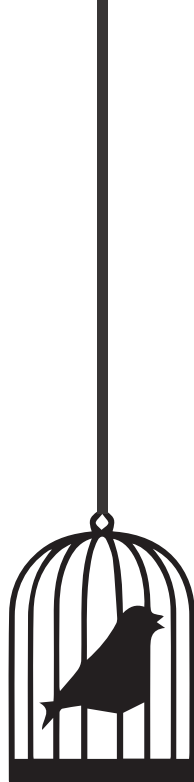
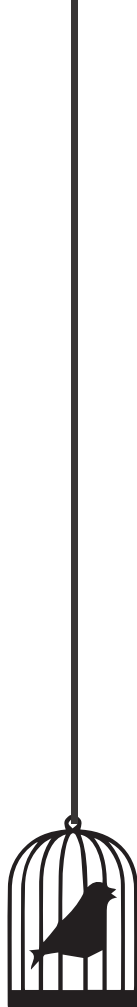
⁸⁶ Glen Sean Coulthard, *Red Skin, White Masks: Rejecting the Colonial Politics of Recognition*, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2014), 173.

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**im/mobile
bodies**



The Washington of Europe: Lajos Kossuth's American Tour and the Transatlantic Politics of Revolution

Liam Mather

I. Introduction

On the brisk, sunny morning of December 6, 1851, the Hungarian revolutionary Lajos Kossuth arrived in the New World to the roar of cannon.¹ United States Navy vessels, stationed throughout the sparkling waters of New York Harbour, welcomed their nation's guest with an official salute.² That day, upward of a quarter million cheering Americans lined Broadway for Kossuth's grand procession through Manhattan. Banners that declared support for Hungarian independence hung from nearly every building on the parade route; many of them likened Kossuth to George Washington.³ It was a ceremony, Kossuth later described in his memoir, "such as the world had never seen before."⁴

Despite the jubilant atmosphere, it was not a ceremony that welcomed a victor. Habsburg and Russian forces had driven Kossuth into exile when they crushed the Hungarian Revolution in 1849. Accordingly, when Kossuth first stepped foot in the U.S., most Americans assumed that he was there to stay; some of his supporters in Iowa, Tennessee, and elsewhere had already established homesteads for the homeless Magyar.⁵ But Kossuth had no intention of becoming an American, or a farmer; his commitment to the Hungarian cause had not faltered since the capitulation at Világos.⁶ "I came not to your glorious shores to enjoy a happy rest," he announced before the thousands of people that gathered at the New York Battery, where his ship docked, "but I

¹ Francis Pulszky and Theresa Pulszky, *White, Red, Black: Sketches of American Society in the United States During the Visit of Their Guests*, vol. 1 (New York, 1853), 65.

² *The New York Times*, 8 December 1851.

³ Donald S. Spencer, *Louis Kossuth and Young America: A Study of Sectionalism and Foreign Policy, 1848-1852* (Columbia & London, 1977), 8.

⁴ Lajos Kossuth, *Memories of My Exile* (New York: D. Appleton, 1880), p. xiv.

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ Kossuth, *Memories of My Exile*, p. vi.

came a humble petitioner in my country's name."⁷ For the next seven months, Kossuth travelled across the U.S., requesting material, military, and political aid so that he could revive his revolution. During this tour, Kossuth was an official guest at Congress, the White House, and numerous state legislatures; he spoke before assemblies of important businessmen and civic organizations; and he met with local crowds in towns around the country in an effort to fundraise money. But in July 1852, Kossuth left the U.S. dejected and empty-handed—and the exiled revolutionary never returned to his native land. President Millard Fillmore, in a decision backed by a substantial majority of Congressmen, had refused to formally support Kossuth's mission. Why did Kossuth fail? And did the U.S. government even take his demands seriously?

To answer these questions, this paper begins with the tumult of 1848. It will examine the reaction of the American public to the revolutions in Europe; the reasons for Lajos Kossuth's emergence in the U.S. as a *cause célèbre*; and the series of events that brought him to the U.S. at the end of 1851. The second part of this paper will outline the main proceedings of Kossuth's tour. Here, it will argue that Kossuth's mission failed primarily because he could not convince President Millard Fillmore, who was a non-interventionist by principle, that greater American engagement in Europe held strategic or economic benefits for the U.S. Moreover, American politics in the early 1850s was rife with bitter partisanship and sectionalism. In such a clime, Kossuth was unable to preserve the consensus that initially supported his cause; and once this consensus shattered, he failed to hold the support of the interventionist faction of the Democratic Party. Throughout, this paper will consider the impact of Kossuth's trip on Habsburg-U.S. relations. Kossuth serves as a useful focal point for examining how these disparate countries engaged with each other—in terms of diplomacy, trade, culture, and ideas—in the context of the midcentury transatlantic world and the European Great Power system. The U.S. was not fully integrated into this system, or on board with its norms, as evidenced by its many diplomatic blunders during the Kossuth episode. Nonetheless, the imperatives of proper diplomacy contributed to Fillmore's decision to rebuff Kossuth's demands. This paper will draw on Kossuth's speeches from his tour; the memoirs of his

⁷ Louis Kossuth, "First Speech in New York," in Phineas C. Headley, *The Life of Louis Kossuth, Governor of Hungary: Including Notices of the Men and Scenes of the Hungarian Revolution; To Which is Added an Appendix Containing His Principal Speeches, &c.* (Freeport, N.Y.: Books for Libraries Press, 1971), 252.

travel companion and fellow Hungarian politician, Ferenc Pulszky; American newspaper reports; as well as foreign policy literature.

II. Springtime in America, 1848 to 1851

The coalescence of two currents—one native to the United States, the other to Europe—brought Lajos Kossuth to the forefront of midcentury American consciousness, and eventually to its shores. The first of these currents was the brash and expansive brand of American nationalism that emerged in the late antebellum period. In the 1840s, the belief in Manifest Destiny, that the U.S. had a providential mission to conquer the Western hemisphere, reached a high point.⁸ At the same time, many Americans became convinced of the superiority of their republican institutions; Ralph Waldo Emerson captured this attitude when he wrote in 1844 that the U.S. was the “leading nation” of the age.⁹ The decisive American victory in the Mexican War in 1848 affirmed these convictions, and displayed the military strength of the young country. It also convinced many Americans that their nation’s mission was not just to expand across the New World, but to export its institutions and principles to the despot-ridden Old World as well.¹⁰ Support for this crusading mission was further fuelled by the revolutions that broke out in Europe in 1848, first in France, and then in the German states and the Austrian Empire. These revolutions received substantial newspaper coverage in the U.S. and evoked the sympathies of many Americans, who held street demonstrations and renamed towns after revolutionaries in displays of solidarity.¹¹ As the revolutions unfolded, the idea of the U.S. taking action to secure republicanism in Europe, either through diplomatic or military intervention, gained traction among the public and politicians.¹²

The first stages of the Hungarian Revolution were peaceful. The Hungarian Diet adopted Kossuth’s national program—a set of legislation known as the “April Laws”—with the consent of the Austrian Emperor, who was scrambling to maintain order in his domains

⁸ Spencer, *Louis Kossuth and Young America*, 178.

⁹ Ralph Waldo Emerson, *The Works of Ralph Waldo Emerson* (London: MacMillan & Co., 1884), 314.

¹⁰ Spencer, *Louis Kossuth and Young America*, 13.

¹¹ Timothy Mason Roberts, *Distant Revolutions: 1848 and the Challenge to American Exceptionalism* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2009), 42-43

¹² Spencer, *Louis Kossuth and Young America*, 18.

amid the violence in Vienna.¹³ The April Laws created a Hungarian state under the aegis of the Austrian Habsburgs and abolished serfdom; both were historic achievements in the eyes of Hungarian liberals. But the latter had two key limitations, which Hungarian radicals vociferously, but unsuccessfully, opposed: the Diet compensated the magnates for their loss of free labour, and it retained a property qualification for voting. Though Kossuth was celebrated in the United States as a great champion of republicanism, the April Laws were designed to cement the power of the gentry. The electoral laws of the French and Prussian revolutionary programs were in fact more democratic than Kossuth's, and the first Hungarian election in June of 1848 returned almost entirely noblemen to the Diet.¹⁴ Unlike elsewhere in Europe, the Hungarian Spring was not a Springtime of the Peoples, but one of the noble estate.

Importantly, Kossuth's April Laws also established Magyar supremacy in the new Hungarian state. They stipulated that "the language of legislation [be] exclusively Hungarian," effectively requiring all legislators to understand Magyar.¹⁵ But the state was inhabited by numerous national groups, including Croats, Slovaks, Serbs, and Romanians, each of which had undergone a process of national awakening in the first half of the nineteenth century, and whose leaders sought greater national autonomy. Once the Habsburgs regrouped from the disorder of the spring and sought to reassert control over Hungary, it allied with these nationalities for a military invasion, which began in September 1848. The Hungarian Revolution, which began as a constitutional adjustment, became a war for independence.

Despite his flawed liberal credentials, Kossuth attracted overwhelming support in the United States because most Americans struggled to grasp the political and ethnic complexities of the simultaneous European revolutions. As the historian Timothy Mason Roberts compellingly argues, Americans viewed the events overseas in simplistic, Manichean, and idealistic terms.¹⁶ Their misunderstandings about Hungary were particularly acute because, compared to Western Europe, it was a place that Americans knew little about.¹⁷ To interpret the barrage of complicated newspaper reports that

¹³ István Deák, *The Lawful Revolution: Louis Kossuth and the Hungarians, 1848-1849* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1979), 67.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 97-98.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 97.

¹⁶ Roberts, *Distant Revolutions*, 11.

¹⁷ Timothy Mason Roberts, "Lajos Kossuth and the Permeable American Orient of the Mid-Nineteenth Century," *Diplomatic History* 39 (2015): 1.

traveled across the Atlantic, Americans relied on their own nation's political culture and history. In their eyes, Kossuth was not fighting for Magyar domination of Hungary's other nationalities; he was fighting for liberty against a despotic monarchy, just as their ancestors had done against the British.¹⁸ The perceived parallels between the Hungarian and American Revolutions were confirmed in April 1849 when Kossuth, in the face of the imperial army, issued the Jefferson-esque Hungarian Declaration of Independence, which severed Hungary's connection with the Habsburgs.¹⁹ At that point, as well, the other European revolutions were fizzling or had been crushed. To Americans, Kossuth thus became the last hope for republicanism in Europe. After he issued his declaration, many politicians called on the U.S. government to officially recognize what had become a rebel Hungarian government. Among them was a one-term Whig Congressman from Illinois named Abraham Lincoln.²⁰ It was the last time he professed support for a rebel government.

Were the U.S. to recognize Hungary, it would have deviated from a core foreign policy doctrine of the young republic, as laid out by George Washington in his 1796 Farewell Address: non-intervention in European affairs.²¹ Intervention would have also defied the wisdom of Lord John Russell's government in Britain, which was not willing to commit resources to securing Hungarian independence, despite a high level of British public support for Kossuth.²² The stakes of American engagement were raised further when Russia, after consultation with the Habsburgs, invaded Hungary in early 1849 to help quash the revolution.

But the hero-worship of Kossuth that swept the U.S. in 1849 was not limited to the poorly informed masses, or to obscure Midwesterners looking to score political points—it permeated the highest offices of government. President Zachary Taylor, the hero of the Mexican War, was less strategically astute as a President than he was as a general. He venerated Kossuth, however, and wanted to save republicanism in Europe. In June 1849, on Taylor's orders, his Secretary of State John Clayton instructed A. Dudley Mann, an American diplomat stationed in Paris, to travel to Hungary and evaluate the facts on

¹⁸ Spencer, *Louis Kossuth and Young America*, 22.

¹⁹ Declaration of Independence by the Hungarian Nation (1848).

²⁰ Spencer, *Louis Kossuth and Young America*, 24.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 50.

²² Deák, *The Lawful Revolution*, 341.

the ground.²³ If Mann deemed that Hungary was “able to maintain the independence she had declared,” Taylor empowered him to recognize Kossuth’s government on behalf of the U.S. and conclude a commercial treaty with it.²⁴ The diplomatic historian George Spencer argues that no other President in American history has delegated such sweeping powers to a diplomat.²⁵ In their correspondences, Taylor, Clayton, and Mann do not offer a coherent, strategic rationalization for taking these dramatic steps towards recognizing Hungary.²⁶ They were instead gripped by an ideological fervour—fuelled by a belief in American exceptionalism and the upheaval of 1848—and believed something even greater was at stake. As Mann wrote to Clayton: “The question of whether continental Europe shall be under Cossack or republican rule hereafter will, in all probability, be definitely decided on the plains and in the passes of Hungary.”²⁷ But before Mann reached Budapest, the Russians forced the Hungarian army to capitulate, and he never had to make his fateful decision.²⁸

As the Russians descended on Vilàgos, Kossuth escaped into the Ottoman Empire to avoid execution, where the Sultan held him under house arrest. Americans were incensed about Hungary’s defeat. Many of them wanted to offer the exiled Magyar freedom in America, in part out of spite for Austria, which was demanding his extradition. Johann Georg Hülsemann, Austria’s *chargé d’affaires* to the U.S., wrote to Prince Felix of Schwarzenberg, the Austrian Foreign Minister: “[American] public opinion is so enraged against Austria that scarcely an editor admits into his paper anything favourable to her.”²⁹ In turn, Austria became enraged with the U.S. when, in March 1850, Taylor publicly released his instructions to Mann in a play for domestic support.³⁰ Learning of Mann’s mission, Schwarzenberg became alarmed by how close the U.S. had come to violating

²³ Merle Eugene Curti, “Austria and the United States, 1848-1852: A Study in Diplomatic Relations,” *Smith College Studies in History* 11, 3 (1926): 152–53, citing Clayton to Mann, 18 June 1849, Senate Documents, 31st Congress, 1st Session, vol. X, Executive Documents, no. 43, Pt. 11.

²⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁵ Spencer, *Louis Kossuth and Young America*, 25.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 26.

²⁷ Spencer, *Louis Kossuth and Young America*, 26, citing Mann to Clayton, 13 July 1849, Senate Documents, 61st Congress, 2nd session, 58, no. 279.

²⁸ Nicole Phelps, *U.S.-Habsburg Relations from 1815 to the Paris Peace Conference: Sovereignty Transformed* (Cambridge University Press, 2013), 56.

²⁹ Hülsemann to Schwarzenberg, 5 January 1850, quoted in Curti, “Austria and the United States,” 159.

³⁰ Curti, “Austria and the United States,” 160-161.

the fundamental norm of the Great Power system: mutual recognition of sovereignty.³¹ Relations deteriorated further between the two countries when Congress passed a joint resolution in February 1851 that called for the U.S. Navy to bring Kossuth to America. President Millard Fillmore, who had taken over the Oval Office after Taylor's death in July 1850, approved the resolution.³² The Sultan willfully obliged. Hülsemann and Daniel Webster, Clayton's replacement as Secretary of State, exchanged scathing letters.³³ On September 10, 1851, Kossuth boarded the *U.S.S. Mississippi*, which brought him to New York City via England. On September 10, as well, the Habsburgs hung Kossuth in effigy.³⁴

III. Kossuth in the United States, 1851 to 1852

Kossuth came to the United States to revive his revolution. The *New York Times* had faith in his mission. On the day he arrived, the *Times* predicted: "He will arouse into life and activity, a popular feeling, which will influence the foreign policy of this country for years to come," and "show the American people that they cannot be indifferent to any case in which a [nation] may be crushed by a foreign power, even if it should occur in the heart of Europe."³⁵ Kossuth's principal challenge was, ironically, a legacy of the man to which Kossuth was frequently compared in the American press: Washington's doctrine of non-intervention.³⁶ Unlike Taylor, Fillmore was a disciple of Washington, and a committed non-interventionist. In 1850, for example, in reference to a Latin American dispute, he remarked, "Our true mission is not to impose upon other countries our form of government, by artifice or force," but "to teach by example."³⁷ When he invited Kossuth to the U.S., Fillmore assured Hülsemann that the U.S. was not formally endorsing Hungarian independence.³⁸ And though Kossuth enjoyed popular appeal, Fillmore could counter with a weapon of his own: Washington's Farewell Address held a status in midcentury American mythology that was equal to the Constitution.³⁹

³¹ Phelps, *U.S.-Habsburg Relations*, 56.

³² Spencer, *Louis Kossuth and Young America*, 44.

³³ Curti, "Austria and the United States," 164.

³⁴ Spencer, *Louis Kossuth and Young America*, 44.

³⁵ *The New York Times*, 6 December 1851.

³⁶ Spencer, *Louis Kossuth and Young America*, 50.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 87.

³⁸ Phelps, *U.S.-Habsburg Relations*, 62.

³⁹ Spencer, *Louis Kossuth and Young America*, 51.

Kossuth knew that had to tackle Washington's Farewell to be successful. Accordingly, he spent his first week in New York City pouring over the address and an eleven-volume set of Washington's writings.⁴⁰ On December 11, Kossuth was honoured with a municipal dinner, which was attended by the most distinguished politicians and businessmen of the city. He used the occasion to articulate and rationalize his specific requests from the U.S.

Kossuth's demands were three-fold. First, he asked the U.S. government to warn Russia that future intervention in Hungary would be met with force.⁴¹ A possible corollary of such a warning, as Kossuth admitted, was war between the U.S. and Russia. But Kossuth assured the crowd that Russia would not dare provoke the powerful "star surrounded Eagle of America"; by simply threatening retaliation, he argued, the U.S. could protect Hungary from Russia.⁴² In later speeches, Kossuth referred to this idea with the slogan "Intervention for Non-Intervention," a direct reference to Washington's Farewell.⁴³ Russia featured so prominently in Kossuth's speeches because its intervention was critical in defeating the revolution; as later history would prove, the Habsburg Monarchy could not simultaneously occupy Hungary, defend its borders, and pursue its other foreign policy objectives. As part of this request, Kossuth asked the U.S. Navy to patrol the Mediterranean and protect trade routes with Hungary from Russian or Austrian interference.⁴⁴

Second, he asked the U.S. government to immediately recognize Hungarian independence and the legitimacy of his Declaration.⁴⁵ And finally, Kossuth asked for material and financial aid from the U.S. government, and from individual citizens, so that he could fight another revolution. Kossuth was a proud man, by his admission, he did not enjoy peddling for donations. "I would rather starve than rely, for myself and family, on foreign aid," he told the crowd, "but for my country's freedom, I would not be ashamed to go a begging from door to door."⁴⁶

⁴⁰ Spencer, *Louis Kossuth and Young America*, 51.

⁴¹ Kossuth, "Banquet Speech," in Headley, *The Life of Louis Kossuth*, 412.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 413.

⁴³ Spencer, *Louis Kossuth and Young America*, 53.

⁴⁴ Kossuth, "Banquet Speech," in Headley, *The Life of Louis Kossuth*, 414.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 417-418.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 419.

Kossuth offered both principled and practical reasons for the U.S. to adopt his program. He began by attempting to turn the doctrine of non-interference on its head.⁴⁷ Kossuth argued that Washington never intended for non-interference to be a lasting principle, but only to be a temporary policy that was necessary for security in the early years of the republic.⁴⁸ But in the half-century since, Kossuth said that the U.S. had grown so powerful that isolation from Europe was no longer necessary. As he remarked, “Is the dress which well-suited to the child still convenient to the full grown man—nay, to a *giant*, which you are?”⁴⁹ Kossuth also cited a letter written by Washington to Marquis de Lafayette, in which Washington promised that the U.S. would defy “whatever power on earth” to defend a “just cause” once it had grown strong.⁵⁰ Nearly everyone in the room agreed that the cause of Hungarian independence met this criterion. Kossuth therefore argued that Washington would have intervened in Hungary out of principle; he would not have been indifferent to Russia’s violation of Hungary’s sovereignty, which was grounded in the “common laws of humanity.”⁵¹ And as Kossuth noted with repartee, Washington had to request assistance from the French to triumph over the British.

Kossuth’s practical arguments for American intervention were far less compelling, however. He noted that American agricultural staples, such as cotton, and its emerging industries, relied on European markets. Kossuth warned that if the Habsburg and Russian Emperors—the personifications of despotism—triumphed in Europe, they would cut off U.S. trade to insulate their people from America’s republican ideals.⁵² He also argued that republicanism and despotism could never co-exist in an increasingly interconnected world—a similar dichotomy to the one professed by Mann in 1849—and that the Austrians or Russians might accordingly take military action against the U.S. once they finished conquering Europe.⁵³ The U.S., therefore, should take pre-emptive action against these threats by helping to establish an independent Hungarian state. Kossuth’s arguments rested on the tenuous premise that an independent Hungary would be strong enough to resist these empires. But he was also incorrect to suggest that they posed a threat to America’s economic, security, and strategic interests. The U.S. had

⁴⁷ Kossuth, “Banquet Speech,” in Headley, *The Life of Louis Kossuth*, 408.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 403.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 398.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 404.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 402.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 406.

⁵³ Spencer, *Louis Kossuth and Young America*, 130.

heretofore enjoyed cordial relations with Russia, and it had a satisfactory economic relationship with the Austrian Empire. Compared to the other giants of Europe, the United States' trade and diplomatic engagement with Austria had been limited since 1776, but the two countries had confirmed a Commerce Treaty in 1831 for the exchange of certain raw materials, including cotton.⁵⁴ Kossuth's inability to prove that intervention was in the best interests of the U.S. ultimately brought about his failure.

Nonetheless, Kossuth was a dazzling and eloquent speaker, and he received a thunderous applause from the crowd. Newspapers praised him and reprinted the speech, and according to Francis Pulszky, it was "universally admired."⁵⁵ His appeal for financial aid was also immediately effective. Some of his supporters created the bi-partisan Central Hungarian Committee to systematically gather donations from around the country. The Committee sold "Hungary bonds," which promised repayment when—not if—an independent Hungary was established, and Kossuth personally signed the fifty-and one-hundred dollar bond certificates.⁵⁶ By the end of December, thousands of dollars had poured in. The Kossuth craze even influenced American fashion. John Genin, a New York hat salesman, began manufacturing black felt hats that resembled Kossuth's signature headpiece. He promised to donate a share of his profits on every hat sold to the Committee.⁵⁷ These "Kossuth hats" became incredibly popular during Kossuth's time in the U.S.; they symbolized patriotism, pro-republicanism, and support for the Magyar's mission.⁵⁸

Despite the outpouring of popular support for his cause, Kossuth needed the U.S. government to recognize and protect Hungarian sovereignty for his declaration to have legitimacy in the context of the mid-nineteenth century state system. Kossuth left New York for Washington, D.C. on December 30, and met with Fillmore at the White House the following day. Kossuth repeated his case for U.S. intervention, but the President was not moved to abandon his conservative diplomatic philosophy. Fillmore told Kossuth, "As an individual, I sympathize deeply with you in your brave struggle for the independence and freedom of your native land."⁵⁹ Fillmore refused, however, to make it his nation's

⁵⁴ Phelps, *U.S.-Habsburg Relations*, 43.

⁵⁵ Pulszky, *White, Red, Black*, 103. For example, see *The New York Times*, 12 December 1851.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 58.

⁵⁷ Spencer, *Louis Kossuth and Young America*, 60.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

⁵⁹ *The New York Times*, 3 January 1852.

policy to help Kossuth achieve that independence. Fillmore's foreign was dictated by U.S. economic and security interests, and he did not believe intervention in Hungary advanced those interests. His foreign policy was instead oriented towards Asia, where he looked to promote U.S. commerce.⁶⁰ So long as Fillmore was President, no matter the state of public opinion, Kossuth could not secure military or political aid from the U.S.

After his disappointing visit to the White House, Kossuth hoped to find other allies in the nation's capital. In early January, his outlook was promising. By a near unanimous vote in both houses, Congress invited Kossuth to deliver an address before a Joint Meeting of the Congress on January 7, 1852—the first foreign dignitary since Lafayette to be bestowed with such an honour.⁶¹ At a congressional banquet that evening, Webster, who was more sympathetic to Kossuth than Fillmore, and had his sights on the Presidency, made a toast to Hungarian independence.⁶² The blunder from the Secretary of State, the United States' top diplomat, prompted an insulted Hülsemann to leave Washington until 1853, effectively cutting the countries' diplomatic ties.⁶³

But shortly after the banquet, the political consensus that supported Kossuth shattered. This occurred for two reasons. First, the issue of intervention became subsumed into the debate on slavery, the foremost U.S. political issue of the 1850's, and one that dragged the nation into a gruesome civil war within a decade of Kossuth's trip. In January, the majority of politicians from the Southern slaveholding states—representing both parties—adopted a strong anti-intervention stance. Kossuth had declared neutrality on slavery on December 12, but they still saw him as a closet abolitionist—Kossuth had emancipated the serfs of Hungary, he often compared Russian and Austrian oppression to slavery, and he had won the support of many prominent abolitionists like Frederick Douglass.⁶⁴ Thus, Southerners did not want to further elevate Kossuth's status by supporting him.

Second, as Congress debated the merits of intervention in the first months of 1852, most Northern Whig politicians realized the magnitude of Kossuth's requests. It had been convenient for them to speak in support of Kossuth in 1849, or to vote to bring him to the

⁶⁰ Spencer, *Louis Kossuth and Young America*, 86.

⁶¹ Pulszky, *White, Red, Black*, 245.

⁶² Spencer, *Louis Kossuth and Young America*, 91.

⁶³ Phelps, *U.S.-Habsburg Relations*, 64.

⁶⁴ Spencer, *Louis Kossuth and Young America*, 104.

U.S. from the Ottoman Empire, when he represented the abstraction of *liberty*. Doing so was popular with voters. But once they realized that Kossuth wanted the U.S. to risk war with Russia, they sided with their President, cooled their interventionist rhetoric, and dropped their support for him.⁶⁵

Thus, by the middle of January 1852, Northern-based Democrats represented the only political constituency that supported intervention.⁶⁶ But 1852 was a Presidential election year, and Kossuth developed a new strategy. For the next five months, he toured all regions of the U.S.—the Northeast, the West, and the South—delivering hundreds of speeches. His goal was to make intervention the wedge issue for the Democrats in the November elections. A crucial characteristic of the party system, however, was that both parties counted pro-slavery and anti-slavery politicians among their ranks. Neither party wanted to alienate the powerful slave interest. At the Democratic Convention in June, the party formally repudiated intervention, just as the Whigs had done, in order to avoid maintain the support of the Southern wing of the party.⁶⁷

At that point, too, as Kossuth admitted, his novelty among the American people had subsided.⁶⁸ Kossuth's mission had conclusively failed—but he was never one to give up. In the last weeks of June, Kossuth cooked up an outrageous scheme to conquer Haiti with an American mercenary army.⁶⁹ Many U.S. citizens attempted similar “filibustering” missions in Latin America during the nineteenth century, a product of Manifest Destiny. For reasons unclear, Kossuth believed that this mission would help him liberate Hungary, and he told Americans that Haiti's Emperor, Faustin Soulouque, was an agent of the Russian Emperor.⁷⁰ He eventually abandoned the scheme, however, and on July 14, Kossuth left the U.S. for Britain with no fanfare. He continued to work for Hungarian independence from Britain and Italy, but he never returned to his native land.

IV. Conclusion

From December 1851 to July 1852, Kossuth traveled to the United States in an effort to revive the Hungarian Revolution. When he arrived, the American public worshipped him

⁶⁵ Ibid., 135.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Spencer, *Louis Kossuth and Young America*, 161.

⁶⁸ Ibid., 168.

⁶⁹ Ibid., 167.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

as a hero, and he received a grand welcome ceremony in New York City. However, Kossuth ultimately failed to secure American military, political, and financial support for his cause. He failed because he could not maneuver American political sectionalism, and because he could not convince politicians that it was strategically beneficial to oblige his demands. Personalities also mattered. Taylor made belligerent, ideologically-fuelled overtures to Kossuth in 1849. Had he not died in 1850, and been replaced by the pragmatic Fillmore, Kossuth may have triumphed.

Kossuth's trip had important implications for U.S. society and policy. When he first stepped foot on American soil, the U.S. was gripped with an expansive spirit; a sense that its mission was not bound by the borders of the seas; that the young republic was destined to reach across the Atlantic and reform the old societies of Europe. By demanding U.S. intervention in Hungary, Kossuth offered the first opportunity for a real-world application of this spirit. He prompted U.S. politicians to hold a legitimate debate about the principles of their nation's foreign policy. What makes this debate more remarkable is that it was held over the merits of going to war for the independence of a nation on the western border of Russia. And as a consequence of that debate—as politicians reasoned out the implications of their brash rhetoric—Washington's doctrine of non-intervention in European affairs was retrenched, and was not re-opened until new circumstances arose in 1917. The Kossuth episode also soured U.S. relations with the Habsburg Monarchy, and they were never resolved. Americans never lost their distaste in the Catholic, despotic monarchy on the other side of the Atlantic that, truly, they knew little about.⁷¹ America's flagrant violations of diplomatic norms—by welcoming Kossuth with an official salute rather than extraditing him to Austria, and by nearly abandoning its recognition of Austria's sovereignty—made the distaste mutual.⁷²

In 1990, to commemorate the demise of communism in Eastern Europe, the U.S. Congress dedicated a bronze bust of a Hungarian revolutionary who captured the admiration of Americans in a manner that, arguably, no foreigner ever has. Today, the bust stands proudly in the Capitol Rotunda, alongside the likenesses of Václav Havel and Winston Churchill, and its inscription reads: "Lajos Kossuth: Father of Hungarian Democracy, Hungarian Statesman, Freedom Fighter, 1848-1849."

⁷¹ Phelps, *U.S.-Habsburg Relations*, 68.

⁷² *Ibid.*

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War Machine: The International Political Economy of Congo

Nellie Gaithuma, Zachary Carson, Beement Alemayehu, Sean Dunne

I. Introduction

By framing war as a political economy in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), we seek to deconstruct the chaos of warfare and understand the political and economic motivations that perpetuate warfare. Due to limits and absences in literature on the region and the Congo Wars, it is difficult to understand how individual and gendered narratives contribute to an analysis of war as a political economy. To add to the existing literature on war as political economy, this article integrates individualized and gendered narratives to develop a holistic understanding of war as political economy beyond conventional political and economic analyses.

William Reno's model of the Shadow State, defined as a state governed under personal rule, is useful for understanding the logic of warfare.¹ Driving the Shadow State is rent seeking, which is when political authority depends on the selective allocation of state resources to certain individuals. This creates a powerful incentive for extensive regulation of economic activity, through which the incumbent elite gains control over a wide range of monopolies and economic rents. Consequently, the Shadow State mirrors how war functions as a political economy.² Mobutu's Zaire exemplifies the Shadow State in many ways. It provided opportunities for entrepreneurs to conceal illicit transactions and avoid regulations.³ The authority of Zaire was based upon the decisions of an individual, not a set of written laws and procedures, even though these formal aspects of government may exist.⁴ Mobutu's personalized rule, based on maintenance of patronage

¹ William Reno, "Clandestine Economies, Violence and States in Africa," *Journal of International Affairs* 53.2, Shadow Economies: Promoting Prosperity or Undermining Stability? (2000): 432.

² Michael Bratton & Nicolas Van de Walle, *Democratic Experiments in Africa: Regime Transitions in Comparative Politics*, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 64.

³ Reno, *Clandestine Economies, Violence and States in Africa*, 432.

⁴ Ibid.

networks, particularly his army, came under threat in the wake of fiscal crises in the 1970's and 1980's.

The fiscal crises, combined with the pressures of a weak state, prompted Mobutu to usher in a new set of policies meant to liberalize the national economy. Laissez-faire policies and the eventual collapse of the Zairian state allowed for the clandestine economy to supersede formal state authorities.⁵ Reno stresses that clandestine commerce depends upon the state to provide formal legitimacy in the form of access to international markets and access to state institutions.⁶ However, in this dichotomy Reno fails to explain the outcomes of the Shadow State collapsing.

How can clandestine commerce continue without legitimacy from the Shadow State? After a conflict, what measures must be taken to address the proliferation of arms and clandestine commerce? Is it best to re-establish the Shadow State or to establish legitimate state institutions? How can gendered narratives deepen our understanding of armed conflict and failing states? We address these concerns by examining the Congo Wars, the events leading up to them, and those that resulted from the wars. In essence, Mobutu's Zaire as a Shadow State serves as a point of departure for this article.

Sexual and Gender Based Violence (SGBV) in eastern DRC has been a polemic and prominent feature of the conflict in the eastern DRC. Male soldiers use it as an instrument of domination, and remain unmasked in the face of numerous accusations of their inability to serve and protect. In many ways, this conflict facilitates the perpetuation of this terror. Locating a gendered analysis within the framework of the international political economy is an arduous task because its relationship has often been overlooked and under-researched, especially within a regional context. Furthermore, it is arguably, "constituted as part of the global assembly line of capitalist production".⁷ These women's liberation must be considered in lieu of an identity crafted by the colonial trusteeship, by being victims of sexual based violence, and by the survival mechanisms undertaken by women who remain tied to rebel or militia members. An in depth feminist analysis of the political economy underscores "the power of hegemonic and allied masculinity and the

⁵ Note that clandestine economy, clandestine commerce and informal economy are used as synonyms.

⁶ Reno, *Clandestine Economies, Violence and States in Africa*, 435.

⁷ Sara Meger, "Toward a Feminist Political Economy of Wartime Sexual Violence," *International Feminist Journal of Politics* 17.3 (2015): 416-434,

ways in which they subjugate others for plunder and profit, especially failed masculinities.”⁸ A multi-faceted approach to the Congo Wars is intrinsic to understanding how SBGV is employed to maintain political instability.

II. Understanding Congo’s Political Economy

The Congo Wars are a by-product of decades of economic and political policies that prioritized resource extraction over social development. The Congo Free State was the personal property of King Leopold until 1908. During this time, slavery and forced labor resulted in over 10 million deaths as rubber was extracted to support the Industrial Revolution in Europe.⁹ The deaths of millions of Congolese depleted local labor supply, and so Belgium turned to Rwanda, Burundi, and to a lesser extent, Rhodesia for labor.¹⁰ This underscores the tendency for resource extraction to be the only policy; the impunity of destroying Congolese bodies; and the history of interconnection between Congolese Banyarwandans, Rwanda, and the DRC.

From the 1930s until 1950, there was a major influx of foreigners into Congo. They supported the rubber industry and extraction of newly discovered minerals, uranium, and copper from Belgium-controlled mines. With regards to anti-Rwanda and anti-Tutsi sentiments, forced labor under Belgian rule institutionalized mass migration into the DRC, setting the stage for contention regarding illicit mineral exports during the Congo Wars.¹¹ Furthermore, this period underscores the vast potential of the Congolese economy. The mineral wealth of the Congo was exploited for the development of Europe. The uranium used in the nuclear bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki came from to Congo and was sold to the US by Belgian officials.¹²

The Government of the DRC was one of fiscal mismanagement and unaccountability. Mobutu’s reign optimized these features. Under personal, neopatrimonial rule he

⁸ J. L. Leatherman, *Sexual Violence and Armed Conflict*, (Cambridge, MA: Polity Press, 2011).

⁹ Bogumil Jewsiewicki, "The Great Depression and the Making of the Colonial Economic System in the Belgian Congo." *African Economic History* 4 (1977): 153.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Priya Ylona Saibel, "Land and Identity in Africa: A Case Study of the Banyamulenge of the Eastern DRC," *Advances in African Economic, Social and Political Development Selected Themes in African Development Studies* (2014): 39-58.

¹² Laura Seay, "What's Wrong with Dodd-Frank 1502? Conflict Minerals, Civilian Livelihoods, and The Unintended Consequences of Western Advocacy," *SSRN Electronic Journal SSRN Journal* (n.d.): n. pag. Web.

asserted his control of the national economy by monopolizing mining production and exports. Under this reign, 10 to 12 million carats of diamonds were exported illegally from the Congo.¹³ Beyond mismanagement, Mobutu's policy decisions created the conditions for war to thrive during the Congo Wars. Oil prices and the global commodity market declined in the early 1970's, putting pressure on Mobutu's popular support and legitimacy. Higher-ranking military officials became threatened as their wealth-acquisition activities were undermined. In the absence of state developmental agenda and in the face of Mobutu's personalization of the state, the informal economy flourished as the only avenue for Congolese citizens to generate an income.

Mobutu increased the national budget to ensure patronage rather than investing in social services. To prevent civil society unrest, Mobutu enacted the policy of *Debrouillez-vous*, or, "Fend for yourself."¹⁴ When the policy stripped government services and subsidies, citizens turned to the informal economy as a means of securing an income. The informal economy quickly became entrenched in civil society and soon developed a life of its own, becoming known as *Système D*.¹⁵

Under pressure to restructure his personalized state, Mobutu liberalized the national economy and in 1983, the mining sector. *Debrouillez-vous* and the liberalization of the mining sector were two key political and economic policies that established the conditions for war to thrive in the 1990's and 2000's. Ironically, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) suggested liberalizing mining would boost economic revenue as part of Structural Adjustment Programs (SAPs).¹⁶ Mobutu removed licenses for private *comptoirs* (syndicates) that held an effective monopoly on mineral extraction, allowing independents to purchase minerals from agents for the first time.¹⁷ Barriers to entry were removed; minimal capital and technological investments sufficed, which made for a stark change from the previously stringent capital and physical down payments needed by private syndicates.¹⁸

¹³ Stephen Jackson, "Fortunes of War: The Coltan Trade in the Kivus," *Fortunes of War: The Coltan Trade in the Kivus*, Overseas Development Institute, n.d. Web.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Stephen Jackson, "Fortunes of War."

¹⁶ Stephen Jackson, "Borderlands and the Transformation of War Economies: Lessons from the DR Congo." *Conflict, Security & Development* 6.3 (2006): 425-47

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Ibid.

The First Congo War completed the liberalization and de-formalization of the mining sector that Mobutu began. The Kivus became the center for mining; the 1983 mining liberalization act resulted in unemployed youth forming semi-permanent mining camps¹⁹. Rising supply of coltan in the Kivus and demand for tantalum for economic industrialization resulted in the price of coltan increasing tenfold from 1999 to 2001. The industry was immensely profitable, making the Congo Wars profitable. Rebel groups and armaments grew, and in the absence of Mobutu's reign, economic success from artisanal mining allowed groups to focus their attention on holding territory and asserting political agendas. Growth in artisanal mining and sustained high prices of these commodities has provided armed groups with the financing necessary to fuel the Congo Wars.

During the First Congo War, which deposed Mobutu and established Laurent Kabila as President of the newly formed Democratic Republic of the Congo, the role of international actors was important. As Kabila was advancing the *Alliance des forces démocratiques pour la libération du Congo* (AFDL) from Rwanda into the DRC, he cut deals with the state of Zimbabwe.²⁰ Robert Mugabe and his party, ZANU-PF, sought to increase state and private assets in the wake of economic sanctions from the EU and US. The director of Congolese mining firm, GECAMINES, a close friend and business partner of Mugabe, acted on behalf of Zimbabwe. Zimbabwe was awarded vital mining concessions and the Zimbabwe Defense Force negotiated logging concessions worth 33 million hectares or 15% of Congo's total land surface. In return, Kabila secured vital military support from the Zimbabwean army in terms of military payments to officials in Katanga, shipments of arms, and the use of Zimbabwean military personnel in combat.

Zimbabwe, along with Angola and Namibia, operated in similar fashion, utilizing the Congo Wars to exert their influence in the region and to ensure such conflict would not arise in their own backyard. Namibia's Mining Minister admitted to a joint venture with an unnamed US company and the DRC government in which diamonds were smuggled to Namibia illegally; they were then sold on the international market.²¹ These activities

¹⁹ Jackson, "Fortunes of War." Sara Geenen, "Relations and Regulations in Local Gold Trade Networks in South Kivu, Democratic Republic of Congo." *Journal of Eastern African Studies* 5.3 (2011): 427-46; Judith Verweijen, "Military Business and the Business of the Military in the Kivus." *Review of African Political Economy* 40.135 (2013): 67-82.

²⁰ Jackson, "Fortunes of War: The Coltan Trade in the Kivus."

²¹ Ibid.

underscore the regional dimension of the political economy of the Congo Wars. The Congo Wars were Africa's Great Wars.²²

The Congo Wars' end in 2006 marked a shift in the DRC towards reconciliation and an attempt to rein in the informal economy that had dominated since the 1990's. The international community saw the use of minerals to finance armed groups as a driving force behind the Congo Wars. This undisputed assumption resulted in inadequate policies that did not provide the institutional mechanisms necessary to support post-conflict resolution. The Dodd-Frank Wall Street Reform and Consumer Protection Act of 2010, Section 1502 requires publicly trading companies to report to the Securities and Exchange Commissions (SEC) and list on their websites whether they source conflict minerals, defined as "coltan, cassiterite, gold, wolframite, or their derivative" from the Democratic Republic of Congo or its neighbors.²³ US human rights group, the Enough Project, lobbied the amendment in the US Congress to less than desirable outcomes, placing an effective ban on mineral exports from the DRC. To verify that minerals come from "conflict free mines," the government uses a tagging system. Major bottlenecks in administering and verifying mines have led to an underground market for these export tags. In effect, the law has done little to undermine the core of Congo's war political economy, rents from armed groups controlling artisanal mines, and has punished several mining camps that are legitimate and seek to better the lives of Congolese citizens.²⁴

The policies of the Belgian Congo help demystify the legacy of Rwandans in the Congo. Mobutu's economic mismanagement led to the rise of the Shadow State and dominance of clandestine commerce. Dodd-Frank and Kabila's Mining Decree of 2010 were attempts to rein in and control a clandestine economy that had developed a life of its own following the collapse of the Zairian state.²⁵ Economic and political analyses of this phenomenon are detailed, but do not satisfy us. We seek to represent components that are not accounted for in the aforementioned analyses by including individualized and gendered stories of greed versus grievance, and criminality versus coping.

²² Gérard Prunier, *Africa's World War: Congo, the Rwandan Genocide, and the Making of a Continental Catastrophe*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009)

²³ Seay, "What's Wrong with Dodd-Frank 1502?"

²⁴ *Conflicted: The Fight over Congo's Minerals. Fault Lines*. Al Jazeera English, 18 Nov. 2015

²⁵ *Ibid.*

The historical trajectory of Mobutuism that culminated in the rise of the Shadow State begins with the phallus as a primary mode of “constructing masculinity and power.”²⁶ Theorist Achille Mbembe believes that the emergence of male domination is rooted in the spectacle of the phallus is instrumental in demonstrating virility at the “expense of a woman and to obtain its validation from the subjugated woman herself.”²⁷ This analysis is incomplete without mentioning the crisis of masculinity faced by Congolese men in the aftermath of the colonial era. This crisis of masculinity has been entrenched by tradition which stipulates that Congolese masculine identity be based on “norms of leadership, strength, courage and the ability to protect one’s family and assets.”²⁸

These norms were institutionalized by the Penal Code which defines “the husband as the head of the household and determines that his wife has to obey him”. Article 444 reads: “His duty is the protection of his wife; his wife owes her obedience to her husband.”²⁹ The rhetoric surrounding the need for protection of women converts women’s bodies into assets. Military groups are notorious for manipulating these notions to recruit members, “pressuring men to take up arms in order to protect their female kin and defend their honour.”³⁰ Gender hegemony is explicated through the Gramscian theory of hegemony, in which the hegemon’s power hinges on the interaction of consent and coercion of the subalterns, so that “ideas, material resources and institutions combine to constitute and reinforce the gender order without the necessity of force.”³¹ As a result of enforcing social responsibility and coercion at the same time, they become inextricably linked, thereby facilitating SGBV. Material accumulation attained through the subordination of women concretizes patriarchy, not only relegating these women’s bodies into abstractions but also turning them into mythologized subjects. Fundamentally, these women’s identities as victims of SGBV become associated with what Kirby calls an imagined or group

²⁶ Achille Mbembé, *On the postcolony*. Vol. 41. (Berkeley: Univ of California Press, 2001).

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Joanne Csete and Juliane Kippenberg, *The War Within the War: Sexual Violence Against Women and Girls in Eastern Congo*, (New York: Human Rights Watch, 2002).

²⁹ R. Schäfer, “Masculinity and Civil Wars in Africa—New Approaches to Overcoming Sexual Violence in War.”

Governance and Democracy Division, Governance Cluster, Programme Promoting Gender Equality and Women’s Rights. January (Eschborn, Deutsche Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit (GTZ), 2009). <http://www.xyonline.net/content/masculinity-and-civil-wars-africa-%E2%80%93-new-approaches-overcoming-sexual-violence-war>

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ M. Donaldson, “What Is Hegemonic Masculinity?” *Theory and Society* 22 (5) 1993: 643 – 657.

identity antagonistically opposed to that of the perpetrators. This is demonstrated in young boys and men who measure their masculinity in the conquering and desecration of female bodies. This violence is maintained by the “division of economic and political power between the core and periphery which enables access to resources and producing new (shadow) markets.”³²

III. The Congo Wars through the Lens of Greed and Grievance

The distinction between grievance and greed-motivated conflicts has been an important area of study in the political economy of civil wars. According to Paul Collier, rebels motivated to rid the nation, or the particular group of people with which they identify, of an unjust regime can be categorized as grievance-motivated. Alternatively, those rebels seeking wealth through the capture and exploitation of resources during wartime are obviously greed-motivated.³³ The conflicts in the Congo are continually referenced as a seminal example of greed-motivated conflict. In 2015, the Congo Research Group identified 69 distinguishable rebel groups operating in the Eastern regions of the country, many surviving, if not profiting, off of rare mineral extraction.³⁴ In addition to the large number of rebel groups exploiting natural resources, the Congo Wars fall under the ambiguous category of “new” civil wars which, as will be elaborated later, tend to be criminal, depoliticized, private, and predatory.³⁵ An original analysis of whether the motivations of actors in the Congo were greed- or grievance-motivated would be outside the purview of this paper. This section will instead examine attempts to investigate the Congo Wars through the lens of greed versus grievance, ultimately concluding the dichotomous categorization does little to explain the motivations of rebel groups and other combatants, as both greed and grievance are almost always involved.

³² C. Nordstrom, *Shadows of War: Violence, Power, and International Profiteering in the Twenty-First Century*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004).

³³ Paul Collier, “Doing Well out of War: An Economic Perspective,” in *Greed and Grievance: Economic Agendas in Civil Wars*, eds. Mats Berdal and David M. Malone, (Boulder: Lynne Reiner Publishers, 2000), 91-111.

³⁴ Jason K Stearns and Christoph Vogel, “The Landscape of Armed Groups in the Eastern Congo.” *Congo Research Group*. December 2015.

³⁵ Stathis N. Kalyvas, “‘New’ and ‘Old’ Civil Wars: A Valid Distinction?” *World Politics* 54 (2001): 99-118.

With the marked decline of interstate conflict and the increase in civil wars in the post-Cold War era, a new interest in the study of intrastate conflict arose among scholars. According to Stathis Kalyvas, this included a widely held view that “new” civil wars of the post-Cold War era were fundamentally different from their “old” civil war counterparts. “New” civil wars, largely the result of ethnic competition as a source of conflict, were viewed as criminal rather than political phenomena, whereas “old” civil wars were ideological, political, political, collective, and even noble in some circumstances.³⁶ Old and new civil wars are differentiated along three dimensions; causes and motivations, support, and violence. First, old civil wars were apparently fought over widely held beliefs and noble causes, such as social change (Kalyvas uses the example of “justice”³⁷) whereas new civil wars are instruments of private gain through greed and loot. This dimension is equated to the difference between greed- and grievance-motivated conflict, as old civil wars are “justice-seeking” whereas new civil wars are “loot-seeking.”³⁸ Second, popular support was held by at least one group in the outbreak of old civil wars, while actors in new civil wars lack any kind of large large-scale popular support. Finally, combatants in old civil wars exercised restraint in the level of violence, especially among rebel groups. Alternatively, in new civil wars, combatants--mainly undisciplined militias, private armies, or independent warlords-- engage in gratuitous levels of violence, often without a clear military objective.

There is little difficulty in seeing the Congo Wars as “new” civil wars according to this typology. Upon taking control in Kinshasa, Kabila negated the democratic reforms forced upon Mobutu at the Congolese Sovereign National Conference in 1992, eliminating any hope that the new regime would be any more “noble” than the previous.³⁹ The AFDL was a Rwandan project rather than a widely-supported Congolese group, and the many rebel groups that arose in the Second Congo War were too small to be considered as having any broad based support. Lastly, gratuitous violence has been widespread in the Congo and employed by all actors involved.

However, Kalyvas argues that the distinction between old and new civil wars is arbitrary. Combatants in old and new civil wars employed similar levels of violence, political actors enjoyed similar levels of support, and there is no distinguishable difference in the nature

³⁶ Ibid, 99-100.

³⁷ Ibid, 102.

³⁸ Kalyvas, “‘New’ and ‘Old’ Civil Wars,” 101.

³⁹ Georges Nzongola-Ntalaja, *The Congo: From Leopold to Kabila*, (New York: Zed Books, 2002).

of old and new civil war motivations. Despite this, the distinction between old and new civil wars evolved as a result of bias and uncritical adoption of categories as well as mischaracterization. Information about ongoing conflicts is often either incomplete, biased, or both. In the case of the Congo, the inaccessible nature of most instances of conflict as well as the wide variety of actors and individual narratives ensures biased and incomplete information. This problem is compounded by the fact that historical research on old civil wars is largely disregarded.⁴⁰

In a seminal paper on greed and grievance in civil war, Paul Collier and Anke Hoeffler use an economic model of greed and grievance, finding that the cost of rebellion was the primary factor in explaining the outbreak of civil war. Availability of finance for rebels (i.e. primary commodity export) as well as low male education levels and per capita income (and thus lower costs of joining a rebel group) proved to have significant effects on the probability of civil war where as proxies for grievances (inequality, political rights, ethnic polarization and religious fractionalization) were insignificant.⁴¹

Ola Olsson and Heather Congdon Fors build on Collier and Hoeffler's work by applying the model to the Congo conflict. Their model differs in its measurement of grievance, focusing on institutional differences installed by ruling groups between formal and informal sectors of production rather than the proxies that Collier and Hoeffler theorized. Olsson and Fors use a framework of conflict theory that includes a ruler and his cronies who control the flow of resources and a large group of informal producers who consider starting a predatory uprising against the ruler.⁴² Differing from Collier and Hoeffler, they find that grievances associated with the the Tutsi-Hutu conflict in Rwanda that spilled into the Congo (especially in the eastern Kivu regions) played an important role in the initiation of both wars. The revoking of Banyamulenge from the citizenship in 1996 and their forceful removal from their homes are only two examples of legitimate grievances that motivated Congolese to initiate or join rebel groups.⁴³ However, Olsson and Congdon Fors conclude that despite the significance of grievances in motivating the conflict, the opportunity to conquer and exploit the natural resources of the Congo were

⁴⁰ Kalyvas, "New' and 'Old' Civil Wars: A Valid Distinction?" 101.

⁴¹ Paul Collier and Anke Hoeffler, "Greed and Greivance in civil war," *Oxford Economic Papers* 56 (2004): 563-595.

⁴² Ola Olsson and Heather Congdon Fors, "Congo: the Prize of Predation," *Journal of Peace Research* 41.3 (2004): 321-336.

⁴³ Ibid., 324.

the primary determinant, especially in the second war.⁴⁴ Rwandan and Ugandan intervention provides the strongest evidence of greed-motivated conflict. Olsson and Congdon Fors point to the increase in mineral exports in both countries that are not naturally found in either, like gold, coltan, and diamonds.⁴⁵ Nzongola-Ntalaja goes further, arguing that there is no truth to the story that Rwanda or Uganda intervened to support a Congolese Tutsi rebellion against Kabila, and that the intervention was in fact entirely greed-motivated.⁴⁶

Although the conceptual distinction between greed and grievance can be a useful tool in understanding the political economy of the Congo Wars, it forces a dichotomous understanding that ultimately does more harm than good. Rebels groups such as the AFDL, as well as foreign actors such as Rwanda and Uganda, are as cast as either criminals or noble freedom fighters. An understanding of a conflict as complex as the Congo must be more nuanced. Zartman, speaking of the use of greed and grievance in explaining civil wars, argues that the distinction is profoundly uninteresting. Both greed and grievance play profound roles in the causes and motivations of civil conflict. So to claim that conflict is motivated by a single factor is wrong, while finding that both are responsible is banal.⁴⁷ This same rhetoric applies to the unlawful use of violence on women as a trading tactic during war. Moore rationalizes both greed and grievance as the route taken by individuals who are denied access to the 'free market' or the state and in attempts to gratify their greedy desires they enact violence. Collier puts it, "they will utilize the language of 'justice' – or as he puts it, 'grievance' – to rationalize their actions," demonstrating how discourse of greed and grievance is deeply gendered. The important area of study is how these two factors interrelate, which is much better explained by the concepts of coping and criminality.

IV. Coping and Criminality in the Congo Wars

The wars in the D.R.C. have been characterized by their economic drive and focus, creating one of the most-studied cases of the "political economy of war." Dominant narratives suggest that this is a direct outcome of the Zairean state and its failure,

⁴⁴ Olsson, "Congo: the Prize of Predation," 322

⁴⁵ Ibid., 327.

⁴⁶ Nzongola-Ntalaja, *The Congo: From Leopold to Kabila*.

⁴⁷ Cynthia J. Arnson and I. William Zartman, *Rethinking the economics of war: the intersection of need, creed, and greed*, (Washington, DC: Woodrow Wilson Center Press, 2005).

criminal and informal economic networks having come about in the context of a failed state in which traditional political theory assumes that “selfishness will reign.” This assumption of selfishness as the supposed driver of the political economy of war has helped create the “abusively simple” characterization of the conflict in international media.⁴⁸ This understanding has very much shaped the discourse around differentiating “criminality and coping” in the D.R.C. conflict. Selfishness, then, implies criminality. However, many academics have called into question this “simple” picture, as Larmer et al. point out: “the assumption that those involved in these economies are either greedy militia or profit-maximizing businessmen overlooks the fact that the majority of those involved [in the informal, often resource-extraction based war economy] continue to be motivated by coping and survival.”⁴⁹ With this perspective in mind it becomes necessary to critically analyze the popular and academic discourses surrounding these issues in order to understand how criminality and coping manifest themselves in the war economy.

Popular and academic understanding of the conflict (which help create the “abusively simple” picture) has often been reduced to what Kamamba calls the *Heart of Darkness* discourse. This sees the Congo as a vast, resource-rich “black hole with porous borders.”⁵⁰ In this view of the Congo, its landscape (reduced to its resources) and its people (reduced to their ethnic or “tribal” identities) coalesce to create an inherently violent and anarchic mix, a viewpoint that existed before the wars even started. This can be seen in the off-the-record comment of a Belgian diplomat, who, (seemingly without irony), states “violence is the usual mode of relations between the Congolese state and its population.”⁵¹ This is taken even farther by controversial intellectuals like Robert Kaplan, who removes any human agency from his framework of Sub-Saharan African conflicts, Africa having “regressed to its inherent barbarism” wherein the war is a result of the landscape itself (“the forest had made the war”).⁵²

The *Heart of Darkness* discourse in many ways has institutionalized the image of the enslaved black female body represented primarily by metaphors of silence. As a result,

⁴⁸ Miles Larmer, Ann Laudati & John F. Clark, “Neither war nor peace in the DRC: profiting and coping amid violence and disorder,” *Review of African Political Economy* 40:135 (2013), 5.

⁴⁹ Ibid., 6.

⁵⁰ Filip Reyntjens, “Briefing: The Second Congo War: More than a Remake,” *African Affairs* 98 (1999): 241.

⁵¹ Patience Kamamba, “‘Heart of Darkness’: Current images of the DRC and their theoretical underpinning,” *Anthropological Theory* Vol. 10.3 (2010): 271.

⁵² Ibid., 269.

SBGV has been popularly viewed as a product of unfettered chaos, “rather than as an integral part of the daily systemic practices of capital accumulation and state building.”⁵³ In order to move beyond the binaries of male violence against women, this needs to be conceptualized as “in process of ongoing primitive accumulation.”⁵⁴ This enables the re-establishing of pre-eminence of the perpetrator, as “men acting in more collective economic interests to extract wealth or to maintain unequal economic relationships over particular groups of women understood as a productive resource.”⁵⁵ These revenge tactics employed against women who are thought to take part in the emasculation of males are raped and pillaged under the guise of the rebels attempt to reinstate their fractured masculinity.

Merger’s argument as a basis for explaining SBGV as a means of reconstituting masculinity, in response to marginalization and subordination, takes two fronts. Firstly, it is “employed to challenge the economic and political marginalization that disempowers them and to reclaim the expected entitlements.”⁵⁶ Male soldiers have used this to combat the advent of globalization. This has facilitated the exclusion of women because it is viewed as ‘neutral’ practice, which “ignores or denies structural interventions to address structural inequalities related to gender, race and class.”⁵⁷ In response to globalization, there has been a widespread militarization of masculinity by male soldiers where “violence may not only serve to resist oppressive economic and political conditions, but is also an alternative mode of asserting masculinity and re-establishing patriarchy to benefit men.”⁵⁸ Secondly, physical domination is used over the female body where SGBV “operates to reinforce the perpetrator’s masculinity at the direct expense of the social power of the victim (male or female).”⁵⁹ The effectiveness of SGBV is in the interweaving

⁵³ H. M. Turcotte, “Contextualizing Petro-Sexual Politics,” *Alternatives: Global, Local, Political* 36.3 (2011): 200–220.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ NCM Hartsock, “Women and/as commodities: A brief meditation,” *Canadian Woman Studies* 23.3–4 (2004): 14–17.

⁵⁶ Hartsock, “Women and/as commodities,” 14–17.

⁵⁷ L. Duggan, *The Twilight of Equality: Neoliberalism, Cultural Politics and the Attack on Democracy*, (Boston: Beacon Press, 2004).

⁵⁸ M.S. Kimmel, “Globalization and its Mal(e)contents: The Gendered Moral and Political Economy of Terrorism,” in *Handbook of Men and Masculinities*, edited by M. S. Kimmel, J. R. Hearn, and R. W. Connell, 414–432. (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2005).

⁵⁹ Ibid.

of political, psychological, and physical oppression in the understanding of its role in the propagation of the Congo wars.

Others, of course, take more balanced approaches, although these can also be problematic. Many of these approaches, when trying to conceive of a framework of a political economy of war, usually arrive at the model of a self-perpetuating war economy. Dunn sums this up best: "In a war economy the goal of the conflict is not necessarily the defeat of the enemy in battle, but the continuation of fighting and the institutionalization of violence for profit."⁶⁰ Violence becomes the main means of accumulation in this analysis. Dunn problematizes this narrative, however, importantly pointing out that the war economy is heavily embedded within discourses of identity and space that also fuel the conflict. This approach should help to enhance understanding of the conflict by bringing its many complexities into focus.

One of these complexities is located within the sheer amount of international media coverage of the rape cases in the DRC. This lends credence to the notion that visibility is not always beneficial to solving this issue. As Buss notes, visibility can be thought of as 'dangerously easy,' when in actuality it constricts the scope of sexual violence to a singular, static form instead of recognizing that "sexual violence against women takes different forms and has multiple . . . contexts in which the gendered nature of the harm intersects with, and is shaped by, other axes of oppression."⁶¹ On a larger scale, the simplification of such narratives fuel the notion that these wars are part of Africa's homogenous, atavistic and de-historicized civil conflicts, instead of a complex set of factors that cannot be easily grappled with.

Many of these discourses, then, have hampered the effort to distinguish "criminality" and "coping" by focusing solely on the exploitative and "criminal" nature of the war economy (ignoring what Larmer calls the coping "majority") or by removing human agency altogether (Kaplan's war made by "the forest"). Many of the political economy-centered (i.e. "state centered") approaches discussed above focus on the criminal nature of the system, which seems to be a continuation of the "Shadow State" model applied by Reno

⁶⁰ Kevin C. Dunn, "Identity, space and the political economy of conflict in Central Africa," *Geopolitics* 6:2 (2001), 55.3.

⁶¹ Doris E. Buss, "The Curious Visibility of Wartime Rape: Gender and Ethnicity in International Criminal Law," *Windsor YB Access Just.* 25 (2007): 3.

to Zaire, whereas the state (and after the start of the war, foreign and non-state actors) operate in an economy of “plunder.”⁶²

However, help can be provided by “society-centered analyses,” which, according to Kamamba, see the “second economy” (known as *Système D* in pre-war Zaire) as being primarily an effect of “survival strategies” (i.e. “coping”).⁶³ Distinguishing between criminality and coping requires at least a definition of the former, handily provided in the context of African political economy by Bayart et. al. in *The Criminalization of the State in Africa* as being the illegitimate use of violence (or the threat of violence) for the purposes of accumulating political and economic power on a large scale.⁶⁴ This definition still leaves many questions unanswered, particularly as to the “criminality” role of foreign actors (political and economic) in the war economy, especially with regards to mineral extraction.

These so-called “conflict minerals” hold a central place in academic and popular western conceptions of the conflict, making them a main target of humanitarian efforts. Many of these efforts, ranging from blanket bans of minerals from conflict zones to increasing vetting and supply chain screening procedures, have had a controversial reception from scholars and local Congolese alike, as Eichstaedt describes many locals “oppose bans on the sale of minerals, because of the harsh impact this has on the small-scale, independent miners who are the vast majority of those digging the ore.”⁶⁵ These “small-scale” miners are the so called artisanal miners, the vast majority of whom engage in mining as a means of coping and survival in the “liminal socio-political environment in which they find themselves.”⁶⁶ This is not to say that the mineral war economy has not severely hurt local populations through its predatory nature and through providing the economic fuel for the multitude of military actors to continue the conflict. Numerous forces have engaged in what can be called “criminal” exploitation of these resources on a massive scale, including Kibila’s AFDL in the early days of the conflict, external military actors like Rwandan, Ugandan and Zimbabwean forces and irregular militia

⁶² Kamamba, “Heart of Darkness,” 285.

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ Jean Francois Bayart, et. al., *Criminalization of the State in Africa*, (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1999).

⁶⁵ Peter Eichstaedt, *Consuming the Congo: War and Conflict Minerals in the World’s Deadliest Place*, (Chicago: Lawrence Hill Books, 2011), 129.

⁶⁶ Larmer, “Neither war nor peace in the DRC,” 1.

forces like the Mai Mai and FDLR.⁶⁷ Regardless of who specifically is benefitting, it is clear that beyond providing an immediate means of coping and survival, the mineral resource extraction that occupies such a central place in the war economy has provided little to no benefit to the local Congolese populations and has directly contributed to their continued economic insecurity by perpetuating conflict and worsening widespread poverty. This abject poverty has facilitated the use of SGBV because of its cheapness. Put simply, rape is cheaper than bullets. Kirby has argued that SGBV is a default strategy for Congo because “rape is a very cheap method of warfare. You don’t have to buy scud missiles or hand grenades.”⁶⁸ This offers rationality for the ‘greed’ argument as male soldiers utilize this rhetoric to perpetuate this war while wielding women’s bodies as their weapons.

Of course widespread poverty had characterized Zaire long before the start of the Congo wars, but the liminal environment of the war economy caused even greater poverty and removed the few remaining legitimate economic opportunities. Many scholars, however, go beyond examining the liminal state of the war economy, and link the war economy directly with the Mobutuist “*Système D*,” which ideologically legitimized the informal economy with the slogan of “*debrouillez vous!*” This combined with failed development plans that had “little impact on the scope or depth of poverty in the country” made informal economic activity less a means of greed-driven accumulation and more a means of survival.⁶⁹ While recognizing that greed and criminal accumulation of wealth did not characterize the old system, the need for “coping” and economic survivalism was undoubtedly driven by the very criminality of the Mobutuist state and its “exploitative and predatory” economic relation with its people.⁷⁰

Of course, distinguishing between the criminals and the well-meaning entrepreneurs and survivalist types who were forced to seek non-legitimate economic opportunities was just as hard in pre-war Zaire as it has been in the D.R.C.’s war economy (as can be seen in McGaffey’s study of the Zairean “second” economy, appropriately titled “Entrepreneurs and Parasites”). Regardless, it becomes clear that for both pre-war Zaire and the war-

⁶⁷ Eichstaedt, *Consuming the Congo*, 111-114.

⁶⁸ Paul Kirby, “How is rape a weapon of war?: feminist international relations, modes of critical explanation and the study of wartime sexual violence,” *European Journal of International Relations* (2012): 1354066111427614.

⁶⁹ Larmer, “Neither war nor peace in the DRC,” 2.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

torn D.R.C. the “second” or “informal” economy characterized by its illicit and often predatory nature was and is the primary economy. As Larmer states, “‘informal’ is a misnomer for an economy in which the supposedly irregular is in fact the everyday norm.”⁷¹ The normalization of the “informal” economy is why distinguishing between criminality and coping is so hard and forms the paradox at the centre of the war economy that explains its self-perpetuation (beyond the simplistic and reductionist criminality narratives): the war economy of extraction (both of mineral and non-mineral forms of wealth) both “facilitates rebel military activities” and “provides the sole coping mechanism for large parts of the population.”⁷²

Understanding the interconnectedness of criminality and coping in perpetuating the conflict helps support the notion held by an increasing number of scholars that the economic roots of the conflict are not in the “inherent” predatory nature of the Congo (the *Heart of Darkness* discourse) but rather in the lack of legitimate economic opportunities and security, never provided by the Mobutuist state and dramatically worsened by the onset of the wars. As Nest et. al. point out, the failure of the peace process to fully end the Congo conflict is foremost due to its failure to seriously address economic issues.⁷³ This failure manifests itself not only in failing to address (the ongoing) criminal behavior of many Congolese and international actors (from regional powers like Rwanda, Uganda and Zimbabwe to major international political and economic actors such as the former colonial French and Belgian states and major mining corporations) but in failing to acknowledge the need for legitimate means of economic advancement in a war economy where illicit activity often remains the sole means of survival. Larmer et al. put it best when they attribute the failure of the internationally driven peace process and state-rebuilding efforts to the international community’s base assumption “that the country’s problems stem from its supposedly inherent weaknesses, rather than from its constant manipulation and exploitation by both external powers and the their allies amongst Congo’s elite” which has left few if any economic opportunities available for the Congolese people, whose “perspectives and intentions” have been left out of international efforts to “aid’ the D.R.C.”⁷⁴

⁷¹ Ibid., 6.

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ Nest et. al, *The Democratic Republic of Congo: Economic Dimensions of War and Peace*, (London: Lynne Reiner Publishers, 2006), 91-92.

⁷⁴ Larmer, “Neither war nor peace in the DRC,” 6.

The interconnectedness of the criminality and coping is further demonstrated through the use of SGBV as what Zillah Einstein calls, “a form of war in yet another inhumane form; but as an integral form of war rather than an effect.”⁷⁵ Kirby rationalizes this through the idea of instrumentality signified as “self-conscious means-ends reasoning at its purest.”⁷⁶ This serves to integrate rape within the scope of the political economy but genders the Machiavelli Theorem that “no one will ever pass up an opportunity to gain a one-sided advantage by exploiting another party.”⁷⁷ In keeping with economic individualism intended to maximize utility, the destruction of women’s bodies are simply a means to an ongoing end. This narrative conceptualizes “soldier-strategists who self-consciously choose to rape, and its normative orientation envisions agents unconstrained by ethical boundaries, and thus susceptible only to direct disincentives.”⁷⁸ The notion of instrumentality privileges individuals who make rational decisions based on their environment; thus if they are in chaotic environment, they are likely to respond in a manner that protects their well-being. After all, this violence is not just analogous to the force of the state; it is part of the state, authorized by the state.

This paper has attempted to offer a more nuanced, multi-faceted assessment of the rationale of the perpetrators of sexual violence in the Congo wars in efforts to avoid the de facto demonization of these male soldiers. Trenholm’s research on the phenomenon of rape and war in Eastern DRC saw “rape was a cheap and accessible weapon for not only disenfranchised rebels but had spread to poorly paid state soldiers and civilians who also employed sexual violence as an intimidation technique to secure basic needs such as food.”⁷⁹ There is evidence to support the argument that burdened by the weight of hyper-masculinity, a significant portion of male child soldiers volunteered themselves to the military while “others were abducted while on their way home from school.”⁸⁰ In interviews conducted with ex-child soldiers, we see that the extent of their physical and emotional abuse ensured that they resisted any form of vulnerability, which is intimately bound to the construct of femininity. This led to the use of sexual violence as a form of coping where the “boys also related how violating women served other purposes: to

⁷⁵ Nest et. al, *The Democratic Republic of Congo*, 91-92.

⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ J. Hirshleifer, “The dark side of the force,” *Economic Inquiry* 32.1 (1994): 1–10.

⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹ J. Trenholm, “Women Survivors, Lost Children and Traumatized Masculinities: The Phenomena of Rape and War in Eastern Democratic Republic of Congo,” *Digital Comprehensive Summaries of Uppsala Dissertations from the Faculty of Medicine* (2013): 920.

⁸⁰ Ibid.

bolster flailing confidence, ease anxiety, exact revenge, relieve anger, intimidate others and restore a sense of personal power.”⁸¹ Therefore, engaging in hyper masculine displays of hegemonic masculinities is posited to provide child soldiers an opportunity to regain their fragmented status and refocus their achievement to the power of hegemonic males.

V. Conclusion

The political economy approach to the Congo Wars is useful in providing structuralist, geopolitical rationales for the violence but fails to do justice to the stories of millions of citizens that were afflicted by the conflict. SGBV, criminality versus coping, greed versus grievance, are a few of many narratives that warrant increased attention when discussing violence in the Congo. This paper has explored the intersection and divergence of these three narratives of the political economy of war in order to develop a multi-faceted approach to understanding the Congo Wars. This presents the reader with the challenge of having to deal with complexity and to deconstruct binary understandings of the Congo War as more than a resource war and a regional conflict. Ultimately, the objective is not to reach a consensus on the political economy of the Congo War but to understand the far-reaching implications that violence has on the day-to-day practices of ordinary Congolese citizens.

⁸¹ Trenholm “Women Survivors,” 920.

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VICTORIA
1819-1901
m. Prince Albert of Saxe-Coburg & Gotha
(Prince Consort) (d. 1861)

SAXE-COBURG & GOTHA 1837-1917 and THE WINDSORS 1917 – PRESENT DAY

Princess Alice
1843-78
m. Grand Duke Louis of Hesse

3 brothers & 4 sisters

2 brothers & 4 sisters

Princess Victoria
1863-1950
m. Marquess of Milford Haven

2 brothers & 1 sister

Edward, Duke of Kent
b. 1935
m. Katharine Worsley

Princess Alexandra
b. 1936
m. Hon. Angus Ogilvy
(1928-2004)

Prince Michael
b. 1942
m. Baroness Marie-Christine von Reibnitz

Princess Alice
1885-1969
m. Prince Andrew of Greece

4 sisters

George, Earl of St. Andrews
b. 1962
m. Sylvana Tomasell

Lady Helen Windsor
b. 1964
m. Timothy Taylor

Lord Nicholas Windsor
b. 1970
m. Paola de Frankopan

Arthur Chatto
b. 1999

Edward, Duke of Wessex
b. 1964
m. Sophie Rhys-Jones

Viscount Severn
b. 2007

Eugenie

Prince William
1982-72

Richard, Duke of Gloucester
b. 1944
m. Birgitte van Deurs

Alexander, Earl of Ulster
b. 1974
m. Dr. Claire Booth

Lady Davina Lewis
b. 1977
m. Gary Lewis

Lady Rose Gilman
b. 1980
m. George Gilman

Columbus Taylor
b. 1994

Cassius Taylor
b. 1996

Eloise Taylor
b. 2003

Estella Taylor
b. 2004

Edward, Baron Downpatrick
b. 1988

Lady Marina Windsor
b. 1992

Lady Amelia Windsor
b. 1995

James Ogilvy
b. 1964
m. Julia Rawlinson

Flora Ogilvy
b. 1994

Alexander Ogilvy
b. 1996

Marina Ogilvy
b. 1966
m. Paul Mowatt (divorced 1997)

Zenouska Mowatt
b. 1990

Christian Mowatt
b. 1993

Philip, Duke of Edinburgh
b. 1921
m. Princess Elizabeth (QUEEN ELIZABETH II)



Life in los intersticios: Puerto Rican Migration, Colonialism, and Identity Formation in Borderland Discourse

Isabella Shraiman

Ever since Gloria Anzaldúa's book *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza* was published in 1987, cultural critics have applied her theory of borderlands to all Latinos living in the US.¹ According to Anzaldúa, if "borders are set up to define the places that are safe and unsafe, to distinguish *us* from *them*" then the borderland is "a vague and undetermined place created by the emotional residue of an unnatural boundary. It is in a constant state of transition. The prohibited and forbidden are its inhabitants...those who cross over, pass over, or go through the confines of the 'normal.'"² Anzaldúa describes the experience of Mexican-Americans living in the United States as living the borderlands experience: one of living in a space where "the Third World grates against the First and bleeds. And before a scab forms it hemorrhages again, the lifeblood of two worlds merging to form a third country – a border culture."³

But what happens when the Borderlands Paradigm is applied to Puerto Rican migration to the United States? Many of the 'borders' Anzaldúa tackles apply to the case of Puerto Rican migrants to the mainland. The idea of living in "*los intersticios*," the spaces between the different worlds, is perfectly embodied by the *barrio* enclaves which Puerto Rican migrants formed for themselves in New York City and other major migrant destinations.⁴ Anzaldúa also discusses the idea of *mestizaje*, the mating of cultures, which can be applied to both Puerto Rican island culture and the experience of Puerto Rican migrants. However, Puerto Rico's unique political relationship with the US over the

¹ Cheryl Funderburk, "The Borderlands in Puerto Rico: Creating New Identities," (M.A. Thesis, University of North Carolina, 2009), Introduction.

² Gloria Anzaldúa, *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza*, (San Francisco: Aunt Lute Books, 1987), 3.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid., 20.

past 120 years distinguishes it from other Latin American countries and their migrants: the status and experience of a Puerto Rican migrant in New York is in many ways different from the Chicano experience which Anzaldúa documents. Claimed by the Spaniards in 1493, Puerto Rico was ceded to the United States in 1898 after the Spanish-American War of 1898. After becoming one of America's first colonial possessions, the 1952 Puerto Rican Constitution reconstituted the island as a politically dependent commonwealth, including limited US political representation as well as American citizenship for its nationals. Puerto Rico's unstable political future has left it in a state of perpetual limbo, which had a measurable effect not just on island culture but also on the experiences of migrants. While it cannot be argued that the other meeting places between American and Latin American cultures are completely egalitarian, due to the US' long history of imperial intervention in the hemisphere, I argue that Puerto Rican's peculiar colonial status creates a more exacerbated hierarchized relationship. The Puerto Rican/American border has disappeared in the American public imaginary, given the way in which the island has been absorbed as a colonial possession; this obscures the dynamics of power which impede Puerto Rican migrants' access to becoming 'truly' American.

Puerto Ricans' status as citizens has spelled a different experience of migration and integration: they are not quite outsiders, but neither do they have a full sense of belonging. If on the island, "Puerto Ricans still lie on the margins of the United States", existing in a sort of liminal space between colony and nationhood, tightly orbiting the metropolis but always "separated by distance, language, racial difference, and their different civic rights and duties," Puerto Rican migration has expanded this borderland into the heart of the US.⁵ Furthermore, there exists no physical boundary between the US and Puerto Rico since the two are nominally part of the same imperial body. Unlike the Rio Grande area Anzaldúa describes as forming the physical embodiment of the borderland which Chicanos inhabit, there is "no borderland to cushion contact" between the US and Puerto Rico meaning that the "combined impact on the identity of the individual is presumably so profound that the prospect of having to choose between one or the other is the cause of considerable internal conflict."⁶ As Funderburk explains, "the borders that Puerto Ricans cross are not the line in the sand that Anzaldúa knew, but

⁵ Suzanne Bost, "Transgressing Borders: Puerto Rican and Latina Mestizaje," *Melus* 25.2 (2000): 189.

⁶ Funderburk, Introduction; Teresa Derrickson, "'Cold/Hot, English/Spanish': The Puerto Rican American Divide in Judith Ortiz Cofer's *Silent Dancing*," *Melus* 28.2 (2003): 124.

what Teresa Derrickson calls a ‘displaced border’⁷; this can be seen in the borders between ethnic neighborhoods in East Harlem. Without even considering the important distinction between island and migrant identity, all of these key differences complicate the analysis of Puerto Rico as borderland.

This essay will look at Puerto Rican migration to the United States and Puerto Rican diaspora identity discourse. It will discuss how migration cycles in and out of the US have related to the construction and development of the borderland identity framework, and how Puerto Rican communal identities in the US have been shaped by mobility patterns and borderland discourse. Although Puerto Rican immigration has spanned the 20th century and continues today, this essay focuses on Puerto Rican immigration to New York City in the 1950s. This time and place specificity focuses the research onto the most well-known – and consequently most stereotyped – Puerto Rican diaspora community. Pop culture phenomena such as *West Side Story* simultaneously romanticized Puerto Rican barrio life and caricaturized it, embodying both the great myth of the American melting pot and the nativist fears of white Americans faced with ethnically-other immigrants. This essay seeks to go beyond the *West Side Story* narrative framework of Puerto Rican migration to New York in order to understand how the Puerto Rican diaspora communities in 1950s New York City constructed their identities and reacted to mainstream American portrayals of them. I argue that a simple interpretation of the Borderland Paradigm is not sufficiently nuanced to fully characterize Puerto Rican migrant identity in the US. The island’s colonial relationship with the US adds a hierarchical element crucial to understanding the construction of Puerto Rican identity in diaspora, a phenomenon I call hierarchized borderland identity.

This essay will refer to Puerto Ricans living in the US either as migrants – since with their legal status as US citizens, the term ‘immigrant’ delegitimizes their right to citizenship – or as *borinquens*, following common mainland Puerto Rican self-identification. I will also consider Puerto Rican migration as a diaspora, where it is understood following Robin Cohen’s standard definition of diaspora as traumatic emigration from a homeland, as economic migrants or as a result of colonial practices.⁸ This essay will draw on a variety of primary sources as well as scholarly analyses of Puerto Rican migration to the US from a variety of academic disciplines. The primary sources used are mainly a series of

⁷ Funderburk, Introduction.

⁸ Robin Cohen, *Global Diasporas: An Introduction*, (London: UCL Press), 1997, x.

memoirs, autobiographies, and oral histories of Puerto Ricans who lived in New York City in the 1950s. As these were written by the authors or collected by third-party ethnographers, I am limited in not being able to pose my own specific questions. However, as these sources are primarily driven by the subjects/authors, I benefit from hearing their voices and their perspectives on what was significant. Another limitation in my sources is the absence of female voices as I unfortunately found little autobiographical material produced by a woman within my temporal framework. This silence of female voices shows the limits of published autobiographical material and sources in conveying the gendered history of Puerto Rican identity formations at this time.

I. A Brief Overview of Puerto Rican History and Identity Formation

Puerto Rico was claimed by Christopher Columbus in 1493 for Spain and was subsequently colonized by the Spanish Empire. The original inhabitants, the aboriginal Taino people, were decimated as a result of contact with European diseases and at the hands of the colonizers.⁹ To replace the loss of cheap indigenous labor, the Spanish colonizers began importing slaves from sub-Saharan Africa.¹⁰ From these early demographic patterns, the roots of Puerto Rican identity began to form. During the nineteenth century, Puerto Rico experienced new waves of immigration and the formation of semi-autonomous political structures.¹¹ However, following the Spanish-American War of 1898, Puerto Rico was ceded to the United States. Through the Foraker Act of 1900, the US proceeded to design a new form of dependent government on the island, combining some elements of self-governance with US control of the island and extending all US laws to Puerto Rico.¹² In 1917, US Congress passed the Jones-Shafroth Act granting all Puerto Ricans US citizenship.¹³ The Puerto Rican House of Delegates, which in 1914 voted unanimously for independence but was refused by the US government, also voted unanimously against the Jones Act, but was once again ignored.¹⁴ This dynamic clearly illustrates that despite the US narrative of exceptionalism which declares itself as an anti-colonial power, US involvement in Puerto Rico has been

⁹ Lisa Pierce Flores, *The History of Puerto Rico*, (Santa Barbara: Greenwood Press), 2010, 31.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 34.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 56.

¹² Truman R. Clark, *Puerto Rico and the United States, 1917-1933*. (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1975), 129.

¹³ Juan Gonzalez, *Harvest of Empire*, (New York: Penguin Press, 2001), 60-63.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

one of imperialism, where the US represents the metropolis and Puerto Rico the colonial periphery. This relationship dynamic plays a significant role in shaping the development of Puerto Rican identity in the 20th century. The hierarchy of the metropolis to periphery adds another layer to the borderland interaction: the point of contact is not just one between two separate entities, but a juncture between a hierarchized set of bodies, an interaction loaded with a history of colonial domination of one over the other. An unforeseen consequence of these processes was the Puerto Rican diaspora: as of 2012, an estimated 5 million Puerto Ricans live in the US, as compared to US census data which in 2014 measured the population on the island of Puerto Rico at approximately 3.5 million.¹⁵

Puerto Rican culture has developed from a synthesis of Taíno, Spanish, African, and later, American influences. This syncretism is the source of the Puerto Rican adaptability that has allowed Puerto Rican migrants to adapt to life on the mainland.¹⁶ The history of persistent poverty – both on the island and in mainland diaspora communities – has had a salient effect on the development of Puerto Rican identity.¹⁷ Chronic poverty has contributed to the central importance of family – understood as extended networks of kinship rather than the North American nuclear family model – in Puerto Rican culture, where survival, rites of passage, and friendship are experienced through the familial rather than at the individual level.¹⁸ Another crucial aspect in understanding Puerto Rican identity on the island is the persistence of strictly delineated traditional gender roles. Both of these will be some of the first elements of island Puerto Rican identity challenged upon the migrant's arrival to the mainland US.¹⁹

In Jorge Duany's book *The Puerto Rican Nation On The Move*, the anthropologist argues that the Puerto Rican nation is tied together through deep cultural continuity and is therefore capable of being translocated to multiple places. Duany discusses the self-perceived identity of Puerto Ricans: they consider themselves Puerto Rican first, and

¹⁵ "Five million Puerto Ricans now living in the mainland U.S", *Caribbean Business*. 27 June 2013; "Table 1. Annual Estimates of the Resident Population for the United States, Regions, States, and Puerto Rico: April 1, 2010 to July 1, 2014" (CSV). U.S. Census Bureau. Retrieved December 21, 2015.

¹⁶ Héctor A. Carrasquillo and Virginia Sánchez-Korrol, "Migration, community, and culture : the United States-Puerto Rican experience", in Silvia Pedraza and Rubén G. Rumbaut eds., *Origins and Destinies: Immigration, Race, and Ethnicity in America*, (Belmont, Calif: Wadsworth, 1996), 103.

¹⁷ Ibid., 103.

¹⁸ Ibid., 104.

¹⁹ Ibid., 106.

American second, in contrast to the legal reality which binds them tightly to the US metropolis.²⁰ From this point, Duany links Puerto Rican cultural identity to their “unfinished project of self-determination”: in a sense, their colonial peripheral status has prompted the development of Puerto Rican cultural nationalism both on the island and in mainland diaspora communities.²¹ This has taken the form of a narrative featuring an ‘us versus them’ dichotomy with Americans, as well as a national myth of moral regeneration.²² In practice, this has meant preference for Hispanic culture in national constructions of Puerto Rican identity, at the cost of the island’s African and Taíno roots and leading to further dichotomization between cultural elements and societal exclusion of racial and sexual perceived ‘Others’ within Puerto Rican society.²³ Official constructions of Puerto Rican identity tend to romanticize the island’s pre-industrial (read: pre-American) past, lending themselves towards celebration of ‘The Great Puerto Rican Family’ and the paternalism and patriarchy this structure entails.²⁴

Duany’s analysis focuses on identity construction on the island, but he also analyzes the enormous role that migration has played in the development of Puerto Rican culture. He convincingly argues that from this long history of multiple colonizations and migrations, Puerto Rico can be understood as a transnational nation, a nation on the move.²⁵ There is no legal definition of Puerto Rican citizenship to correspond with its national identity boundaries; there is no territorial boundedness of membership to the Puerto Rican identity group, as is manifested by generations of migrants who still self-identify as Puerto Rican despite having lived their whole lives in the US; bilingualism and the *mestizaje* of Spanglish continue to challenge traditional theoretical notions of national identity. Puerto Rican identity cannot be mapped in the frameworks which traditional national ethnographies have constructed because “contemporary Puerto Rican culture flourishes along the porous borders of political, geographic, and linguistic categories long taken as the essence of national identity”, challenging and defying them so that “such categories can no longer capture the permeable and elastic boundaries of the Puerto Rican nation.”²⁶ Puerto Rico represents a borderland where Taíno, African, Spanish, and

²⁰ Jorge Duany, *The Puerto Rican Nation On The Move: Identities on the Island and in the United States*, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002), 13.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 16.

²² *Ibid.*, 19, 35.

²³ *Ibid.*, 19, 24.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 19, 25.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 27.

²⁶ Duany, *The Puerto Rican Nation On The Move*, 37.

American cultures have met and combined to create a wholly new culture, but as mentioned above, the hierarchy of cultures and violence integral to the experience of colonialism have created a dynamic of non-equals which continues to influence the development of contemporary Puerto Rican culture, a dynamic further complicated by the massive *borinquen* migration to the US.

II. The Puerto Rican Diaspora in NYC in the 1950s

The first question that surfaces when studying a diaspora is how to identify members of that diaspora; in this definition, it is important to consider both the groupings from the point-of-view of an outsider, and self-identification. Elena Padilla, a first generation Puerto Rican migrant, remembers a White “tendency to ignore individuality and to obliterate social and cultural differences among Puerto Ricans.”²⁷ From white America’s perspectives – as represented by official documentation and mainstream media – Puerto Ricans are “defined either as a racial group, an ethnic group, or a cultural group” based on birthplace and mother’s birthplace²⁸; however, as various memoirs of Puerto Rican migrants tell “this criterion for identifying Puerto Ricans is not consistent: miscellaneous Spanish-speaking individuals, and odd assortments of dark-skinned individuals are frequently assumed to be Puerto Ricans.”²⁹ White Anglophone America – with all of its own internal variation – generally assumes that all Puerto Ricans, regardless of class, race, gender, region of origin, or time spent away from the island, share a “common and uniform culture.”³⁰ In sum: to the outsider, the identity label ‘Puerto Rican’ grouped a uniform mass of hispanophones or those from hispanophone families originating on the island, correlating with darker skin tones in the context of the States’ binary racial hierarchy. In contrast, from the standpoint of self-identified Puerto Ricans, the identity category is much wider and includes Puerto Ricans, their descendants who may or may not speak Spanish, and Spanish speakers from other parts of the world.³¹ In this sense, Puerto Rican self-identification lends itself more to belonging in a Hispanic group than an exclusively Puerto Rican one, where “the Hispano group includes peoples who share

²⁷ Elena Padilla, *Up from Puerto Rico*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1958), 47.

²⁸ Interestingly, although in 1930 it included a “Mexican” racial category, by 1940, the US Census does not include a Latino/Hispanic category; rather, individuals identifying as such are instructed to “spell out in full” their race. Barry Edmonston and Charles Schultze. *Modernizing the U.S. Census*. (Washington, D.C.: National Academy Press, 1995), 144.

²⁹ Padilla, *Up from Puerto Rico*, 47.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Ibid.

elements of a common Hispanic historical heritage. The Hispano group is a communal form of adaptation of peoples...in the context of American life.”³² Padilla’s memoir suggests that this form of group identification can be understood as stemming from Puerto Rican/Hispano solidarity based on feelings of exclusion from white America.³³ However, it must be noted that throughout the 1950s, Puerto Ricans were the dominant Hispanic group in New York City and the wider United States; large-scale Cuban and Dominican immigration did not begin until the 1960s, and Central American immigration until the series of civil wars in the 1970s and ‘80s.³⁴

New York City in the 1950s was experiencing a ‘Great Migration’ of Puerto Ricans. Official census data reports 600,000 Puerto Ricans in the city by the mid-1950s, 60,000 of whom were concentrated in East Harlem, *El Barrio*, one of the most diverse communities in NYC.³⁵ However, as Sharman’s ethnography of the neighborhood points out, it is difficult to trust in the accuracy of census data on Puerto Rican migrations and these official numbers are most likely too conservative, as a product of the “confusion over the racial, ethnic, and national status of Puerto Ricans at the time.”³⁶ *Borinquens* in the 1950s and ‘60s were “the poorest segment of the New York City population...heavily concentrated in low occupational levels, and their median family income [was] considerably lower than that of the Blacks.”³⁷ Puerto Rican migrant poverty – along with explicitly racist housing policies³⁸ – forced them to group into low-income neighborhoods, such as East Harlem and Red Hook, Brooklyn. Many memoirs of growing up in these neighborhoods describe the unique landscape these areas cultivated as various immigrant groups cohabitated and clashed. For example, José, who grew up in 1950s East Harlem, reminisces on his excitement when his family moved into the new public housing, where the strict sense of order and efficiency in their administration was a welcome relief from their overcrowded and run-down previous tenement apartment.³⁹ He

³² Ibid.

³³ Ibid., 48.

³⁴ migrationpolicy.org, accessed 09/02/2016.

³⁵ Russell Leigh Sharman, *The Tenants of East Harlem*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006), 51.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Joseph P. Fitzpatrick, *Puerto Rican Americans: The Meaning of Migration to the Mainland*, (New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1971), 59.

³⁸ Sonia Song-Ha Lee, *Building a Latino Civil Rights Movement: Puerto Ricans, African Americans, and the Pursuit of Racial Justice in New York City*, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2014), 45.

³⁹ Sharman, *The Tenants of East Harlem*, 56.

also remembers the de-facto segregation in public housing, where racial tensions between white, Afro-American, and Hispanic inhabitants quickly turned into the frontline of ethnic gang war.⁴⁰

Besides the boundaries between the poor immigrants of varying ethnicities contained within neighborhoods such as East Harlem, there was also the strict spatial division between white America and the 'Others'. Jack Agüeros, a second generation *borinquen* New Yorker who grew up in East Harlem in the 1940s and '50s, writes in his autobiographical piece "Halfway to Dick and Jane" on his childhood memories of the urban divisions. Remembering the frontier between East Harlem and a white neighborhood, Agüeros writes that "when you got to the top of the hill, something strange happened: America began, because from the hill south was where the 'Americans' lived."⁴¹ When Agüeros explains that in the abstract, his childhood was not "too great a variation on Dick and Jane" – the children he saw in his schoolbooks – and at times he was happy to write "essays about how grand America was"; but when he compared his life to the one he spied on in 'real' America, he realized that "Dick and Jane were not dead; they were alive and well in a better neighborhood."⁴²

Puerto Rican youth under the age of 25 were the city's fastest growing demographic group in the 1950s: this group was especially visible and feared as delinquents by white America.⁴³ Agüeros remembers the rampant disillusionment and exclusion Puerto Rican youth felt from education and political/policing systems as he watched the boys around him quitting school. Agüeros specifically remembers the use of the word 'quitting':

[I]t was an irony, for what was really happening was that after many years of being rejected, ignored, and shuffled around by the school, the kid wanted to quit. Only you can't quit something you were never a part of...But what do you say when you are powerless to get what you want, and what do you say when the other side has all the cards and writes all the rules?⁴⁴

⁴⁰ Sharman, *The Tenants of East Harlem*, 59.

⁴¹ Jack Agüeros, "Halfway to Dick and Jane: a Puerto Rican pilgrimage" in *The Immigrant Experience; The Anguish of Becoming American*, (New York: Dial Press, 1971), 93.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 94.

⁴³ Lorrin Thomas, *Puerto Rican Citizen History and Political Identity In Twentieth-Century New York City*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010), 200.

⁴⁴ Agüeros, "Halfway to Dick and Jane," 96.

Award-winning historian Lorrin Thomas acknowledges the patterns of delinquency and disillusionment which plagued young Puerto Rican migrants, but also points to the rise of youth activism, encouraged by the migrants who had arrived a generation earlier, as *borinquens* began to agitate for civic pride and the strengthening of their communities and to mobilize against anti-Puerto Rican sentiment in mainstream US society.⁴⁵

All of this developed within the Cold War context of paranoia and conformism.⁴⁶ Although Puerto Ricans were able to use their participation in WWII as a basis for claiming greater inclusion in mainstream American society, migrants were still mainly cast as an alien 'Other', despite their legal status as American citizens.⁴⁷ In fact, their legal status was one of the major sources of fear mainstream Americans felt when watching the influx of Puerto Rican migrants: as citizens, they could not be barred from immigration and could vote in elections.⁴⁸ "Puerto Ricans were citizen immigrants, a peculiar paradox that would haunt them into the twenty-first century" and exercise a significant effect on their construction of their identity.⁴⁹ Carmen Teresa Whalen, a specialist in the Puerto Rican diaspora, describes this process, arguing that:

Puerto Ricans arrived in the States as a colonial people in the metropolis, as U.S. citizens, and as a racially diverse group in a biracial system of classification that deemed people as either white or black, despite the far greater racial complexity that has always existed in the United States... As Puerto Rican migration increased after 1898, and even more so after World War I, Puerto Ricans also settled in communities with diverse Latino populations that were predominantly working class...the 'massive post-World War II migration allowed ensuing settlers to form strong ethnic enclaves and preserve their language and culture'.⁵⁰

When José discusses his memories of growing in such an enclave, *El Barrio* of East Harlem, he explains the strength of the bonds which tied *borinquen* migrants together, saying that

⁴⁵ Thomas, *Puerto Rican Citizen History*, 210.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 149.

⁴⁸ Ibid., 133.

⁴⁹ Sharman, *The Tenants of East Harlem*, 14.

⁵⁰ Carmen Teresa Whalen and Víctor Vázquez-Hernández, *The Puerto Rican Diaspora: Historical Perspectives*, (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2005), 239.

‘when you move someplace, and you form an enclave, people naturally stick together, whereas back on the island they would probably never hang out’...[José’s] sense of being Puerto Rican comes from the vibe in [*El Barrio*], the transplanted nature of an ethnicity on the move. As he says ‘once you are far from your old homeland, that has a dynamic all its own. Once you have those shared values, you tend to coalesce and stick together more than if you were on the island’.⁵¹

In response to the influx of Puerto Rican migrants, anti-Puerto Rican sentiment rose in the US, similar to previous patterns of antipathy towards other immigrant groups. Anti-Puerto Rican sentiment was understood by its perpetrators as an issue “created by the island’s people rather than its unresolved political status.”⁵² Critics elaborated a “range of deficits by which Puerto Ricans were alleged to threaten white American society: biological and intellectual inferiority, incapacity as workers, dependency on relief, susceptibility to disease, and political gullibility” among others.⁵³ Charles Hewitt, writer for *Scribner’s Commentator*, summed up white fear of Puerto Rican migration in his 1940 article on 18 ‘typical’ Puerto Rican immigrants to NYC, highlighting these stereotypes of disease, laziness, and moral corruption.⁵⁴ Popular culture also acted as a vehicle for anti-Puerto Rican sentiment. The famous musical *West Side Story* shows *borinquens* as “problematic strangers” in a “political vacuum that made the colonial context of Puerto Rico disappear completely”, perpetuating negative stereotypes of Puerto Ricans as violent delinquents.⁵⁵ The musical exhibits a combination of liberal sympathy for hardworking immigrants trying to achieve the American dream, like Maria, and nativist fears of “knife-wielding Puerto Rican youth...portrayed as even more predatory than their ‘native’ gang counterparts”.⁵⁶

While delinquency and ethnic gang rivalries were absolutely a part of the Puerto Rican migrant experience in New York, José’s memories of these rivalries carry his impression

⁵¹ Sharman, *The Tenants of East Harlem*, 74.

⁵² Thomas, *Puerto Rican Citizen History*, 134.

⁵³ *Ibid.*

⁵⁴ Charles E. Hewitt Jr., “Welcome: Paupers and Crime,” *Scribner’s Commentator* (Mar. 1940): 11–17, Covello papers, series X, box 103, folder 23. Cited from Thomas, *Puerto Rican Citizen History*, 134-5.

⁵⁵ Thomas, *Puerto Rican Citizen History*, 133.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 164-165.

that they were sensationalized.⁵⁷ On the other hand, Piri Thomas' memoirs of his childhood in East Harlem do recount his gang fights; however, according to Piri, the fights mainly took place between rival Puerto Rican groups.⁵⁸ Another example of negative portrayals in popular culture came in Oscar Lewis' widely read 1966 anthropological study *La Vida: A Puerto Rican Family in the Culture of Poverty*, where Puerto Rican families were portrayed as acculturated to poverty and incapable of properly socializing children for success. Lewis' work demonstrates the prevalent public perception of Puerto Ricans as embroiled in a "culture of poverty" of their own making.⁵⁹ By claiming that *borinquen* culture was the cause of their poverty, white Americans were able to justify their antipathy towards the migrants while rejecting any responsibility of the US' colonial practices for the 'Puerto Rican problem'. The peculiar colonial status of Puerto Rico differentiated anti-Puerto Rican sentiment from the animosity faced by Irish, Russian and Italian immigrants in their first years of settlement. Negative presentations of Puerto Rican identity in 1940s and '50s popular culture "served not just to undermine migrants' standing as potential employees or...leaseholders" but also "to depoliticize the presence of migrants whose New York compatriots had marched through Harlem... denouncing US policy in its largest remaining colonial outpost."⁶⁰ A narrative of Puerto Rican delinquency and drug-related crime overshadowed multiple attacks on US government buildings by Puerto Rican nationalists in 1950 and 1954. Even those white liberals supportive of *borinquen* migration, sympathetic to their plight, and willing to help improve migrant conditions, formulated their own ideal representation of the Puerto Rican migrant, Juan Q. Citizen, based on the necessity of education for effective assimilation into Anglo-Saxon culture.⁶¹ This focus on assimilation into Anglo culture further perpetuated the idea of a Puerto Rican 'culture of poverty' – that the problem with Puerto Rican migrants was their identity, and if they learned to leave the island behind and become 'American' enough, they would soon achieve the American Dream.

Puerto Rican migrants in New York City were not passive receivers of the racial slurs and discrimination thrown at them. They formed a large variety of civil and political

⁵⁷ Sharman, *The Tenants of East Harlem*, 57.

⁵⁸ Piri Thomas, *Down These Mean Streets*, (New York: Knopf, 1967), 31.

⁵⁹ Mercer L. Sullivan, "Puerto Ricans in Sunset Park, Brooklyn: Poverty Amidst Ethnic and Economic Diversity," *In the Barrios: Latinos and the Underclass Debate*, eds. Joan Moore and Raquel Pinderhughes, (New York: Russell Sage Foundation), 1981.

⁶⁰ Thomas, *Puerto Rican Citizen History*, 136.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 201.

organizations to protest discrimination and anti-Puerto Rican language in the media.⁶² The Puerto Rican Protest Committee was an association of over 50 NYC-based Puerto Rican and Latino groups, formed in response to Hewitt's racist article, which eventually became successful in forcing him to print a retraction.⁶³ Other examples of *borinquen* activists in NYC included the Hispanic Young Adult Association and the Puerto Rican Association for Community Affairs.⁶⁴ *El Diario de la Prensa*, NYC's Spanish-language Latino newspaper, established in 1948, was also an active forum for the voices of *borinquen* activists. A common trope of defense against racism which was used especially by sympathetic white liberals and the Puerto Rican elite was that "Puerto Ricans were no different from any other immigrant group and that they should not be singled out as a 'problem' in this nation of immigrants."⁶⁵ But others, including African Americans, pointed out that although all immigrant groups faced a certain level of hostility on arriving in the US, they had eventually moved upwards in society – if they were white. Since upward mobility in the US was in large part predicated on whiteness and Puerto Rican migrants counted as 'colored' under the US 'one drop' model, the discrimination Puerto Ricans faced was not directly comparable to that faced by the Irish or the Italians.⁶⁶

Following WWII, political pressures to extend social services to Puerto Rican migrants resulted in the launch of a variety of bodies, including the New York City Mayor's Advisory Committee on Puerto Rican Affairs, founded in 1949 and disbanded in 1955. These bodies, combined with other forms of *borinquen* activism, were moderately successful in shifting the tone of the NYC press to one of more empathy, albeit still a patronizing one, towards the Puerto Rican diaspora community.⁶⁷ Furthermore, during the 1950s, the NYC Puerto Rican population grew and as citizens with voting rights, they became a significant voting bloc. Conservative estimates put "the Spanish vote" in NYC in the mid-1950s at 100,000; with numbers like these, politicians were forced to take them into account, at least nominally.⁶⁸ Lastly the Cold War fear of 'Other' which contributed to the ostracization of Puerto Rican migrants at times simultaneously

⁶² Ibid., 137.

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ Ibid., 211.

⁶⁵ Thomas, *Puerto Rican Citizen History*, 142.

⁶⁶ Ibid., 145.

⁶⁷ Ibid., 157.

⁶⁸ Ibid., 159.

benefitted them – Cold War patriotism prompted employers to limit hiring to nationals in the post-war boom and Puerto Ricans, with their legal status as American citizens, were more ‘American’ than some other migrant groups.⁶⁹ Overall though, the Puerto Rican experience was mostly one of exclusion. White America’s popular negative feelings towards Puerto Ricans persisted because racial markers further separated them from previous immigrant groups: in the post-war era, the Puerto Rican experience proved that “the promised rights of liberal citizenship were no match for the weight of their identity as dark-skinned colonials”.⁷⁰

III. Identity Construction in Puerto Rican Migrant Communities

Puerto Rican migrants in the US constructed different identities and engaged in different types of cultural production than their island counterparts.⁷¹ Patterns of circular migration – popularly called *el vaíven* – contributed to rising syncretism between Puerto Rican and American cultures.⁷² In this sense, *borinquen* migrants played the part of the cultural agent which traditional transnational texts describe.⁷³ Despite early studies such as sociologist Joseph P. Fitzpatrick’s 1971 book, which doubted that Puerto Ricans would “achieve a deep sense of identity through the development of a strong community on the model of earlier immigrant groups,” tightly-knit Puerto Rican migrant communities did develop in NYC, providing the base from which unique forms of group identification developed.⁷⁴

These *borinquen* communities were not insulated from the effects of American society and their identities shifted in response to contact with the US. One of the biggest points of contention which Puerto Ricans encountered was the clash between their traditional extended family-oriented societal model and the US’ emphasis on the strictly delineated Anglo-Saxon nuclear family model.⁷⁵ Puerto Rican familist values of loyalty and interdependence conflicted with the all-American spirit of individualism and personal

⁶⁹ *ibid.*, 160.

⁷⁰ Thomas, *Puerto Rican Citizen History*, 19, 160.

⁷¹ Duany, *The Puerto Rican Nation On The Move*, 31.

⁷² *Ibid.*, 32.

⁷³ Thomas Adam, *Intercultural Transfers and the Making of the Modern Age, 1800-2000*, (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 5.

⁷⁴ Fitzpatrick, *Puerto Rican Americans*, 179.

⁷⁵ Carrasquillo and Sánchez-Korrol, “Migration, community, and culture,” 105.

enterprise.⁷⁶ As on the island, poverty reinforced Puerto Rican family ties – by necessitating dependence on family support networks – but in the US, poverty also tore families apart.⁷⁷ In interactions with US welfare bureaucracies, Puerto Ricans were separated from their kinship networks and reduced to individuality, something Agüeros remembers as an overwhelming feeling of “coldness”.⁷⁸ Carrasquillo and Sánchez-Korol argue that poverty further destroyed Puerto Rican family fabric by challenging traditional gender roles, leading to what they claim to be a “psychological breakdown” in Puerto Rican men and thus leading to a rise of single mother households.⁷⁹ Traditionally, Puerto Ricans followed strictly structured gender roles based on ideals of *machismo* for men and *marianismo* for women, which dictated that the woman be anchored in the private, family sphere and model her virtue on the Virgin Mary.⁸⁰ However, economic demands in the US forced a shift in traditional Puerto Rican gender roles by necessitating partners of both genders to work outside of the home. Piri’s memoir narrates his adolescent struggle to become an *hombre* and fulfill macho ideals; however, like many of his peers, excluded from mainstream America and plagued with feelings of economic insecurity, he turned to drugs and delinquency to achieve what he believed to be macho behavior.⁸¹ Psychologist Jose B. Torres argues that negative Anglo-American stereotypes of Latino *machismo* reduce male Latino identity, separating it from the set of community values it originates in and therefore interfere with communal identity in Puerto Rican communities.⁸² Another element of Puerto Rican identity which came under fire when transplanted to New York City was their infamous pride. As Agüeros tells us, “the expression, ‘I’d rather starve than go on welfare’ is common in the PR community.”⁸³ However, many Puerto Ricans were forced to swallow their pride and go to the WPA for assistance, an episode which Agüeros remembers triggering his parents’ shame, “*verguenza*”.⁸⁴ White America stereotyped Puerto Ricans as lazy welfare-recipients,

⁷⁶ Carmen Dolores Hernandez, “Puerto Rican Voices in English” in *Hispanic New York: A Sourcebook*, ed. Claudio Iván Remeseira, (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010), 303.

⁷⁷ Carrasquillo and Sánchez-Korol, “Migration, community, and culture,” 105.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 106; Agüeros, “Halfway to Dick and Jane,” 97.

⁷⁹ Carrasquillo and Sánchez-Korol, “Migration, community, and culture,” 105.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 106-107.

⁸¹ Piri Thomas, *Down These Mean Streets*, 15-16.

⁸² Jose B. Torres, “Masculinity and gender roles among Puerto Rican men: machismo in the US,” *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry*, Vol. 68 No.1, 1996: 16-26.

⁸³ Agüeros, “Halfway to Dick and Jane,” 98.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

when the memoirs of those same Puerto Ricans show such an aversion to public assistance.

Complex Puerto Rican conceptions of race were also challenged upon arrival in NYC – José tells his biographer of the tension between his ‘white’ mother and her ‘dark’ in-laws. These tensions originated in Puerto Rico, but whereas “on the island, there had long been a struggle between the perception of racial interconnectedness and the experience of a color hierarchy”, mainland US racial discourse further complicated Puerto Rican racial politics because of its emphasis on “clear racial categories based largely on phenotype, skin color in particular, precluding even the perception of interstitial categories of racial mixing.”⁸⁵ Puerto Ricans of all skin tones were treated as non-white by white America, but within Puerto Rican communities there existed fraught subdivisions along racial lines; this contradiction carried over in Puerto Rican relations with the African American community and complicated the self-identification of young *borinquens* like dark-skinned Piri.⁸⁶ However, Puerto Ricans in the US found strength in their traditions of faith, religion, and spirituality, which played a decisive role in animating Puerto Rican diaspora identity and activism. Symbolic figures such as that of the *jibaro*, the traditional rural peasant, served as important symbols of Puerto Rican-ness both on the island and the mainland, contributing to a certain amount of cultural continuity within migrant communities.⁸⁷

The cultural adjustment from Puerto Rico to New York City was fraught with generational and communal anxiety.⁸⁸ Juan Flores, a specialist in socio-cultural theory, proposes four stages in the awakening of a unique mainland Puerto Rican cultural consciousness.⁸⁹ First, migrants experience the ‘Stage of Abandonment’, in which they encounter a life of poverty and discrimination in a US urban ghetto. This stage is embodied by Piri Thomas’ adolescent memories of exclusion and rebellion. The second stage is what Flores calls the ‘Stage of Enchantment’, where migrants rediscover their origins and romanticize life back on the island. Piri’s memories of his mother fit into this stage: he quotes her as reminiscing that “in Puerto Rico those around you share *la pobreza* with you and they

⁸⁵ Sharman, *The Tenants of East Harlem*, 55.

⁸⁶ Piri Thomas, *Down These Mean Streets*, 56.

⁸⁷ Piri Thomas, *Down These Mean Streets*, 204.

⁸⁸ Carrasquillo and Sánchez-Korrol, “Migration, community, and culture,” 107.

⁸⁹ Juan Flores, “Que assimilated, brother, yo soy asimilao: the structuring of Puerto Rican identity”, *Divided borders: essays on Puerto Rican identity*, (Houston: Arte Público Press, 1993), 182-195.

love you, because only poor people can understand poor people.”⁹⁰ Flores’ third stage is one of renewed encounter with New York City: Puerto Ricans asserted their indigenous culture as part of the city’s mosaic. Agüeros’ childhood memories of Puerto Rican parties – featuring traditional foods, live Latin music and Puerto Rican poetry – are an example of this stage where Puerto Ricans transplanted their culture into their new environment; the Puerto Rican Pride parades which Lorrin Thomas discusses also fit into this stage.⁹¹ The last stage is that of selective interaction with other minorities and migrant communities: this is seen for example in the growth of pan-Latino consciousness in NYC or in the relationship between the Puerto Rican and African American communities in East Harlem, such as that discussed by historian Sonia Song-Ha Lee in her book *Building a Latino Civil Rights Movement: Puerto Ricans, African Americans, and the Pursuit of Racial Justice in New York City*.

With the growth of a specific Puerto Rican diaspora cultural consciousness, developed through kinship networks and communal organizations, came the construction of a specifically Puerto Rican diaspora identity. This identity was created in the space between US and Puerto Rican identities. As Duany persuasively argues, “Puerto Rican organizations in the US selectively appropriated the discursive practices traditionally associated with being Puerto Rican, yet they continued to portray themselves as part of a translocal nation divided between the Island and the mainland” when constructing Puerto Rican migrant identities.⁹² These community organizations sought to preserve cultural linkages to the island, but the ways in which these cultural linkages were expressed changed over time.⁹³ First generation migrants and pre-WWI migrants emphasized the use of Spanish and constructed their migrant identity as temporary, since most hoped to return to the island, whereas in the 1950s, migrant identity-construction shifted to a pursuit of “educational, economic and political advancement of Puerto Ricans in the US.”⁹⁴ Besides these pressing group needs, Puerto Rican community organizations also sought to foster group pride by organizing public events celebrating Puerto Rican culture and identity, which became “communal focal points throughout the Puerto Rican diaspora.”⁹⁵ This developing identity rejected assimilation

⁹⁰ Carrasquillo and Sánchez-Korrol, “Migration, community, and culture,” 10.

⁹¹ Agüeros, “Halfway to Dick and Jane,” 91; Thomas, *Puerto Rican Citizen History*, 162.

⁹² Duany, *The Puerto Rican Nation On The Move*, 186.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, 201.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 202

⁹⁵ Whalen and Vásquez-Hernández, *The Puerto Rican Diaspora*, 241.

into white American culture as a goal, but also challenged the “island-centered discourse of national identity.”⁹⁶ Still, these community organizations tended to strengthen ties between migrants and the homeland, even if not purposefully.⁹⁷ However, as Duany points out, patterns of circular migrations rendered labels such as ‘home’ versus ‘abroad’ artificial; Puerto Rican identity challenges traditional understandings of national belonging as their experiences of “circular migration mobilize[d] cultural identities beyond neatly bounded categories of language, territory, or citizenship.”⁹⁸

The pervasiveness of the colonial domination exercised by the US over Puerto Rico has shaped Puerto Rican community and identity-building efforts in US-based diaspora communities. Despite – or perhaps as a result of – colonial Americanization missions in Puerto Rico and its diaspora communities, which celebrated American wisdom and power over a colonized people, Puerto Ricans created a unique migrant identity in the development of transnational communities. Puerto Ricans in the States have resisted complete assimilation into mainstream culture, preferring to craft their own hybrid identity – speaking Spanglish and celebrating island culture while adapting to their lives in the US – which challenges the colonial relationship between their homeland and the metropolis; this hybridity also highlights the history of this colonial relationship, which remains largely unacknowledged in in US culture. Many Puerto Rican migrant cultural productions have explored this relationship. For example, in the 1980s and ‘90s, a wave of so-called Nuyorican artists and intellectuals reflected on the development of Puerto Rican diaspora identity, emphasizing their transcendence of victimhood and the continuing centrality of their status as colonial subjects in their self-perception, such as in Pedro Pietri’s acclaimed poem “Puerto Rican Obituary.”⁹⁹

IV. Conclusion: Puerto Rican Diaspora Identity as Hierarchized Borderland

The memoirs of Puerto Rican migrants in 1950s New York and scholarly analyses of island and diaspora culture demonstrate the significance which the US-Puerto Rican colonial relationship had for identity formation. This peculiar dependent relationship

⁹⁶ Duany, *The Puerto Rican Nation On The Move*, 202.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 205.

⁹⁸ Duany, *The Puerto Rican Nation On The Move*, 234.

⁹⁹ Ramón E. Soto-Crespo, *Mainland Passage: The Cultural Anomaly of Puerto Rico*. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2009), 120-123.

where Puerto Rican migrants were more belonging than other immigrant groups, yet also frozen in a colonial hierarchy of inferiority, distinguishes them from the pattern of identity formation seen in other Hispanic groups. Both Puerto Rican identity on the island and in the diaspora can be understood as developing in the space between American and Hispanic influences, but its colonial status – and the resulting invisibility of its border in the American imagination – changes this space from the juncture theorized by Anzaldúa to what I call a hierarchized borderland. A modified understanding of Borderland Discourse is needed to analyze *borinquen* identity formation and the restricted access Puerto Ricans specifically face in integrating into the American public. The combination of disillusionment and inferiorized belonging illustrated in the memoirs of Puerto Rican migrants is a product of hierarchized borderland identity. The legacy of American colonialism in Puerto Rico continues to impact the identities of diaspora *borinquens*. Agüeros' last lines in his memoir perfectly capture this feeling: "I was born in Harlem and I live downtown. And I am a migrant for if migration is anything, it is a state of mind...I am very much a migrant because I am still not quite at home in America."¹⁰⁰

¹⁰⁰Agüeros, "Halfway to Dick and Jane," 104-105.

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Reproductive Bodies: The Medicalization of Women's Bodies Through Abortion in the 19th Century United States

Noah Witte-Winnett

I. Introduction

While what physically constitutes a body is not subject to change over time, the way in which bodies are interpreted and valued within society remains in permanent flux. Today, discourses surrounding the morality of a woman's choice to get an abortion remain politically pressing. This essay is an historical examination of the way in which the abortion issue in Victorian Era medical history worked— through the authority of scientific discourse and religious belief— to fundamentally shift the conception of the female body for political and ideological purposes.

Bodies in a physical sense may not change drastically over time, but the way in which bodies are understood and charged with cultural meanings makes them susceptible to the attitudes of their historical moment. The United States of America as a nation was based on a specific fantasy of unity, an “imagined community,”¹ with carefully demarcated and administered boundaries. Both the boundaries containing and circumscribing the medical body as well as those defining the social, national, body must be imagined as permeable to history. Social reproduction and the creation of new bodies took place either inside or outside what could popularly be recognized as the nation. The increasing contact with “Other,” non-American bodies over the course of the nineteenth century resulted in an identity crisis for the U.S.² While the clear distinction between inside/outside the nation/body were, and today still remain fluid, the case of abortion demonstrates that medical knowledge worked to entrench and solidify this distinction.

¹ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities* (Fairfield: Quebecor World, 2006), 6-7.

² Emily S. Rosenberg and Shanon Fitzpatrick, *American Encounters/Global Interactions : Body and Nation : The Global Realm of U.S. Body Politics in the Twentieth Century* (Durham, NC, USA: Duke University Press Books, 2014), 6.

In the nineteenth century in the United States of America, discourses and theories surrounding in-utero development were instrumentalized by an empowered white-protestant medical professional class, to alter the ability for women to understand and enact agency over their bodies. Under the auspice of the medical discourse, professionals asserted that it was simultaneously in a woman's best interest, as well as in the nation's, that abortion be made illegal and inaccessible. In this essay I will connect demographic and societal events in the latter half of the nineteenth century to the rationale physicians could employ to make abortions inaccessible and morally reprehensible. In the first section of the essay I will outline the historical moment in which the medicalization of women's bodies occurred, the identities of those responsible for this process, particularly their religious affiliations, and the instrumentalization of the prevailing ideological background of the time working to limit women's reproductive agency. From there, I will compare a scientific article discussing new findings in the area of cell theory to a medical professional's condemnation of abortion. Through applying Thomas Laqueur's theory on the power of metaphors, I will describe how medicalization placed emphasis on the fetus rather than the pregnant woman. Subsequently, I will explore the conceptions of pregnancy and female reproduction, such as quickening, which was replaced in the course of the medicalization of the female body. Finally, I will closely examine popular educational anti-abortion tracts alongside professional medical material to describe the manner in which women's bodies were redefined in the context of the crusade against abortion. I will argue that the medicalization of women's bodies allowed the medical profession to withhold the right to abortions from women as it reinscribed a gender hierarchy, that was tied to an exclusive conception of national citizenship.

II. The Historical Actors and the Social and Political Moment

In the eighteenth century it was possible to speak of natural roles of women without invoking scientific knowledge. Women's 'nature' was a social fact; Rousseau did not appeal to any scientific authority to claim that abortion was "unnatural" and "perverse."³ He writes in his treatise *Emile, or On Education*:

"When the Greek women married, they disappeared from public life; within

³ Rosalind P. Petchesky, *Abortion and Woman's Choice : The State, Sexuality, and Reproductive Freedom* (Boston [Mass.]: Northeastern University Press, 1990), 39.

the four walls of their home they devoted themselves to the care of their household and family. This is the mode of life prescribed for women alike by nature and reason.”⁴

Rousseau elaborated his social theory upon this essentialized understanding of femininity. Like Rousseau in the eighteenth century, male medical professionals in the nineteenth century USA had their own idealized vision of society. Both at the individual level of the body and at the societal level, this vision was based in a notion of health that metaphorically tied the health of an individual body to the health of a larger society. By this logic, conceiving of society as a body involved both diagnosing its present state as well as drawing prognoses about its future.

In the realm of political and economic theory, Thomas Malthus similarly essentialized women's bodies. Malthusian thought had a profound impact on the politics surrounding women's bodies and abortion throughout the nineteenth century. Rosalind Petchesky characterizes Malthusianism not merely as an economic and social theory but as an intrinsic component of the ideology of Anglo-American Victorian bourgeois society.⁵ The essence of Malthus's original theory was that the global population, growing at an exponential rate, would outstrip the resources it could realistically extract, whose quantity was increasing only at a linear rate. Poverty, the scarcity of resources, was by this interpretation the result of overpopulation.⁶ In Linda Gordon's reading, according to the Protestant cleric Malthus, overpopulation was the result of moral failings on the individual level. Insisting that individuals should be held responsible for their actions, he opposed abortions in favour of enforcing codes of morality.⁷ The social and political climate Malthus's theory fostered was one characterized by a competition for material resources and the surveillance of individuals for the good of society. Analyzing the implications of Malthus's 1798 *Essay on the Principles of Population*, Catherine Gallagher writes that according to Malthus,

“the value of bodies is not absolute but is rather based on their ability to create a commodity whose value is only defined in relationship to its ability

⁴ Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Emile : Or, on Education* (New York: Basic Books, 1979), Book V.

⁵ Petchesky, *Abortion and Woman's Choice* 36.

⁶ Linda Gordon, *Woman's Body, Woman's Right : A Social History of Birth Control in America* (New York: Grossman, 1976), 75.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 76.

to replenish the [social] body.”⁸

The “value” of the female body, the single site that had the “ability to create a commodity” that could “replenish the [social] body,” thus became imbued with great value in this economy of bodies; it also became the locus for anxiety to those charged with administering the health of the social body. In this Malthusian view, whereby reproductive function equaled social value, a woman’s body was rendered passive, and instrumentalized in the context of societal demands.⁹ In the context of Malthusian theories, individual women’s private experience and choices became highly relevant to the political climate.¹⁰ As the nineteenth century progressed, a differentiation between bodies occurred along the lines of ‘race’ or ‘stock.’ With this change in discourse, the relative value of different female bodies was simultaneously redefined. While Malthus’s theories and fears of overpopulation were eventually disproven, they continued to influence dominant political discourse throughout the nineteenth century.

A distinct demographic claimed the authority to administer women’s bodies and harness their reproductive potential for the greater good of the social body. An overwhelming majority of the men who practiced medicine and spoke on matters of reproduction in the nineteenth century were Protestants of Anglo-Saxon origin.¹¹ Protestant clergymen would often be invited to deliver the graduation commencement speech at medical schools throughout the nineteenth century, particularly in newer schools.¹² The jurisdictions of physicians, the supposedly secular men of science, and the clergy were linked from the outset of doctor’s professional careers. The realms of care they were charged with administering were defined as separate, yet their social roles became increasingly similar. Laqueur claims that the

“[doctor’s] mission was to free women’s bodies from the stigma of clerical prejudice and centuries of popular superstition and, in the process, to

⁸ Catherine Gallagher, “The Body Versus the Social Body in the Works of Thomas Malthus and Henry Mayhew,” *Representations*, no. 14 (1986): 96.

⁹ Petchesky, *Abortion and Woman’s Choice* vii.

¹⁰ Carroll Smith-Rosenberg, *Disorderly Conduct: Visions of Gender in Victorian America* (New York: A.A. Knopf, 1985), 217.

¹¹ Jonathan B. Imber, *Trusting Doctors: The Decline of Moral Authority in American Medicine* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2008), 7.

¹² *Ibid.*, 9.

substitute the physician for the priest as the moral preceptor of society.”¹³

In the USA, as medical discourse became professionalized, the physician emerged alongside the priest as “moral preceptor of society”¹⁴; this transfer of moral authority could only occur with the support of the clergy. At commencement ceremonies, the clergy professed that the physician’s mission combined spiritual labour with professional and material labour.¹⁵ This alliance is evident in the Reverend John Todd’s assertion that “as a class, the medical profession have taken a noble stand”¹⁶ against abortion. Martin Luther Holbrook, M.D. in his medical tract on the pains of childbirth, in turn, cites Reverend Todd to add weight to his argument that abortion was “awfully dangerous, and awfully wicked.”¹⁷ Notably, the class that Todd speaks of in this instance is not simply a professional or vocational class; it is at the same time a highly homogeneous social and ethnic class. For this class to be allowed to assume the physical and moral care of the clergy’s constituency, doctors had to demonstrate that they were themselves morally upright, themselves embodying Protestant morality.¹⁸ This class now had the symbolic blessing of the old moralizers to continue this legacy. Further, this alliance also extended the knowledge structures cultivated in the “centuries of popular superstition”¹⁹ into medical discourse.

The nineteenth century physicians who condemned abortion cannot be isolated from their social context. The national developments transforming American society in the nineteenth century directly shaped anxieties surrounding the maintenance of male Protestant Anglo-Saxon hegemony over both the medical discourse and larger social and political life. In the first decades of the nineteenth century, the belief in the principle of Manifest Destiny, unrestricted westward expansion defined American discussions of reproduction and population: Political commentators such as Benjamin Franklin and Mason Locke Weems regarded the low age of marriage and high fertility rate of the

¹³ Thomas Laqueur, "Orgasm, Generation, and the Politics of Reproductive Biology," in *The Making of the Modern Body : Sexuality and Society in the Nineteenth Century*, ed. Catherine Gallagher and Thomas Walter Laqueur (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987), 29.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Imber, *Trusting Doctors: The Decline of Moral Authority in American Medicine*, 16.

¹⁶ John Todd, *Serpents in the Doves' Nest* (Boston: Lee and Shepard, 1867), 5.

¹⁷ Martin Luther Holbrook, *Parturition without Pain: A Code of Directions for Escaping from the Primal Curse* (New York: Fowler & Wells, 1871), 16.

¹⁸ Imber, *Trusting Doctors: The Decline of Moral Authority in American Medicine*, 18.

¹⁹ Laqueur, "Orgasm, Generation, and the Politics of Reproductive Biology," 29.

young nation as the source of their national strength and pride.²⁰ It seemed like the Malthusian model for considering populations did not apply to the ever-expanding USA.²¹ As the century progressed, however, this pride was transformed into anxiety. Around the midcentury, a significant population influx occurred that threatened the Protestant majority and therefore also its social supremacy, one in which the medical profession was heavily invested. Between 1845 and 1852, over 1.3 million Roman Catholics fled the Potato Famine in Ireland, seeking refuge in the New World.²²

The anxiety this population influx created for the medical elite is apparent in the popular writings of the time. In his anti-abortion essay *Why Not?* Horatio Storer points out that “abortions are infinitely more frequent among Protestant women than among Catholics.”²³ He follows this comment with a defense of Protestantism, attributing the prevalence of abortion among its followers not to the belief system, but rather the “popular ignorance regarding this offense.”²⁴ Storer’s text aims to singularly address and correct this ignorance. In his closing remarks he poses the following question: Shall the “great territories of the far West [...] be filled by our own children or by those of aliens?”²⁵ His nativist appeal is specifically directed towards both the community of physicians and his intended Protestant audience, and not necessarily toward the population as a whole. He, along with other Protestant physicians, recognized that Roman Catholic doctrine was more effective at preventing women from seeking out abortions, and, he perceived this as a threat to the future of the nation.

Storer’s appeal attests to the fears of Protestant “race suicide” resulting from the high birth rate among Roman Catholic immigrants and the receding birth rates among Protestants. He claims, “in one State [...] the natural increase of the population [...] has of late years been wholly by those of recent foreign origin.”²⁶ The population of “the

²⁰ Nicole Eustace, *1812 War and the Passions of Patriotism* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2012), 10.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 9.

²² United States Bureau of the Census, “Historical Statistics of the United States, Colonial Times to 1970,” in *House document - 93d Congress, 1st session ; no. 93-78* (Washington: U.S. Dept. of Commerce, Bureau of the Census : for sale by the Supt. of Docs., U.S. Govt. Print. Off., 1975), 106. Series C89-119: Immigrants, by Country: 1820 to 1970

²³ Horatio Robinson Storer, *Why Not? A Book for Every Woman* (Boston: Lee and Shepard, 1867), 64.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 65.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 85.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 63.

American and native element” on the other hand “is stationary or decreasing.”²⁷ In this usage, “American” was coded as Protestant Anglo-Saxon.”²⁸ The women whose bodies became the subject of social anxieties surrounding race were those of the same class and ‘race’ as the physicians.²⁹ In her analysis, Gallagher proposes that by Malthusian logic,

“[s]ociety was imagined to be a chronically, incurably ill organism that could only be kept alive by the constant flushing, draining, and excising of various deleterious elements.”³⁰

An alternate or expanded version of Gallagher’s model, more relevant to the nineteenth century US from the perspective of the Protestant physicians, would be the existence of multiple competing organisms; the Catholic threat, a “deleterious element,” had been identified as “alien” (i.e. the non-American Other), and through this identification rhetorically excised. The result of this Malthusian logic is that two distinct, seemingly antagonistic social organisms emerge: One Protestant and the other Catholic, with boundaries and growth to be constantly monitored and administered. To answer who will fill the “great territories,” Storer asserts, “this is a question our own women must answer.”³¹ Here Storer invokes the early nineteenth century American ideal of femininity that lauded women’s high fertility rate within the context of marriage. In the American fantasy, this feminine role was a driving force behind the American, i.e. Protestant, colonization of the North American continent.³² Women, through their reproductive potential, became the means through which the supremacy, and consequent survival, of the one (protestant) organism could be guaranteed.

Both the influence of Protestant morality and the paternalist role ascribed to and assumed by physicians are evident in the physicians’ strong opinions on abortion. In many instances the condemnation of the act is rhetorically linked to its divine consequences. In his instructional book on the pains of childbirth, Holbrook quotes his

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Nicola Beisel and Tamara Kay, “Abortion, Race, and Gender in Nineteenth-Century America,” *American Sociological Review* 69, no. 4 (2004): 501.

²⁹ Ibid., 499.

³⁰ Gallagher, “The Body Versus the Social Body in the Works of Thomas Malthus and Henry Mayhew,” 90.

³¹ Storer, *Why Not? A Book for Every Woman*, 85.

³² Eustace, *1812 War and the Passions of Patriotism*, 25.

colleague Storer, who quotes his colleague Granville, asserting that “for as sure as there is in any nation a hidden tampering with infant life, [...] so surely will the chastisement of the Almighty fall upon such a nation.”³³ In this statement, three physicians invoke nation and God in the same breath to condemn abortion. Their professional medical expertise and medical condemnation are intrinsically linked to Christian moralizing rhetoric. Further, New York physician Ely van der Warker, writing on the subject of “Criminal Abortions” in the *Transactions of the Gynaecological Society of Boston*, decries abortion as a “sacrilege.”³⁴ While it is true that many aspects of nineteenth century US society were influenced by religious thought, the fact that doctors would condemn abortion on religious grounds need not be foregone conclusion. The political and moral agendas of the physicians as a class were interlinked with their interpretation of medical and scientific knowledge; they interpreted medical knowledge through the lens of their religion. Additionally, by explicitly situating medical discourse within this religious framework, the ideas they forwarded were made more accessible to the Protestant nation being addressed. Through this appeal, Protestant fears and anxieties listed above were also transposed into medical discourse.

Composed of mainly Protestant men, the American Medical Association, “represent[ing] the medical profession of America”³⁵ in its entirety, was on the forefront of anti-abortion politics in the mid-nineteenth century. In 1857 it launched an investigation to determine how common abortion was nationwide.³⁶ By 1864, it had gathered enough information to conclude that, by its own criteria, it was a rampant societal issue, and in addition to legal reform, the medical profession was obliged to take steps to reduce its frequency.³⁷ Their findings were that abortion was an issue that the common people did not understand or care about enough;³⁸ abortion went “against nature and all natural instinct, and against public interest and morality [...] [and was] dangerous to [women’s] health.”³⁹ After receiving the findings on the prevalence of abortion in the US, the AMA formally adopted an anti-abortion stance in 1859 and held a competition for the best medical educational

³³ Holbrook, *Parturition without Pain* 19.

³⁴ Ely van de Warker, “The Detection of Criminal Abortion,” *Transactions of the Gynaecological Society of Boston* 2, no. 2 (1871): 293.

³⁵ Storer, *Why Not? A Book for Every Woman*, 11.

³⁶ Gordon, *Woman’s Body, Woman’s Right* 60.

³⁷ Storer, *Why Not? A Book for Every Woman*, 11.

³⁸ Gordon, *Woman’s Body, Woman’s Right* 60.

³⁹ Storer, *Why Not? A Book for Every Woman*, 15.

tract on the subject of abortion.⁴⁰ Horatio Storer, the author of *Why Not? A Book for Every Woman*, was awarded this prize by his father David Humphrey Storer, the chair of the AMA prize committee.⁴¹ At the time it was widely referenced as an authoritative opinion on the subject of abortion.⁴² Storer's essay, first published in 1865, is representative of the popular medical discourse surrounding abortion at this historical moment. He received the full support of the AMA; the only amendment he made to the second edition, published in 1867, concerned the safety of anesthesia during childbirth, and was added by collegial request.⁴³ The fact that this minor correction was the single change in this text demonstrates the overwhelming homogeneity of the medical profession's position on and attitude towards the subject.

III. The Erasure of the Female Body

In both the popular and professional medical literature that proliferated in the nineteenth century USA, women were stripped of agency and reduced to objects of study. Discussing Mary Putnam Jacobi's work on women's reproductive physiology in the late 1800s, Laqueur highlights the "power of cultural imperatives of metaphor, in the production and interpretation of the rather limited body of data available to reproductive biology during the late nineteenth century."⁴⁴ The power of metaphors is particularly evident and powerful in physicians' condemnation of abortion. A comparison between the scientific findings of the French scientists Clemenceau and Robin, and the US gynecologist Hugh L. Hodge's medical description of the phenomenon of conception will illustrate the rhetorical and imaginative power of metaphors in the medical discourse on abortion.

In medical and scientific discussions of reproductive physiology at this time, scientists and physicians invoked metaphors that erased women's agency by reducing women to the reproductive potential of their bodies. Clemenceau and Robin's 1864 essay "De la

⁴⁰ Smith-Rosenberg, *Disorderly Conduct* 222.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*

⁴² Sara Dubow, *Ourselves Unborn : A History of the Fetus in Modern America* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 16; Smith-Rosenberg, *Disorderly Conduct* 222; Carroll Smith-Rosenberg and Charles Rosenberg, "The Female Animal: Medical and Biological Views of Woman and Her Role in Nineteenth-Century America," *The Journal of American History* 60, no. 2 (1973): 344.

⁴³ Storer, *Why Not? A Book for Every Woman*, 88.

⁴⁴ Laqueur, "Orgasm, Generation, and the Politics of Reproductive Biology," 34.

génération des éléments anatomiques” was translated by F. G. Snelling, M.D. and published in English in the *American Journal of Obstetric and Diseases of Women and Children* in 1870.⁴⁵ Through their use of metaphor, the authors establish the life fetus as a pre-determined fact that necessitates that women’s bodies function as the site of unperturbed care. Building on de Mirbel’s theory that plants are a “federation of anatomical elements,” in their essay, the two French scientists make the claim that “[a]natomical analysis [...] reduces the animal organism into its ultimate corpuscles.”⁴⁶ They outline a theory of cell life whereby “*la naissance*,” cell birth, “comprises both reproduction and regeneration”;⁴⁷ once the “ultimate corpuscle” is capable of reproducing itself and sustaining its structure, birth is completed. Following this assertion, they claim that “the appearance of the ovule of the first anatomical element, and the birth of the being, constitute the same process.”⁴⁸ They do not differentiate between the fertilized and unfertilized ovule, rather they “regard the ovule as a preexistent matter,”⁴⁹ assuming its existence as a point of departure for their study. This conflation is unsurprising since fertilization was first observed in sea-urchins twelve years later in 1876.⁵⁰ Prior to this discovery, the exact progression of the microscopic changes embryos underwent was unclear.

Clemenceau and Robin discuss a general theory of the “evolution of embryonic germs” for “elements ... in the ovule, the embryo, the foetus and the adult,”⁵¹ making a special mention of the ovule. However the entire essay lacks an explicit mention of a woman. Almost in passing, they mention that the precondition for the evolutionary process under investigation is that “anatomical elements should find themselves placed in certain conditions favorable to nutrition and development.”⁵² Women’s bodies and their reproductive function are mentioned here, but actual women who might have an interest in what occurs in their bodies are entirely absent; their bodies are instrumentalized to nourish a fetus but the question of their health outside of this nurturing role is avoided.

⁴⁵ G. Clemenceau and M. Ch. Robin, "The Evolution of the Embryonic Germ According to Recent Observations of Clemenceau and Robin," *The American journal of obstetrics and diseases of women and children* 2 (1870): 131 footnote.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 133.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 136.

⁴⁸ Ibid., 137.

⁴⁹ Ibid., 139.

⁵⁰ Dubow, *Ourselves Unborn* 13.

⁵¹ Clemenceau and Robin, "The Evolution of the Embryonic Germ " 138.

⁵² Ibid., 136.

Clemenceau and Robin can thus maintain that the moment an ovule is formed, however that may occur, it is considered “born.” It can be assumed that the inclusion of this translation in the *American Journal of Obstetrics and Diseases of Women and Children* in 1870 was a policy decision on the part of its publishers. In the same volume of the journal, a review of Hugh L. Hodge’s treatise “Foeticide, or Criminal Abortion” lauds his contribution for the “truths he sets forth.”⁵³ In the context of the medical journal, the translated scientific article does not merely stand as a neutral scientific fact. Their theory resonates congruently with the general anti-abortion program of the AMA; the fact that they claimed that the ovule could be considered “born” is incredibly significant. The context in which it is presented to the medical community is politically charged, blatantly intending to influence how medical practitioners understand the body, and consequently how they approach their female patients on the subject of abortion.

Hugh L. Hodge succeeds in effacing women in a similar manner in his introductory address to students at the University of Pennsylvania in 1854. His lecture was published on two other occasions, once in 1839 and then shortly before his death in 1872.⁵⁴ The first address garnered little attention, but by 1854 the students who heard it asked Hodge to be published, a request to which he happily obliged.⁵⁵ In his address, Hodge draws parallel between an unborn child and an acorn:

“As an acorn, ... dropped into the earth, is capable of vegetating and producing, ... under favorable circumstances, by its own inherent powers, another oak ... ; so the embryo, by its own innate vital properties, ... is gradually developed in utero, from its incipient state of existence ... to that of the perfect fetus at the full period of utero-gestation.”⁵⁶

Like Clemenceau and Robin’s “ovule” metaphor, Hodge’s use of the acorn metaphor effaces women as individuals and introduces “the embryo” as a subject. Women are likened to the “earth;” they become the “favorable circumstances” that enable the acorn to grow into a tree and, by analogy, the fetus to grow into a human being. In this

⁵³ “Review of Foeticide, or Criminal Abortion,” *ibid.*: 558.

⁵⁴ Dubow, *Ourselves Unborn* 18.

⁵⁵ Hugh L. Hodge, *On Criminal Abortion. A Lecture* (Philadelphia: T.K. & P.G. Collins, 1854), Correspondence. It is worth noting that Hodge’s first address, in 1839, predates the phenomenon of Protestant fears of “race suicide.” This fear only became an issue in public discourse in the mid-1840s

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 10.

metaphor, as with Malthusian theory, women are assumed to be and declared passive; they become unnamed receptacles in which the teleological growth of an already-present individual, “from its incipient state of existence ... to that of the perfect foetus” may occur unperturbed. The embryo, already possessing “vital properties,” is the active participant in this drama, the master of its own destiny.

A focus on the fetus at the expense of the mother reoccurs in nineteenth-century medical discourse. During this period, anatomical atlases and visual representations of bodies became teaching tools for physicians. These atlases became the foundation of physicians’ and surgeons’ knowledge of the body and from them they learned about what to expect from actual bodies.⁵⁷ In its depictions in gynecological atlases, the woman’s body surrounding the fetus became increasingly and disproportionately insignificant; whereas in the 18th century, anatomical dolls for training midwives featured a head and limbs, by the mid-nineteenth century, gynecological atlases depicting a fetus *in utero* neglected to include the whole body of the mother.⁵⁸ *The Medical Student’s Vade Mecum*, a medical and surgical handbook, popular enough to be in its 7th edition by 1865, documents this stylized depiction of a fetus inside a womb.⁵⁹ (See Appendix) Save for two hips and the vulva, the body of the mother is close to unintelligible. The skin on her stomach is neatly flayed open, the skin flaps obscuring her torso and neck. The uterus, however, is neatly opened, cut away to present a fully matured fetus cradled in her womb. Barbara Duden describes how the depiction of fetuses in medical textbooks has a history of featuring a fully formed child.⁶⁰ The large intestine fill the remainder of her body cavity and it seems that the artist went out of his way to depict the ovaries emerging from the mess of viscera. In nineteenth-century medical discourse, the ovaries were imagined to be “the essence of femininity itself.”⁶¹ The explicit inclusion of the ovaries in the illustration signals the reproductive potential and, as it would be read at the

⁵⁷ Roberta McGrath, *Seeing Her Sex : Medical Archives and the Female Body* (Manchester, UK; New York; New York, NY: Manchester University Press ; Distributed exclusively in the USA by Palgrave, 2002), 64.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 30.

⁵⁹ George Mendenhall, *The Medical Student’s Vade Mecum. A Compendium of Anatomy, Physiology, Chemistry, Poisons, Materia Medica, Pharmacy, Surgery, Obstetrics, Practice of Medicine, Diseases of the Skin, Etc. Etc.*, 7th ed. (Philadelphia: Lindsay & Blakiston, 1865), 538. fig 11.

⁶⁰ Barbara Duden, “The Fetus on the “Farther Shore”: Towards a History of the Unborn,” in *Fetal Subjects, Feminist Positions*, ed. Lynn Marie Morgan and Meredith W. Michaels (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1999), 21.

⁶¹ Laqueur, “Orgasm, Generation, and the Politics of Reproductive Biology,” 27.

time, the reproductive imperative and nature of the woman's body, even in death. As with the ovule and acorn metaphors, in this depiction, women are reduced to their bodies and their potential reproductive function.

While the mother in this illustration is quite obviously dead, the status of the fetus is more ambiguous. It is clearly the focus of the illustration, but its full exposure compromises its safety. It is, however, fully matured, with its head directed towards the vagina, awaiting birth. The effect of this tension of depictions of birth and death is that the fetus is divorced from the mother's body; it can feasibly be imagined outside the uterus, away and distinct from the body of the mother, screaming in the next instance.

IV. In the Beginning there was Quickening

It is not a transhistorical fact that what we now recognize as a fetus growing inside a woman's womb is alive and is considered to be a subject with rights. Prior to the nineteenth century the concept of "quickening" was intrinsic to how reproduction was understood. "Quickening" refers to a women's sensation of movement inside her womb. Dubow describes the fetus as an "emergent identity"⁶² of industrial society, one that previously did not exist but whose existence became necessary in order to criminalize abortion. This identity was not an apolitical occurrence; its construction coincided with the racialized fears of Protestant doctors of the mid-nineteenth century.⁶³

In order for the fetus to emerge, "quickening" had to be reconceptualized, and the power of its descriptive potential had to be abandoned. Smith-Rosenberg uses "quickening," which she calls a "nineteenth century term," to describe the "first four months of pregnancy" in which, prior to the 1860s, it was legal to procure an abortion in all states.⁶⁴ Smith-Rosenberg's use of quickening, however, fails to take into account the nuanced understanding of what pregnancy was in the nineteenth century. As early as the Hippocratic corpus and Aristotle, quickening was understood to mark the beginning of life in the womb, although the sources disagree on the stage of the pregnancy at which this event occurred.⁶⁵ In the early nineteenth century, it was only *after* quickening was experienced that a woman's status as being pregnant was conceivable; in the four

⁶² Dubow, *Ourselves Unborn* 10.

⁶³ Beisel and Kay, "Abortion, Race, and Gender in Nineteenth-Century America," 499.

⁶⁴ Smith-Rosenberg, *Disorderly Conduct* 219.

⁶⁵ Gordon, *Woman's Body, Woman's Right* 52 footnote.

months that followed what was later identified as the microscopic event in which a sperm cell fused with an ovum, prior to the sensation of quickening, the woman was not considered pregnant.⁶⁶ According to Duden and Gordon, as long as quickening remained the criterion for pregnancy, women could be the interpreters of their own bodies, their subjective experiences and needs. There was little public scrutiny or interpretation surrounding what was happening to a female body during pregnancy.⁶⁷

Before the idea of trimesters or stages of pregnancy were introduced, it was commonplace for women to experience irregular menses or untimely uterine discharges before the onset of quickening. Although they would later be called miscarriages, even in the nineteenth century these events were understood as blocked menstrual paths that delayed the onset of menses; these signs were indications of a possible future pregnancy but did not provide a concrete forecast of one.⁶⁸ To illustrate the nuances of the 18th-century understanding of quickening and pregnancy, Barbara Duden tells the story of a weaver's wife who visited a Dr. Johann Storch in 1725 in Eisenach: Storch claims that this woman had "felt something that she perceived as a likely pregnancy"⁶⁹ but was now experiencing "*Haemorrhagiam uteri*" (uterine hemorrhaging) along with a headache. After receiving medicine from the physician she ejected a "*molum*," a growth, from her uterus. Her headache and her bleeding then stopped. Several days later she reported that "some piece ha[d] left her, big as a ripe nut, that on one side looked like a pig's head."⁷⁰ Both the doctor and the patient understood that the formation of a child as a result of quickening was merely a possibility; it was within reason to find an imperfect formation resulting from quickening and that if it occurred "nature [would] expel[] it as something useless."⁷¹ In the 18th century, the birth of a child was considered a potential outcome of quickening and subsequent pregnancy, but was by no means a certainty. What would later be called induced miscarriages through abortifacients, in the 18th century, was understood as the clearing of the menses, a routine bodily function.⁷²

Duden's example is useful for historicizing the concept of quickening and pregnancy in

⁶⁶ Petchesky, *Abortion and Woman's Choice* 30.

⁶⁷ Barbara Duden, *Disembodying Women : Perspectives on Pregnancy and the Unborn* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1993), 81.

⁶⁸ "The Fetus on the "Farther Shore": Towards a History of the Unborn," 16.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 17.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*

⁷² *Ibid.*, 18.

general. While her example is set in Eisenach, part of the Holy Roman Empire in Europe in 1725, a similar understanding of women's bodily functions is evident in a medical case in the USA in 1871. Ely van de Warker details with horror the brazenness of a woman in New York who "successfully carried out ... a plan of deception" by lying to her husband, "a young medical man," about having procured an abortion.⁷³ In van de Warker's account, the husband accepted the wife's explanation that after visiting a physician, "a healthy renewal of her menses [was restored] after an interruption of two or three months."⁷⁴ Being only "two or three months" pregnant, this woman had probably not yet experienced quickening so it was not apparent to her husband that she should be pregnant. An understanding of quickening, as it was known in Eisenach in 1725, seems to have crossed the Atlantic and influenced the popular conception of women's bodies in North America.⁷⁵ Furthermore, the fact that a "young medical man," someone who had presumably been exposed to the newest medical knowledge in medical school, did not recognize "two or three months" of blocked menses as constituting a pregnancy is evidence of the lack of consensus on the subject at this time. This understanding of quickening, even the mere existence of the concept, contradicted the definition of pregnancy in which later medical professionals in the nineteenth century were invested. Prior to the imposition of the concept of conception, it was not conceivable that anything resembling a life could exist in a womb prior to quickening.

V. Towards a New Definition of Abortion

With the scientific knowledge such as that of Clemenceau and Robin, physicians were able to challenge the use of quickening to define fetal life. In this section, I will primarily use Horatio Storer's educational book *Why Not?* in dialogue with contemporary medical voices to establish how abortion was redefined. Storer argues that although "[m]any

⁷³ Warker, "The Detection of Criminal Abortion," 295.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ In 1720, the population of the British colonies in North America is estimated to have been only 466,185.* By 1800, the population of the newly formed United States of America had swelled to 5.3 million and by the mid-century had reached 23 million, mostly through immigration from Europe.** It is thus plausible to assume that the understanding of quickening that Duden recounts was brought over the Atlantic with this population movement.

*United States Bureau of the Census, "Historical Statistics of the United States, Colonial Times to 1970," in *House document - 93d Congress, 1st session ; no. 93-78* (Washington: U.S. Dept. of Commerce, Bureau of the Census : for sale by the Supt. of Docs., U.S. Govt. Print. Off., 1975), 1168. Series Z 1-19: Estimated Population of American Colonies: 1610-1780

**ibid., 1: 8. Series A 6-8, Annual Population Estimates for the United States: 1790 to 1970

women suppose that the child is not alive till quickening ... they are ... erroneous. ... Quickening is in fact but a sensation.”⁷⁶ With this statement Storer discredits women’s body as a site of knowledge production. Key to this attack on the body was the idea that women were too sensible, and their subjective experiences were incapable of interpreting reality accurately. In his gynecological reference book, Hodge, asserts that, just as “[i]nfants are proverbially sensitive,” “women, compared with men, are impressible and sensitive.”⁷⁷ Women are therefore predisposed

“to delirium, insanity, and to various perversions of the intellectual and moral powers, ... the most acute metaphysician or theologian, as well as the most talented and experienced physician, cannot decide ... what is physical or spiritual, or where moral responsibility ceases, and insanity begins.”⁷⁸

Because of women’s increased “sensitivity,” even experts could not fully understand them in a rational manner; anything that women claimed about themselves and their subjective experiences, therefore, could be dismissed as intellectually and morally perverse or “insane.” This heightened sensitivity and subsequent frailty was intrinsically linked to their biological reproductive system, particularly the uterus.⁷⁹ The female body, because of its erratic nature and inconsistencies, became subordinate to the physician’s knowledge.

Whereas Hodge was describing women generally, Storer uses this essential feminine inferiority to argue against women’s autonomy in relation to the physician specifically on the issue of abortion. Storer claims,

“[i]f each woman were allowed to judge for herself in this matter, her decision upon the abstract question would be too sure to be warped by personal considerations, and those of the moment.”⁸⁰

Hodge’s view supports the idea that it is beyond women to make informed decisions

⁷⁶ Storer, *Why Not? A Book for Every Woman*, 32.

⁷⁷ Hugh L. Hodge, *On Diseases Peculiar to Women: Including Displacements of the Uterus* (Philadelphia: Henry C. Lea, 1868), 70.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 70-71.

⁷⁹ Smith-Rosenberg and Rosenberg, “The Female Animal,” 334.

⁸⁰ Storer, *Why Not? A Book for Every Woman*, 74.

regarding their own bodies and their “personal considerations” were wrapped up in the ambiguity and uncertainties that Hodge describes. Storer’s solution is to remove any influence a woman might have in the decisions concerning her body, and place her trust entirely with the physician. From this point, women’s social role came to be determined and dictated by their inability to accurately know about themselves.⁸¹ Because quickening was “a sensation” felt by women, and women were biologically incapable of understanding their own bodies, doctors could take the definition of pregnancy and abortion out of their hands.

It was commonly understood that an intrinsic part of the essential woman was the reproductive potential she acquired by owning a uterus. As we have seen, in social and political discourses surrounding ‘race suicide’ at the time this role was clearly defined; in the example of Clemenceau and Robin and Hodge, the assumption of feminine passivity was infused into scientific and medical knowledge as well. Therefore, Storer was able to claim, “to bear children ... is the end for which [women] are physiologically constituted and for which they are destined by nature,”⁸² without being challenged. On a similar vein, Holbrook, quoting a Professor Hubbard, asserted further, “as if the Almighty, in creating the female sex, *had taken the uterus and built up a woman around it.*”⁸³ The uterus became the focal point in women’s biological make-up and essence, and a plethora of diseases were attributed to the disturbance of its natural function.⁸⁴

It was Storer’s fundamental belief that abortions were harmful to women because they upset their natural feminine constitution. Characterizing his campaign as malevolent in its attempt to outlaw and prevent abortion would be to misrepresent his intentions and aims regarding the health of women. Any interference with the process that was seemingly determined by the biological composition of a woman was “always attended with more or less shock to the maternal system, even though the full effect of this is not noticed for years.”⁸⁵ For this statement to be coherent, the concept of a “vital force” is key. It was taken for granted in medical discourse that every body contained a finite quantity of this “vital force” that, if depleted, was harmful to the individual.⁸⁶ On this assumption, Storer

⁸¹ Smith-Rosenberg and Rosenberg, “The Female Animal,” 333.

⁸² Storer, *Why Not? A Book for Every Woman*, 75.

⁸³ Holbrook, *Parturition without Pain* 14-15.

⁸⁴ McGrath, *Seeing Her Sex* 34; Smith-Rosenberg and Rosenberg, “The Female Animal,” 335.

⁸⁵ Storer, *Why Not? A Book for Every Woman*, 38.

⁸⁶ Smith-Rosenberg and Rosenberg, “The Female Animal,” 340.

asserted that “[d]uring pregnancy all the vital energies of the mother are devoted to a single end: the protection and nourishment of the child.”⁸⁷ This view justified his concern that prematurely interrupting a pregnancy was harmful to the woman. In Rosenberg and Smith-Rosenberg’s words, however, the effect was that “[p]hysicians saw woman as the product and prisoner of her reproductive system,”⁸⁸ not as individuals with experiences and specific needs living constrained lives.

In addition to the worries of ‘race suicide’ in the middle of the century, this new understanding over the dangers abortions posed to women’s bodies prompted Storer, along with the AMA, to launch an investigation into the popular practice of abortions. By 1867 Storer claimed to have established the “true frequency of the crime”⁸⁹ by listening to and recording the “confessions of many hundreds of women.”⁹⁰ Although confession was distinctly not an aspect of Protestantism, the religious dimension of this practice cannot be denied. Unlike confession in a religious context, confessions of abortion undoubtedly had to be extracted through precise questioning, and potential emotional duress; van de Warker does not rule out “wringing a confession from [women] by means of [their] fears.”⁹¹ Based on the detrimental health effects of abortions, physicians saw this as a necessary measure. For physicians, the perception of an increase in abortions was not only harmful to society along Malthusian lines, but also harmful to individual women. Storer quotes Hodge saying that “[p]hysicians alone ... can rectify public opinion,”⁹² and could thus preserve women from harm. The paternalistic element of the mission to protect women and a correct society is highly reminiscent of the moralizing mission instilled into the medical profession by the Protestant establishment.

VI. Conclusion

Women and their bodies were deeply entangled in social, cultural and medical imperatives that demanded from them their reproductive capabilities. There was little room for women to exert a say over how their bodies were treated. Medical professionals took away their ability to define their own experiences and needs, justifying this encroachment in the name of women’s individual health and the health of society as a

⁸⁷ Storer, *Why Not? A Book for Every Woman*, 38.

⁸⁸ Smith-Rosenberg and Rosenberg, “The Female Animal,” 335.

⁸⁹ Storer, *Why Not? A Book for Every Woman*, 52.

⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁹¹ Warker, “The Detection of Criminal Abortion,” 303.

⁹² Storer, *Why Not? A Book for Every Woman*, 82.

whole.

Because those who redefined the discourse around women's bodies in this profession came from a homogeneous class in society, the social anxieties of this class were reinscribed onto and into the bodies of all women. As Dubow writes, in the context of the fears surrounding Protestant 'race suicide,' the unborn that is at risk of being aborted becomes "a synecdoche for a white, Protestant nation besieged."⁹³ Through a very specific medical discourse, influenced by the anxieties of the Protestant ascendancy, what Barbara Duden calls the "ideology of 'a life',"⁹⁴ was implanted into women's wombs, leaving women in a vulnerable and passive position to articulate their needs. The medicalization of women's bodies could demand this passivity while at the same time guaranteeing that being reduced to this state was in a woman's best interest.

Although the social and political ideas concerning essentially femininity were made to intersect with medical discourse to justify the suppression of the technology of abortion, in the end, it was unsuccessful. Abortion, even after it was criminalized, was never classified as homicide, which would be the logical conclusion if "a life" was present in the womb.⁹⁵ Additionally, although the medical establishment refused to sanction the use of the technology of abortion, women still sought it out and risked their lives to control their reproduction.⁹⁶ Although women's social inferiority and lack of freedom was imposed on them as a result of the medicalization of their bodies, by continuing to seek out abortions they resisted the medical definitions imposed on them.

⁹³ Dubow, *Ourselves Unborn* 24.

⁹⁴ Duden, *Disembodying Women* 54.

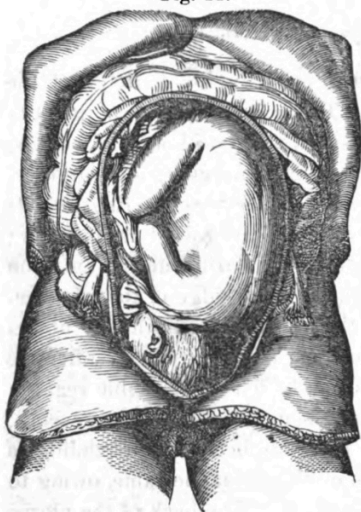
⁹⁵ Petchesky, *Abortion and Woman's Choice* 330.

⁹⁶ Gordon, *Woman's Body, Woman's Right* 39.

Appendix

During the fifth month, motion is perceptible by the mother, the

Fig. 11.



length is from seven to nine inches, and the weight nine or ten ounces; at the sixth month, the parts are more perfectly developed, it weighs from one to two pounds, and its length is from nine to twelve inches.

At the seventh month, all parts are more perfectly developed; the eyelids, which until now have been united by the *membrana pupillaris*, are separated; the hair and nails grow, the weight is from two to three pounds, and the length is from twelve to fourteen inches. At eight months, the weight is from three to five pounds, the length sixteen inches or more,

and all the parts show a much more perfect condition of development. At the ninth month, the head has considerable firmness, ossification is more complete, all the organs are capable of performing their appropriate functions in a more perfect manner; the length of the fœtus is about 20 inches, and the average weight is about 7 pounds in this country.

EXTRA-UTERINE PREGNANCY.

What are the *varieties* of extra-uterine pregnancy? *Ovarian pregnancy*, or when the embryo is developed in the ovary.

Ventral or *abdominal pregnancy*, when the embryo becomes deposited and developed in the cavity of the abdomen.

Tubal pregnancy, or when the embryo becomes developed in the tube.

Interstitial pregnancy, or when the ovule becomes deposited between the layers of the muscular fibres of the uterus and is developed.

What are the *consequences* of extra-uterine pregnancy? The

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The Moynihan Report: An analysis of constructed pathologies and neglected historical legacies

Yasmin Ali

I. The Forgotten Chapters: Revisiting the Moynihan Report

Few policy documents in the United States are as infamous as the Moynihan report, published by politician-academic Daniel P. Moynihan in 1964. Originally a confidential White House document, the report attempted to uncover the cause of Black poverty in America. Moynihan linked Black poverty to family structure, contending that "...for the vast numbers of the unskilled, poorly educated, city working-class the fabric of conventional social relationships has all but disintegrated¹." By this, Moynihan was referring to a plethora of issues ranging from high divorce rates to the prevalence of female-headed households – trends he felt were rooted in Black culture. For Moynihan, as long as such a pathological familial situation persisted, poverty and disadvantage would continue to plague the Black community.

Once leaked in 1965, the report faced an immeasurable amount of backlash for its contents – particularly from the African-American community. By placing the onus of struggle onto Black culture, many saw the report as inflammatory and quite racist. Prominent Black activists actively spoke out against the report, such as Martin Luther King, who claimed that highlighting "negative accounts of Negro family life" would work "...to justify, neglect, and rationalize oppression."² Others, such as James Farmer – the national director of the Congress of Racial Equality – took an even stronger stance against the report. In an interview with the Washington Post in 1965, he claimed that the

¹ United States Department of Labor, Office of Policy Planning and Research, *The Negro Family: the Case for National Action*, by Daniel P. Moynihan (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1965).

² James T. Patterson, *Freedom is not enough: the Moynihan Report and America's Struggle over Black Family Life – from LBJ to Obama* (New York: Basic Books, 2010), 77.

Moynihan report was becoming, "...the scriptural basis of new brands of bigotry."³ Expressing an overwhelming sense of weariness towards the report, he went on to state that, "It has been the fatal error of the American society for 300 years to ultimately blame the roots of poverty and violence in the Negro community upon Negroes themselves. [...] I honestly felt that the civil rights and voting laws indicated that we were rid of this kind of straw-man logic, but here it is again, in its most vicious form, handing the racists a respectable new weapon and insulting the intelligence of black men and women everywhere."⁴

In many ways, the resentful reaction of the African-American community towards the report was understandable – for more reasons than one. The language Moynihan chose to use in the report was beyond incendiary – describing the lower-class Black family as "highly unstable" and "...approaching complete breakdown."⁵ This language, coupled with the fact that the report was leaked, led to the emergence of apocalyptic headlines from several news outlets.⁶ *Newsweek* magazine, for instance, released a story on the report in 1965, featuring a photograph of Black children in Harlem tossing bottles, with an accompanying caption that read, "A time bomb ticks in the ghetto."⁷ In addition, the timing of the report's release could have hardly been worse. As authors Douglas S. Massey and Robert J. Sampson describe, in the context of an emerging Black power movement, Moynihan's emphasis "...on humiliated Black men could not have been less timely, and in the context of a coalescing feminist movement, his pairing of matriarchy and pathology could not have been less welcome. Young black militants and newly self-aware feminists joined in a rising tide of vilification, and Moynihan was widely pilloried not only a racist, but a sexist to boot."⁸

However, all these critiques fail to address an underlying tension that exists within the report. Specifically, although the majority of the report links familial disintegration to the abnormality of Black culture – there are a few areas in Moynihan's work that completely diverge from this thesis. In certain excerpts, Moynihan addresses structural issues – primarily those related to the economy – as the cause of familial disintegration; and by

³ "Core Chief Rips Report by Moynihan", *The Washington Post*, December 17, 1965, 1.

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ United States Department of Labor, *The Negro Family*, 5.

⁶ Patterson, *Freedom is not enough*, xiv.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 67.

⁸ Douglas S. Massey and Robert J. Sampson, "Introduction: Moynihan Redux: Legacies and Lessons", *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 631, no.1 (2009): 9.

extension, as the cause of fundamental weakness in the Black community. To demonstrate, in one example, Moynihan links familial disintegration (i.e. divorce, desertion) to high unemployment rates. According to Moynihan, “During times when jobs were reasonably plentiful, the Negro family became stronger and more stable. As jobs became more and more difficult to find, the stability of the family has become more... difficult to maintain.”⁹ In another section, he discusses the inability of the American wage system to provide for families, explaining that “The federal minimum wage of \$1.25 per hour provides a basic income for an individual, but an income well below the poverty line for a couple, much less a family with children.”¹⁰ In light of these excerpts, it becomes apparent that Moynihan was not completely unaware of the role the economy played in the lives of African-Americans. Consequently, it makes one question Moynihan’s characterization as a racist who completely failed to discuss the role of institutionalized poverty within American race relations. Yet, in his report, Moynihan generally fails to acknowledge key structural economic issues that have contributed to both familial instability and poverty within the Black community. Moreover, in most of the text, he puts all his discursive efforts into constructing the Black family as abnormal – independent of the economy. This is achieved through the culturally potent images of the “lazy Black father” and “domineering Black woman”. Even more interestingly, Moynihan’s section on “history” – particularly slavery and the Reconstruction period – only serve to bolster these images.

Essentially, although Moynihan seems to understand the importance of economic oppression and institutionalized poverty – he fails to place it at the center of his analysis. The question is, why? Why did Moynihan choose to pathologize the Black family in his report instead of the American economy? Most importantly, what historical legacies did he neglect to address as a result of that theoretical choice? Most critiques of the Moynihan Report center around his comments on the supposed “tangle of pathology” entrapping the Black community. However, I aim to provide a fresh analysis of the Moynihan Report. Firstly, my analysis will pertain to an oft-ignored chapter of the report – specifically, that entitled, “The Roots of the Problem” in which Moynihan provides an overview of Black history as pertaining to his thesis. Secondly, it can be argued that within this chapter, Moynihan’s sections on slavery and the Reconstruction period are largely historically inaccurate and work to construct a pathologized account of Black

⁹ United States Department of Labor, *The Negro Family*, 21.

¹⁰ *Ibid*, 24.

history. Most importantly, this paper will be delving into the historical legacies that Moynihan *fails* to address in his account of Black history – particularly, the inability of African-Americans to procure capital during slavery; and consequent lack of wealth redistribution during the Reconstruction period that ultimately left Black America in a perpetual state of poverty. As a result, it can be argued that within his report, Moynihan prioritizes cultural arguments in favor to structural ones – thus, failing to account for the ways in which a long-standing history of economic oppression has impacted the socioeconomic difficulties the Black community faced into the 1960s. Contrary to Moynihan’s conclusions, it was not the Black family that was abnormal – but the American economy.

Prior to delving into an analysis of Moynihan’s report, it is necessary to further contextualize the contents of the report, as well as its historical legacies. As previously noted, in March 1964, Daniel Patrick Moynihan published a report officially entitled, “The Negro Family: The Case for National Action.”¹¹ The seventy-eight page report, which presented a dismal portrait of Black family life in the inner cities, rested largely on research and statistics compiled by the Policy Planning and Research staff of the U.S. Department of Labor.¹² Writing at the peak of the civil rights movement, Moynihan sought to establish the idea that African-Americans could only achieve “equality of results” if the Black family – particularly among lower class African-Americans – was bolstered.¹³ He supported this idea in three separate chapters. The first chapter, “The Negro American Family”, provides several statistics to indicate the ways in which the Black family is breaking down by drawing on high divorce rates, illegitimate births, female-headed households, and welfare dependency.¹⁴ In the second chapter, “The Roots of the Problem”, Moynihan attempts to describe the ways in which Black culture has been degraded by oppression – thus leading to the breakdown of the Black family.¹⁵ In this chapter, which I analyze further in-depth later, he primarily discusses slavery, the Reconstruction period, and urbanization. In his final and most famous chapter, “The Tangle of Pathology”, Moynihan discusses the presence of “matriarchy” in the Black community (i.e. female headed households) and the concurrent emasculation of Black

¹¹ Patterson, *Freedom is not enough*, xii.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ United States Department of Labor, *The Negro Family*, 1-5.

¹⁴ Ibid., 5-13.

¹⁵ Ibid., 15-21.

men.¹⁶ He also uses this chapter to discuss the failures of black youth, particularly in relation to educational attainment, army enrollment, and delinquency. It should be noted that Moynihan's report serves as a descriptive tool – but does not provide a prescription for the problems outlined. Instead, he ends his report with a proposed “national effort” to enhance the stability of the Black family.¹⁷

The Moynihan Report was primarily written as a means to grab the attention of top administration officials in the hopes that they would enact widespread socioeconomic reform to aid lower-class Black families.¹⁸ Confidentially published in 1964, the report was quite well received by the White House. In fact, the report did so well that the President, Lyndon B. Johnson, asked Moynihan to help draft his famous speech at Howard University in June 1965.¹⁹ Moynihan's influence on the speech was apparent as Johnson promised to fight for large-scale socioeconomic programs to “...hold families together.”²⁰ However, by mid-July the report was leaked – coinciding shortly with the Watts Riots in August. The latter refers to a five-day period of urban violence in the predominantly Black area of Watts in Los Angeles, in which thirty-four people killed, and thousands sustained injuries.²¹ The Watts Riots, which surprised many civil rights leaders as well as Johnson, led reporters and others to scramble in search of key sources of Black urban unrest.²² In the process, they rushed to get their hands on copies of the report. As previously mentioned, a large number of news reports zeroed in on passages within the report that painted a devastating portrait of family disorganization²³. Furthermore, as historian James T. Patterson notes, Moynihan's use of inflammatory language “...seemed to suggest that deep-seated historical forces had all but irreparably savaged Black culture.”²⁴ And so, during the summer and fall of 1965, a vital time in modern U.S. political history, the liberal mood of the spring came to an end – with the Moynihan report causing controversy and dismay.

¹⁶ Ibid, 29-45.

¹⁷ Ibid, 53.

¹⁸ Patterson, *Freedom is not enough*, xii.

¹⁹ Ibid, xiii.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Ibid.

²² Ibid.

²³ Ibid, xiv.

²⁴ Ibid.

II. Recalling the Legacies of American Slavery

The second chapter of the Moynihan Report, entitled, “The Roots of the Problem,” provides an inaccurate and pathologized account of Black history – particularly distorting the history of slavery and Reconstruction in the United States. These accounts can be analyzed to highlight the historical legacies of institutional economic oppression that are completely neglected by Moynihan in the writing of his report.

Moynihan begins his commentary on the slave era by stating that American slavery was profoundly different from and indescribably worse than “...any recorded servitude, ancient or modern.”²⁵ He then proceeds to draw on the works of Alexis de Tocqueville and Nathan Glazer to describe key differences between slavery in the United States – and that of other slaveholding countries, such as Brazil. To demonstrate, Moynihan notes that Brazil, “...had a legal and religious tradition which accorded the slave a place as a human being in the hierarchy of society – a luckless, miserable place, to be sure, but a place withal.”²⁶ In stark contrast, within the context of the United States, “...there was nothing in the tradition of English law or Protestant theology which could accommodate to the fact of human bondage – the slaves were therefore reduced to the status of chattels.”²⁷ The uniqueness of the American slave system was further elaborated in an excerpt of Glazer’s work, which reads: “...the Brazilian slave knew he was a man, and that he differed in degree, not in kind, from his master. [In the United States], the slave was totally removed from the protection of organized society, his existence as a human being was given no recognition by any religious or secular agency, he was totally ignorant of and completely cut off from his past, and he was offered absolutely no hope for the future.”²⁸

Up until here, Moynihan’s comments on slavery are relatively historically sound – nevertheless, the weakness in his work comes to light with the inclusion of an excerpt written by historian Stanley M. Elkins. Specifically, Elkins draws a comparison between the psychological impact of Nazi concentration camps and American slavery. According to Elkins, both constitute “...closed systems, with little chance of manumission, emphasis

²⁵ United States Department of Labor, *The Negro Family*, 15.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Ibid.

on survival, and a single, omnipresent authority.”²⁹ He then goes on to note, “Extending this line of reasoning, psychologists point out that slavery in all its form sharply lowered the need for achievement in slaves...Negroes in bondage stripped of their African heritage, were placed in a completely dependent role. All of their rewards came not from individual initiative and enterprise, but from absolute obedience – a situation that severely depresses the need for achievement among all peoples.”³⁰ There are several issues resulting from the inclusion and contents of Elkins’ excerpt. Firstly, Moynihan failed to contextualize these excerpts – they were inserted into his report without an accompanying explanation. Consequently, it is hard to glean exactly what he was trying to achieve with the incorporation of Elkins’ excerpt into his work. Secondly, this excerpt serves as an overly simplistic and inaccurate depiction of a very complicated history. Firstly, Elkins’ idea that slavery “stripped” slaves of their African heritage is inaccurate. Although it is true that slave-owners attempted to erode the African heritage of slaves and render them dependent, African-Americans found ways to counteract this by preserving their ties to the African continent. Within the context of the United States, African culture has been transmitted through the black population in a multitude of ways, from the production of instruments in the colonial era (such as banjos and drums) to the presence of folktales riddled with African symbols and motifs.³¹ Consequently, Elkins constructs slaves to be one-dimensional characters, without any agency – failing to account for the ways in which dependency was resisted. Secondly, the notion that slavery “lowered the need of achievement” in slaves is also grossly inaccurate. For the most part, the slave regime did not provide an environment where individual initiative and enterprise could flourish – however, this only holds if one fails to account for acts of black resistance against slavery. Specifically, acts of resistance towards slavery – both individual and collective – are a testament to the fact that the black population was ambitiously trying to improve the quality of their lives. Thus, this depiction of slaves as lazy and dependent beings is false in light of the survival techniques used by the black population to actively navigate and outwit a complex system of oppression.

Hence, it seems that with the inclusion of Elkins’ excerpts into his work, Moynihan is implying that the socioeconomic difficulties faced by African-Americans are

²⁹ Ibid, 16.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Megan Sullivan, “African American Music as Rebellion”, Cornell University, last modified April 8, 2001, http://www.arts.cornell.edu/knight_institute/publicationsprizes/discoveries/discoveriesspring2001/03sullivan.pdf

fundamentally caused by the way their culture was shaped during slavery. Particularly, if slavery lowered a need for achievement in African-Americans – then the ills they are facing are cultural; not structural. However, this logic is flawed and fails to tackle one of the most outstanding legacies of slavery that continue to affect African-Americans in the 1960s – that of institutional economic deprivation.

What Moynihan neglects to address in his report is the way in which 245 years of enslavement left the African-American population economically destitute in comparison to their white counterparts – both during and after slavery. During the slave era, the enslaved black population could not accumulate wealth – because they were considered to be property. Specifically, every slave state which comprised fifteen states at the time of the Civil War had a slave code that unilaterally made slavery a permanent condition, inherited through the mother, and defined slaves as property, usually in the same terms as those applied to real estate.³² Slaves, being property, could not own property or be party to a contract.³³ This prevention of wealth accumulation is well demonstrated by Louisiana's 1724 slave code, which states, "We declare that slaves can have no right to any kind of property, and that all that they acquire, either by their own industry or by the liberality of others, or by any other means or title whatsoever, shall be the full property of their masters."³⁴ With 90% of the Black population living in southern slave states in 1860, the large majority of the Black population was systematically denied the ability to accumulate wealth for hundreds of years.³⁵

It should be noted that free Blacks living in the North also faced institutional barriers to wealth accumulation. Composing 10% of the Black population in 1860, they faced varying degrees of discrimination in regards to wealth accumulation.³⁶ In some northern states, this was explicit. For instance, in 1857, white voters in Oregon incorporated an exclusion clause into their Bill of Rights, prohibiting Blacks from being in the state,

³²"Early American Slavery in the Colonies and the Hardening of Racial Distinctions" in *Slavery in the United States: a Social, Political and Historical Encyclopedia*, edited by Junius P. Rodriguez (Santa Barbara: ABC-CLIO, 2007), 45.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ "Primary Documents: Louisiana's Code Noir (1724)", University of Washington, last modified June 2010, http://faculty.washington.edu/qtaylor/documents_us/LA_code_noir.html.

³⁵ L.H. Welchel, *Sherman's March and the emergence of the independent Black Church movement: from Atlanta to the sea to emancipation* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), 3.

³⁶ Ibid.

owning property, and making contracts.³⁷ In other states, however, the discrimination was more subtle. As historian Ahmed Shawki describes, in many northern states African-Americans could work and own property, but they were often excluded from existing trade unions – decreasing the likelihood that their wages would get raised.³⁸

Thus, it comes as no surprise that on the eve of emancipation, the African-American population was quite impoverished in comparison to their white counterparts. According to U.S. Census statistics compiled in 1860, the average property claimed by whites nation-wide was equivalent to \$751.³⁹ In stark contrast, that for the free Black population was only \$85.⁴⁰ In addition, this figure was likely to have averaged out much lower had the majority of the Black population been accounted for, namely, the enslaved. However, this is completely unmentioned in relation to the socioeconomic difficulties faced by African-Americans in the 1960s. For all intents and purposes, it seems that Moynihan only mentions slavery and its legacies as a means to “explain” why Black culture is abnormal – and consequently, why that led to the disintegration of Black family life and to resulting poverty. However, in the process, he put forth a pathologized account of Black history, while concurrently failing to address the true “roots” of poverty – namely, the long-standing economic deprivation faced by African-Americans from slavery onwards.

III. Reconstruction and its Discontents

Moynihan extends a similar treatment to his section on the Reconstruction era – a period of time from the mid to late 19th century in which the U.S. political and economic system was being reconfigured following the American Civil War (1861-1865).⁴¹ Moynihan begins his commentary on Reconstruction by stating that with emancipation in 1865, the Black family began to form on a widespread scale – “...but did so in an atmosphere markedly different from that which has produced the white American family.”⁴² More

³⁷ Gregory R. Nokes, *Slaves Breaking Chains: slavery on trial in the Oregon Territory* (Corvallis: Oregon State University Press, 2013), 139-143.

³⁸ Ahmed Shawki, *Black liberation and Socialism* (Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2006), 35-36.

³⁹ Steven Ruggles and Matthew Sobek, “1860 Free Population – Preliminary”, Integrated Public Use Microdata Series: Version 2.0 (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 1997); The above citation can also be viewed at: <http://www.bowdoin.edu/~prael/lesson/tables.html>

⁴⁰ Steven Ruggles and Matthew Sobek, “1860 Free Population – Preliminary”, Integrated Public Use Microdata Series: Version 2.0 (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 1997).

⁴¹ Eric Foner, *Reconstruction: America’s Unfinished Revolution: 1863-1877* (New York: Harper and Row Publishers, 1988), xxvii.

⁴² United States Department of Labor, *The Negro Family*, 16.

specifically, “The Negro was given liberty, but not equality. Life remained hazardous and marginal. Of the greatest importance, the Negro male, particularly in the South, became an object of intense hostility, an attitude unquestionably based in some measure on fear.”⁴³ Moynihan then jumps straight into the late 19th century – using the “Jim Crow” era to mark another cultural moment in which the Black family began to flounder. According to Moynihan, during the Jim Crow era, “...the Negro male was most humiliated.”⁴⁴ This resulted from the fact that they were most likely to use public facilities – and so, they were more likely to be exposed to segregation and “...the submissiveness it exacts.”⁴⁵ Consequently, in Moynihan’s opinion, “Keeping the Negro ‘in his place’ can be translated as keeping the Negro male in his place: the female was not a threat to anyone.”⁴⁶ For Moynihan, this period destroyed the Black family insofar as it “...worked against the emergence of a strong father figure.”⁴⁷ Specifically, he notes that, “The very essence of the male animal, from the bantam rooster to the four-star general, is to strut. Indeed, in 19th century America, a particular type of exaggerated male boastfulness became almost a national style. Not for the Negro male. The ‘sassy n*****’ was lynched.”⁴⁸ Essentially, Black masculinity was undermined by the policies of the Jim Crow era – and so, this bolstered the domineering role of Black women within the family. As a result, “...the Negro family made but little progress toward the middle-class pattern of the present time.”⁴⁹

Similar to his section on slavery, much can be contested in regards to Moynihan’s thoughts on the Reconstruction period. Firstly, the idea that Black men were more heavily impacted by segregation is historically inaccurate – and more than anything, is reflective of the normalized sexism that prevailed in mid-20th century America. In *Living with Jim Crow*, historians Leslie Brown and Anne Valk detail the ways in which African-American women were affected by segregation laws – as well as the ways they fought against it. For example, one Black woman recalls facing much discrimination in public spaces, such as within her school. Narrating a first person account, she explains in detail that segregation was “vivid” in her school, and “...when the white women would come in,

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

we were supposed to get up and move to the right and leave the front row seats for them.”⁵⁰ There are hundreds of examples similar to this in Brown and Valk’s book, working to refute Moynihan’s implausible claim that Black women were less likely to be exposed to the humiliations caused by segregation. Thus, just as Black women were not prone to assaults of slavery – nor were they immune to those of Jim Crow.

Secondly, Moynihan’s claim that Jim Crow laws led to the decline of Black masculinity is also faulty. Moynihan is correct in stating that Black men in this era were not afforded the luxury of boastfulness whether perceived or real for they were subjects of constant white suspicion. This was particularly true regarding sexual relations between Black men and white women. As Brown and Valk explain, “...white authorities exacted severe punishment against Black males accused of social or sexual ‘crimes’, from ‘eye rape’ when a Black man ‘looked at a white woman too hard’ to sexual assault to consensual interracial affairs.”⁵¹ However, within the Black community, Black masculinity was in fact bolstered – for boys and men received explicit messages about their roles and responsibilities. According to Brown and Valk, “Men operated socially in a separate sphere that excluded women and children, where they articulated and facilitated boys’ development into adult men. Male respectability related to family responsibility. Men and boys could engage in drunkenness and bootlegging without falling into disrepute, as long as they attended to family needs.”⁵² And so, within the African-American community, Black masculinity was fostered through the enhanced importance of male familial responsibility. Consequently, this leaves little support for Moynihan’s claim that Black women became domineering figures due to the emasculation Black men suffered under Jim Crow. Thus, by focusing solely on the ways in which Black masculinity was targeted by white authorities, Moynihan failed to account for the ways in which masculinity was supported within Black spaces. Nevertheless, the most problematic aspect regarding Moynihan’s depiction of the Reconstruction period was the way in which he neglected key politico-economic decisions made prior to the Jim Crow era particularly in the 1860s that ensured Black families would remain poor for decades to come.

As previously noted, on the eve of the American Civil War, the Black population in the United States had very little property due to 245 years of enslavement that directly

⁵⁰ Anne M. Valk and Leslie Brown, *Living with Jim Crow: African-American women and Memories of the Segregated South* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 143.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 54.

⁵² *Ibid.*

undermined the accumulation of any substantial wealth. With emancipation and the consequent end of the civil war in 1865, there was much discussion among the nation about the ways in which wealth (i.e. property) would be redistributed in light of the end of slavery.⁵³ For African-Americans, the redistribution of property was central to completing their newfound independence.⁵⁴ As distinguished historian Eric Foner explains, “The desire to escape from white supervision and establish a modicum of economic independence profoundly shaped Blacks’ economic choices during Reconstruction, leading them to prefer tenancy to wage labor, and leasing land for a fixed rent to sharecropping. Above all, it inspired the quest for land of their own. [...] Without land, there could be no economic autonomy, for their labor would continue to be subject to exploitation by their former owners.”⁵⁵ This goal was unsurprising; throughout the Western world, the end of slavery was often followed by a prolonged struggle over control of labor and access to land. However, as Foner notes, unlike freedmen in other countries, “...American Blacks emerged from slavery convinced that the federal government had committed itself to land distribution.”⁵⁶ This belief in an “imminent division of land” was quite powerful among Black freedmen in the south, influenced by the unique experience of Sherman’s Field Order 15 in South Carolina and Georgia.⁵⁷ The latter refers to an order made by General William Tecumseh Sherman in January 1865 to set aside land in South Carolina and islands off the coast of Georgia for roughly 40,000 former slaves.⁵⁸ And so, according to Foner, with the end of the war in April 1865, a grand expectation of impending change swept through the South.

By the end of the war, the federal government had acquired over 850,000 acres of land in the American South.⁵⁹ It should be noted that this was a quite small amount of land considering that the Second Confiscation Act of 1862 was supposed to result in large-scale forfeitures of confederate land. However, President Lincoln had little enthusiasm for confiscation that could have potentially undermined efforts to “...win the support of loyal planters and other Southern whites.”⁶⁰ As a result, the act remained largely unenforced – helping to explain the modest amount of land acquired by the end of the

⁵³ Foner, *Reconstruction*, 35.

⁵⁴ *Ibid*, 104.

⁵⁵ *Ibid*.

⁵⁶ *Ibid*.

⁵⁷ *Ibid*, 105.

⁵⁸ *Ibid*.

⁵⁹ *Ibid*, 158.

⁶⁰ *Ibid*, 51.

war. In fact, according to Foner, far more land came into federal hands from seizures for non-payment of taxes or as abandoned property.⁶¹

In regards to administration, the division of this land was the responsibility of the Freedman's Bureau – a subset of the War Department "...authorized to divide abandoned and confiscated land into forty-acre plots, for rental to freedmen and loyal refugees for eventual sale."⁶² According to Foner, although the Bureau was hardly a definitive commitment to land distribution, it did anticipate "...at least some Blacks becoming, with the government's assistance, independent farmers in a 'free labor South.'"⁶³ Consequently, with 850,000 acres of land, the first commissioner of the Bureau, General Oliver O. Howard, was confident that they would be able to start creating a modest Black yeomanry.⁶⁴ Hence, by the summer of 1865, the process began. In Tennessee, Howard's subordinates began locating Blacks on 65,000 acres under his control – with similar processes occurring in Louisiana, South Carolina, Georgia and Florida.⁶⁵

However, this practice was completely derailed in just a few months. Specifically, by the fall of 1865, President Andrew Johnson issued several special pardons, restoring the property of former Confederates. This policy was made official in September 1865, with the White House issuing Howard's "Circular 15"; legislation which ordered the restoration of all land to pardoned owners except a small amount that had already been sold under court decree.⁶⁶ Soon thereafter, the government proceeded to suspend land sales scheduled in Virginia and South Carolina. By November, virtually all the land in Bureau hands would revert back to its former owners.⁶⁷

As Foner points out, Johnson's actions, especially "Circular 15", radically altered the character of the Bureau.⁶⁸ With the implementation of this policy, the idea of settling any freedmen on land was completely gone. More importantly, from the end of 1865 onwards, "...agents of the Bureau made a major effort to persuade freedmen throughout

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² Ibid, 68.

⁶³ Ibid, 69-70.

⁶⁴ Ibid, 158.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ Ibid, 159.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Ibid, 161.

the South to sign labor contracts for the coming year, and to disabuse them of the idea that the government intended to divide land among them.”⁶⁹ This marked a key political and economic change regarding the definition of “free labor”. As Foner explains, “Instead of carrying out a two-pronged labor policy in which some African-Americans farmed independently, while others worked as hired laborers for white employers, the Bureau found itself with no alternative but to encourage virtually all freedmen to sign annual contracts to work on the plantations.”⁷⁰ Due to this unfavorable legislation, the amount of land that came into the possession of Blacks proved to be miniscule.⁷¹ Thus, post-emancipation, the majority of the African-American population in the United States was left economically destitute – without property – and forced to become wage laborers wholly dependent on the state of the job market.

None of this information made it into Moynihan’s report. Instead, similar to his theoretical treatment of the slave era, Moynihan only used the Reconstruction period to put forth a pathologized account of Black history. The latter is particularly linked to arguments of “Black male emasculation” as a means to account for the socioeconomic problems faced by African-Americans. However, in the process, Moynihan completely neglects the deep-rooted institutionalized poverty faced by the Black population in the United States that ultimately has its origins in slavery and a lack of property redistribution in the Reconstruction period.

IV. Problematizing Moynihan’s Theoretical Choices

In essence, Moynihan chose to make a cultural argument instead of a structural one – making a politico-economic issue seem “natural”. Throughout the length of his report, Moynihan puts all his effort into constructing the Black family to be abnormal, instead of accounting for the ways in which the economy has consistently undermined the prosperity of the African-American community.

There are several areas of the report that serve to highlight Moynihan’s preference for culture-based arguments instead of structural ones when describing the socioeconomic difficulties faced by the Black community in the 1960s. For instance, Moynihan notes that 56% of African-American men fail the “Armed Forces Qualification Test” – an

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ Ibid, 164.

⁷¹ Ibid, 161.

examination necessary to pass in order to join the army, navy, air forces, and/or marines.⁷² According to Moynihan, the test "...is not quite a mental test, not yet an education test."⁷³ Essentially, it works to test competence, and "...roughly measures ability that ought to be found in an average 7th or 8th grade student."⁷⁴ For Moynihan, the failure of African-Americans to pass a seemingly basic comprehension test is most strongly linked to culture – specifically to, "...the strains of the disorganized and matrifocal family life in which so many Negro youth come of age."⁷⁵ However, what Moynihan does not take into consideration are economic factors that could inhibit overall performance on this test. To demonstrate, African-Americans, particularly in urban areas, are more likely to live in impoverished neighborhoods – with schools that may not provide students with the adequate tools they need to thrive academically. Consequently, perhaps it is not familial disorganization that is the issue – but the lack of academic resources afforded to predominantly Black, low-income neighborhoods.

Moynihan extends a similar treatment to youth unemployment rates. In the 1960s, the Black community was experiencing high fertility rates, causing the population of Black youth to steadily grow. That being said, the job market at the time was failing to expand in order to account for this growth. Moynihan comments on this, saying "...the most conspicuous failure of the American social system in the past 10 years has been its inadequacy in providing jobs for Negro youth."⁷⁶ On this account, in 1965, the unemployment rate for Black teenagers stood at 29%.⁷⁷ However, Moynihan then goes on to minimize the role of this lack of economic opportunity in a later chapter, stating that youth unemployment can be partly accounted for by "...a certain failure of nerve" characterized by a "lack of motivation" and an inability to "absorb setbacks."⁷⁸ With the inclusion of this statement, it is apparent that Moynihan puts a primacy on cultural explanations rooted in the deviance of Black culture – as opposed to those related to systemic factors.

In a last example, Moynihan's preference for cultural arguments comes to light in his discussion on the prevalence of female-headed households or matriarchy. According to

⁷² United States Department of Labor, *The Negro Family*, 40.

⁷³ *Ibid.*

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 42-43.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 26.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 44.

Moynihan, "...the Negro community has been forced into a matriarchal structure which, because it is so out of line with the rest of American society, seriously retards the progress of the group as a whole."⁷⁹ Although much can be contested about this statement – what is particularly interesting is the way in which these comments could have easily been made in relation to the Black population's relationship to the economy. Specifically, African-American's entry into the U.S. as human cargo, coupled with 245 years of enslavement could be considered to be "...so out of line with the rest of American society" in terms of economic integration. Yet, the institutional economic disadvantages that result from this difference are consistently neglected – with Moynihan only zeroing in on cultural differences between Black and white families.

V. Understanding Moynihan: The Man behind the Report

And so, it must be asked: why does Moynihan – a man who had some understanding of the way the economy deeply impacted the lives of African-Americans – choose to center his argument on the Black family, instead of the long-standing abnormality of the American economy? Although no definitive answers can be found, there are a few potential reasons to account for Moynihan's flawed theoretical choice. Firstly, calling the economy abnormal would have forced the presidential administration to confront a historical legacy that is often buried under Jim Crow – namely, the key political decisions made by President Andrew Johnson in the 1860s to circumvent the redistribution of property and consequent wealth after the civil war.

More importantly, highlighting this fact in a time of transition – with the civil rights movement at its peak – could have opened the door to the more tenuous conversation of reparations. However, the concept of reparations is deeply antithetical to American narratives of the "self-made man" or the "American dream"; which put an emphasis on individual self-motivation and determination, while failing to account for the impact of overriding structural factors in the quest for socioeconomic improvement. Essentially, it would have been a far too radical move from a moderate liberal such as Moynihan. Furthermore, as a man running for office at the time of the report's release, focusing on the dysfunction of the economy could have been perceived as a politically abrasive move. Consequently, it was far easier, and presumably more politically safe, to center on

⁷⁹ Ibid, 29.

the pathologies of Black family life. Ultimately, the narrative of Black deviance has always been easier to stomach than that of an America fundamentally rooted in injustice.

VI. Unpacking the Moynihan Report: The Myth of Black Pathology

The Moynihan Report is often considered to be one of the most controversial policy documents within contemporary American history. This paper sought to provide a fresh analysis of the report by focusing on an oft-ignored chapter – namely, “The Roots of the Problem” – which consists of Moynihan’s depiction of Black history. Through a rigorous analysis of this chapter, it becomes apparent that Moynihan’s version of Black history is both inaccurate and pathologized – particularly with regard to his account of slavery and the Reconstruction period. Discussing the impacts of slavery, he constructs slaves as one-dimensional figures devoid of agency. On the other hand, when he addresses Reconstruction, Moynihan pathologizes the Black family by delegitimizing the experiences of Black women under Jim Crow, in addition to discounting the ways in which Black masculinity was fostered within the African-American community. Ironically, Moynihan’s selective account of Black history works to highlight the historical legacies he fails to address – particularly the inability of African-Americans to procure capital during slavery; and the consequent lack of wealth redistribution during the Reconstruction period that left Black America in a perpetual state of poverty. The Moynihan Report worked to favor cultural arguments over structural ones; a theoretical choice that ultimately worked to emphasize the supposed pathology of the Black family instead of the long-standing abnormality of the American economy.

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DISCIPLINING THE PAST

Indigenous Literacies and Self-Determination: Education, Writing, and Power in the Late Nineteenth Century

Arielle Baker

Control of land is central to the settler colonial project. In the context of late nineteenth-century North America, a time marked by both the solidification of settler states and sustained resistances of Indigenous peoples, struggles over land were “also, inextricably, a struggle for narrative power.”¹ Master narratives, as theorized in the work of Edward Said, are a “crucial dimension of imperial struggles;”² while their creation certainly occurs both within and outside of written documentation of them, the acquisition of colonial literacy is one way that Indigenous peoples in the late nineteenth century sought to gain control of these narratives, and thereby gain access to power in the colonial arena. Of course, the reality of literacy education in the form of the assimilatory, genocidal schooling, which also became entrenched across the continent during this period,³ complicates this assertion, as does the widespread existence of literacies not recognized by Eurocentric standards.⁴ Nevertheless, while it has been stated “language is the *perfect* instrument of Empire,”⁵ so Indigenous peoples have shown how it can be the perfect instrument of resistance.

While there are many forms of literacy and all literacies have value and function, this paper examines the technologies and knowledges that were used by Indigenous peoples

¹ Megan Harvey, “Story People: Stó:lō-State Relations and Indigenous Literacies in British Columbia, 1864–1874,” *Journal of the Canadian Historical Association* 24, no. 1 (2013): 52.

² Ibid.

³ Scott Richard Lyons, “Rhetorical Sovereignty: What Do American Indians Want from Writing?,” *College Composition and Communication* 51, no. 3 (February 2000): 449.

⁴ Marie Battiste, “Micmac Literacy and Cognitive Assimilation,” in *Indian Education in Canada, Volume 1: The Legacy*, ed. Jean Barman, Yvonne M. Hébert, and Don N. McCaskill (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1986), 27.

⁵ Trend, qtd. in *ibid.*, 32; emphasis in the original.

to interact with the colonial powers on equal footing: reading and writing in the sequential literacies of English and French, primarily. Working from Battiste's conception of literacy "as a shield in cultural transmission and as a sword of cognitive imperialism,"⁶ I will draw out the multi-functionality of 'literacy' in relations between Indigenous peoples and the state during the last four decades of the nineteenth century. My evidence⁷ draws on numerous sources: the autobiography of Luther Standing Bear, the address made by Elias Boudinot on behalf of the Cherokee, the education provisions negotiated by various First Nations in the numbered treaties, and the petitioning of religious and governmental authorities by Kwakwaka'wakw, Stólo, Mi'kmaw, and Kanaka Maoli peoples. It is clear that English literacy education was actively demanded by many Indigenous peoples across the continent (and beyond, in the case of the Native Hawaiians), and the knowledge and skills taken from this were subsequently leveraged to enhance the position of these peoples in relation to the colonial powers. Further, Indigenous peoples refuted the racializing discourse that positioned them as inferior to European colonizers due to their 'lack' of written language by both asserting the existence of their own literacies and challenging this very hierarchization, as evidenced by the stories told by Harry Robinson and those recorded by Teit and Carlson, as well as in Battiste's work.

Though methods and motivations were diverse, Indigenous peoples strategically sought out literacy education in order to negotiate both the solidification of the colonial states and the changing economic conditions that this entailed, and therefore their continued survival as peoples. Furthermore, they challenged the foundational assumptions of the "civilizing project" in asserting the existence, whether historical or contemporary to them, of their own literacies, thereby defying the discursive hegemony of the state.

I. Contextualizing This Discussion

Canada and the United States are the settler colonial nation-states that make up northern North America/Turtle Island. They were both founded in, and continue to be upheld through violent processes of colonization through which colonial powers have aimed to dispossess nations indigenous to Turtle Island of the land and resources with

⁶ Battiste, "Micmac Literacy and Cognitive," in *Indian Education in Canada*, 23.

⁷ Throughout this paper, I use the first person in order to insert myself, as the author, into the text. My positionality as a settler of colour necessarily affects the work, and I aim to remain aware of my biases and my complicity in settler colonialism, and to avoid reproducing the discursive violences of the imperialist project.

the use of physical and discursive force. Indigenous peoples have often been portrayed as passive actors in this drama, or are disappeared from it altogether, because the naturalization, and therefore legitimization, of the settler state relies on erasing the discursive work that renders settlers 'present' and Indigenous peoples 'absent.'⁸ However, Indigenous peoples across this continent have been active agents in this process, and have resisted colonial incursions since they began through a variety of means and to varied success. Resistance is a limited lens, of course, which "inevitably assumes that non-Natives are the most important thing in Aboriginal people's lives and history,"⁹ and also homogenizes the beliefs, perspectives, and actions of Indigenous peoples.

I acknowledge that the pursuit and use of colonial literacies did not always and only denote a form of resistance — to claim this would be to deny agency to individual Indigenous actors — but I maintain the legitimacy of my claim that the acquisition of English literacy was an important form of resistance in late nineteenth century Indigenous communities, even if the goal of this acquisition was 'only' to be able to participate in new economies (this in itself, of course, can be understood as a form of resistance in that it facilitates peoples' survival). As Lyons says, "discourses of resistance and renewal have never ceased in Indian country, and these marginalized narratives of the continuing struggle for Indian sovereignty are making themselves more and more visible in public representation."¹⁰ I will begin my examination of these forms of resistance by discussing the concept of 'literacy.'

II. Defining Literacy

The term 'literacy' holds many possible meanings, so I will now define the way in which I use it. Eurocentric epistemologies often "[assume] literacy to be a fixed set of generic, transferable skills[,] their primary function being to enhance individual and national

⁸ Andrew Baldwin, Laura Cameron, and Audrey Kobayashi, "Where Is the Great White North? Spatializing History, Historicizing Whiteness," introduction to *Rethinking the Great White North: Race, Nature, and the Historical Geographies of Whiteness in Canada* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2011), 3.

⁹ Keith Thor Carlson, "Orality about Literacy: The 'Black and White' of Salish History," in *Orality and Literacy: Reflections across Disciplines and Cultures*, ed. Keith Thor Carlson, Kristina Fagan, and Natalia Khanenko-Friesen (n.p.: University of Toronto Press, 2010), 63.

¹⁰ Lyons, "Rhetorical Sovereignty" 453.

economic productivity,”¹¹ and a causal link between this type of ‘literacy’ and degree of ‘civilization’ was also drawn by colonizers; as Carlson notes, “for many, orality is considered the defining characteristic of indigeneity, but... such a definition perhaps says more about the fact that literacy has for even longer been regarded by elite Europeans as the defining characteristic of Western civilization.”¹² The case of Native Hawaiians illustrates this further, because “from the missionary point of view... the Kanaka ‘Ōiwi were perceived to lack alphabetic writing, which was a proof of their uncivilized nature.”¹³ Edwards terms these conceptions of literacy ‘colonial literacy,’ showing how “the literacy that predominantly occupies the mind is a colonial legacy of the predominance of reading and writing, most often in English and... historically located with and in ideas of assimilation or extinction of indigenous groups.”¹⁴

We must reject these constructions, and work instead from an understanding of multiple literacies: there are many forms of literacy and all literacies have value and function. Battiste, for example, identifies the symbolic/ideographic literacies of the Mi'kmaq, referencing the “pictographs, petroglyphs, notched sticks and wampum” used by this nation for hundreds of years,¹⁵ and I will discuss these and other literacies in the last section. The relation of the propagation of settler literacies to the subjugation of Indigenous literacies and languages (for the two cannot be separated, of course¹⁶), as well as the way in which “the change from orality to literacy has eroded native forms of

¹¹ Ānetai Hinemih Rāwiri, "Whanganui Iwi and Adult Literacy: Ngā Whiringa Muka - Indigenous Community-Based Participatory Adult Literacy Research" (paper presented at International Adult Literacy Conference: 'The Power of And', Langham Hotel, Auckland, New Zealand, September 28, 2007), 5.

¹² Carlson, "Orality about Literacy," 64.

¹³ Noenoe K. Silva, *Aloha Betrayed: Native Hawaiian Resistance to American Colonialism* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004), 33.

¹⁴ Shane Edwards, "Matauranga Maori Literacies: Indigenous Literacy as Epistemological Freedom v. Eurocentric Imperialism," *World Indigenous Nations Higher Education Consortium Journal*, 2010, 27.

¹⁵ Battiste, "Micmac Literacy and Cognitive," in *Indian Education in Canada*, 24.

¹⁶ Basil H. Johnston, "Is That All There Is? Tribal Literature," *A Quarterly of Criticism and Review* 128 (Spring 1991): 56; Battiste argues that “when Europeans did encounter undeniable evidence of writing, of literacy equivalent to their own, they did their best to eradicate it as if it posed a threat to the Scripture or literacies they brought with them, as for example, in the situation of the Toltec and Mayan parchment or paper books.” Battiste, “Micmac Literacy and Cognitive,” in *Indian Education in Canada*, 27.

thought and expression, especially due to the fixing and consequent reduction in possible meanings and versions of text,"¹⁷ as Silva notes, must also inform this study.

However, starting from this multivocal conception of literacy, and in keeping with the aims of this paper, I will re-narrow 'literacy' to refer, after all, to technologies and knowledges that were used by Indigenous peoples to interact with the colonial powers on equal footing: reading and writing in the sequential literacies of English and French, primarily. By this usage, I do not mean to elide or devalue other forms of literacy; this is simply the type of literacy that I argue was being sought by Indigenous peoples in the late nineteenth century, and is in no way superior to or more valuable than other literacies (nor is it necessarily distinct from them).

III. Petitioning Religious Entities

The late nineteenth century was a tumultuous period in northern North America which included the American Civil War (1861-1865), Canadian Confederation (1867), the passing of the *Indian Act* (1876), the signing of the numbered treaties (beginning in 1871), and the establishment of government-run "Indian" residential/boarding schools in Canada (entrenched in the *Indian Act*) and the United States (1897 on), among other local and global processes. Though the strategy I discuss was particularly salient during this period, struggles around and through literacy have been an element of the colonial process for hundreds of years. One example of this is Elias Boudinot's "Address to the Whites" in 1826, just a few years before the influential "Cherokee Cases," which established the legally important designation of a "domestic dependent nation," were heard in the U.S. Supreme Court.¹⁸

During this address, Boudinot, a member of the Cherokee Nation, attempted to convince the members of a Philadelphia church to fund the establishment of a seminary and the purchase of a printing press, to produce a national newspaper in both Cherokee and English.¹⁹ Boudinot's only argument in favour of the seminary was: "[N]eed I speak one

¹⁷ Silva, *Aloha Betrayed*, 13.

¹⁸ Lyons, "Rhetorical Sovereignty," 451.

¹⁹ Elias Boudinot, "An Address to the Whites," address presented in First Presbyterian Church, Philadelphia, May 26, 1826, Galileo Digital Library of Georgia Database, accessed October 23, 2014, <http://neptune3.galib.uga.edu/sssp/cgi-bin/tei-natamer-idx.pl?sessionId=0b2ae6df-88063f2f70-3171&type=doc&tei2id=BDT001>.

word of the utility, of the necessity, of an institution of learning?"²⁰ I cannot judge whether this focus on learning and literacy is a rhetorical strategy to influence the audience, but Boudinot's words do seem to speak to the enthusiasm with which he (if not most members of his nation) viewed literacy and Western education. Speaking of the Cherokee alphabet, Boudinot claims that:

The eagerness to obtain a knowledge of it [is] evinced by the astonishing rapidity with which it is acquired, and by the numbers who do so. It is about two years since its introduction, and already there are a great many who can read it. In the neighbourhood in which I live, I do not recollect a male Cherokee, between the ages of fifteen and twenty-five, who is ignorant of this mode of writing.²¹

Boudinot made his argument using the language both of autonomous nationhood and of the white civilizing mission, indicating a complex negotiation of discourses with the aim of securing the resources necessary to the continued survival of the nation and its ability to profit, materially and otherwise, from the settler economy:

There are three things of late occurrence, [sic] which must certainly place the Cherokee Nation in a fair light, and act as a powerful argument in favor of Indian improvement. First. The invention of letters. Second. The translation of the New Testament into Cherokee. And third. The organization of a Government.²²

This quote, considered with respect to Boudinot's later assertion that the Cherokee Nation would "become not a great, but a faithful ally of the United States," implying the Nation's commensurability with the U.S., suggests that the imagined connection between civilization and literacy is being leveraged in the attempt to maintain sovereignty. This move is similar to that employed by the Stólō whereby they "invoke[d] the story that they [were] in the process of becoming 'civilized' (by sending their children to local schools) and so deserve[d] protection of their lands,"²³ and that which Silva argues Kanaka Maoli made, as "agreeing to become civilized had more to do with retaining their independence

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Boudinot, "An Address to the Whites."

²² Ibid.

²³ Harvey, "Story People," 70.

as a sovereign nation than with acceptance of the racial or cultural hierarchy”²⁴ inherent in civilizing discourses.

The Kwakwaka’wakw of Alert Bay, off the coast of the colony and later province of British Columbia, were also engaged in appeals to the members of a religious body in order to secure access to education. In the words of the Kwakwaka’wakw (none were identified by name), addressed through an 1890 petition to the Church Missionary Society (CMS) in London which was transcribed for them by white trader Stephen Spencer,²⁵

We feel angry at the treatment we get from Mr. Hall, and we do not like him, and we say that from now on, we agree to pledge ourselves, not to go to his church, or to his school, and not to let our friends go, if we can help it, just as long as he remains here. What we want is a good man, and one that will teach us some good and what is right.... We also say that we are not satisfied with Mrs. Hall’s teachings because she attends more to her store than to her teachings.²⁶

By writing to the CMS requesting a teacher, in the form of a missionary, who would “give them the resources, such as literacy, that they and their children needed to thrive,”²⁷ these Kwakwaka’wakw were affirming the value of this form of education to them, and stipulating the nature and quality they expected. Raibmon, who had access to this entire document (which I did not) along with many others, interprets this as the Kwakwaka’wakw “asserting their right to a place within modernity.”²⁸ She goes on to claim that “[m]any Kwakwaka’wakw believed they had much to gain from a classroom education. They understood that in the increasingly ‘Westernized’ environment of late-nineteenth-century British Columbia, their survival and independence hinged on literacy,” so while they were “[u]nwilling to pay for a church, many Kwakwaka’wakw willingly contributed to the construction of a school.”²⁹

²⁴ Silva, *Aloha Betrayed*, 73.

²⁵ Paige Sylvia Raibmon, *Authentic Indians: Episodes of Encounter from the Late-nineteenth-century Northwest Coast* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2005), 31.

²⁶ Alert Bay Indians to Church Missionary Society, May 10, 1890, Reel A-123, Church Missionary Society Original Letters, Correspondence, etc., Incoming 1882-1900, National Archives of Canada, Ottawa.

²⁷ Raibmon, *Authentic Indians*, 31.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 28.

²⁹ *Ibid.*

IV. Government and Schools

While the predominance of educators in the 'colonial era' were religiously affiliated, with Confederation in 1867 the Canadian government became an entity that could be appealed to in the provision of education.³⁰ During the 1870s, the government "met and negotiated Treaties 1 to 7 with First Nations from western Ontario to the foothills of the Rocky Mountains."³¹ While the motivations of the government were to free up land for European settlement in exchange for minimal services, "First Nations representatives... wished to negotiate the peaceful sharing of their land in exchange for services that would enable them not only to survive the loss of their traditional lifestyle but also to participate fully in the new economy."³² A central component of this was access to education.

Though it is expressed differently in the various treaties, with attendant implications, ranging from "Her Majesty agrees to maintain a school on each reserve hereby made, *whenever the Indians of the reserve should desire it*"³³ (my emphasis) in Treaty 1, to "Her Majesty agrees to maintain schools for instruction in such reserves hereby made *as to her Government of her Dominion of Canada may seem advisable*, whenever the Indians of the reserve shall desire it"³⁴ (my emphasis) in Treaties 3, 5, and 6, treaty commissioner Alexander Morris' account of the negotiations indicates that formal (Western) education was one of the main provisions sought by Indigenous peoples in negotiating the treaties, going so far as to say that there was a "universal demand for teachers"³⁵ among the negotiators. Hampton's interpretation of the treaties is that, "[w]ith

³⁰ Jo-ann Archibald, "Locally Developed Native Studies Curriculum: An Historical and Philosophical Rationale," in *First Nations Education in Canada: The Circle Unfolds*, ed. Marie Ann Battiste and Jean Barman (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1995), 393-394.

³¹ Sheila Carr-Stewart, "A Treaty Right to Education," *Canadian Journal of Education* 26, no. 2 (2001): 126.

³² *Ibid.*

³³ Alexander Morris, *The Treaties of Canada with the Indians of Manitoba and the North-West Territories, including the Negotiations on Which They Were Based, and Other Information Relating Thereto*, (Toronto: Belfords, Clarke, 1880), 315.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 323.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 194.

respect to education, the Crown's responsibility included three key provisions: (1) establishment of schools, (2) equal educational outcomes, and (3) choice."³⁶

However, as anyone even remotely familiar with the history of government schooling of Indigenous children knows, the government not only failed to live up to the terms it had negotiated, but in fact instituted a system that Battiste characterizes as "cognitive imperialism:" "the last stage of imperialism wherein the imperialist seeks to whitewash the tribal mind and soul and to create doubt."³⁷ In her terms, "[e]ducation became the tool of cognitive manipulation" as "the implicit goal of federal education was the annihilation of Micmac history, knowledge, language, and collective habits... the destruction of tribal identity and values along with the tribal soul."³⁸ Eber Hampton goes even further in criticizing this system of "education with the goal of assimilation," characterizing it as "a tool of genocide."³⁹ Carr-Stewart's impression of the terms of education in the numbered treaties is that the First Nations

negotiated an educational right complementary to their own Aboriginal teachings. Aware of the instructional practices of the newcomers, they sought to supplement their community educational practices with the linguistic and literacy skills of the settlers. They were, however, dragged into an abyss and forced into an educational system that sought to eliminate their traditional educational practices, languages, culture, and customs, something that had not been a part of the treaty negotiations.⁴⁰

³⁶ Eber Hampton, "First Nations-Controlled University Education in Canada," in *Aboriginal Education: Fulfilling the Promise*, ed. Marlene Brant Castellano, Lynne Davis, and Louise Lahache (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2000), 211.

³⁷ Battiste, "Micmac Literacy and Cognitive," 37.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 36-37.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 210. A similar censure of the Canadian Indian Residential School (IRS) system is the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada's finding that the IRS system was a form of "cultural genocide." Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, *Honouring the Truth, Reconciling for the Future: Summary of the Final Report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada* (2015), 1.

⁴⁰ Sheila Carr-Stewart, "A Treaty Right to Education," *Canadian Journal of Education* 26, no. 2 (2001): 138.

Thus, Hampton argues, “the failure to implement education in accordance with an Aboriginal understanding of the commitments undertaken has distorted education, transforming it from a tool of self-determination into a weapon of captivity.”⁴¹

The use of literacies as “tools of self-determination,” however, is clear in the petitions of three other groups: the Mi’kmaq, the Stólō and the Kanaka Maoli. Battiste details the attempts of the highly literate Mi’kmaq, in the late nineteenth century, to respond to colonial encroachment through “numerous petitions to the Queen, the Governor General, and the Legislative Assemblies.”⁴² These petitions were ultimately futile in that “the Micmacs’ civilized efforts to use roman script to petition the legal authorities to return their wealth were met with disdain and neglect,” though Battiste claims it did teach the Mi’kmaq “that assimilation to colonial life did not advance their interest,” leading to a low incidence of what she terms “cognitive assimilation.”⁴³ In contrast, the Stólō and the Kanaka Maoli achieved success in their petitioning, and this success created conditions in which cognitive assimilation might be less likely. In examining four petitions written by the Stólō, Harvey was lead to the conclusion that “[w]riting was a technology at the heart of the transformative process colonialism represented, and a central mechanism through which colonial forces had the power to actualize their stories,” but through their petitions to the colonial and then federal governments in the 1860s and 1870s, the Stólō began to “intervene in this powerful process and become skilled writers themselves, on their own terms, and to accomplish their own objectives.”⁴⁴ Likewise, 95% of Kanaka Maoli in 1897 signed the bilingual (English/Hawaiian language) petitions protesting annexation to the United States, which “appropriated the discourse [of ‘civilized’ governments] and turned it around on the oligarchy and the U.S. government,” leading to the defeat of the annexation treaty in the U.S. Senate.⁴⁵ Though Lyons is referring to more contemporary legal battles, his pronouncement applies here:

These victories were won by Native people who learned how to fight battles in both court and the culture-at-large, who knew how to read and write the legal system, interrogate and challenge cultural semiotics,

⁴¹ Hampton, “First Nations-Controlled University Education,” 210.

⁴² Battiste, “Micmac Literacy and Cognitive,” 34.

⁴³ Battiste, “Micmac Literacy and Cognitive,” 34.

⁴⁴ Harvey, “Story People: Stólō-State Relations,” 80.

⁴⁵ Silva, *Aloha Betrayed*, 155.

generate public opinion, form publics, and create solidarity with others. That behind each of these victories were contests over the acts of reading and writing is obvious; what needs to be underscored is that both are also victories of rhetorical sovereignty.⁴⁶

It is now to this concept of rhetorical sovereignty, and its implications for literacies, that I will turn.

Literacies, Self-Determination and Rhetorical Sovereignty

Starting in 1879 when the school first opened, Luther Standing Bear, who would become an Oglala Lakota Chief, was a student of the Carlisle Indian Industrial School, one of the first boarding schools established for Indigenous children in the United States. The memoir he published in 1928 is a rich source and deserves more than the passing attention I can pay to it in this paper, especially with regards to the passages on writing and on interpreting. Raibmon, in examining the Kwakwaka'wakw petition previously discussed, contends that Kwakwaka'wakw "wanted 'White' skills, not so that they could become White but so that they could survive in a White world."⁴⁷ Whether or not that claim is substantiated, it is echoed in Standing Bear's recollection of his father telling him: "There is nothing but the Long Knives (or white people) everywhere I went, and they keep coming like flies. So we will have to learn their ways, in order that we may be able to live with them,"⁴⁸ and in his subsequent return to the school he was "more determined than ever to learn all the white people's ways, no matter how hard [he] had to study."⁴⁹

However, I think that the narrative of adaptation to the inevitable, overwhelming force of settler encroachment is perhaps overly simplistic — though adaptation is, of course, a rational and effective response to changing conditions. Standing Bear's text shows how he maintained "rhetorical sovereignty," a concept developed by Lyons, who describes it thus:

⁴⁶ Lyons, "Rhetorical Sovereignty," 466.

⁴⁷ Lyons, "Rhetorical Sovereignty," 31.

⁴⁸ Luther Standing Bear, *My People the Sioux* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1975), 150, accessed October 23, 2014, <http://asp6new.alexanderstreet.com/ibio/ibio.result.documents.aspx?sourcecode=S10018395&sortorder=title>.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 153.

As the inherent right and ability of peoples to determine their own communicative needs and desires in the pursuit of self-determination, rhetorical sovereignty requires above all the presence of an Indian voice, speaking or writing in an ongoing context of colonization and setting at least some of the terms of debate. Ideally, that voice would often employ a Native language.⁵⁰

While the very act of writing his memoir meets this definition, especially considering asides referencing different kinds of literacies, like this one, that he throws into the text: “The sign language, by the way, was invented by the Indian. White men never use it correctly.”⁵¹ This is particularly well illustrated in an incident that Standing Bear recounts, which took place after he had been at the school for a good deal of time. At “an entertainment in a big hall,” Standing Bear and some other students were in attendance with Captain Pratt, the founder of the school, at which an attendee “asked to hear some of the children speak in the Sioux tongue”:

Now in school we were not allowed to converse in the Indian tongue, but here was an old man making a formal request which Captain Pratt did not wish to refuse. So...Then he turned to me again with a request that I say something in my native tongue... so I arose and said, ‘*Lakota iya woci ci yakapi queyasi oyaka rnirapi kte sni tka le ha han pe lo,*’ which, interpreted into English, means, ‘If I talk in Sioux, you will not understand me anyhow.’...Just then the old man stood up again, and while I was shivering in my shoes for fear of what he might again ask me, he said, ‘Can that boy interpret what he said into English?’ I knew I had to say something, so I replied that it meant, ‘We are glad to see you all here to-night.’ This seemed to satisfy the audience, and Captain Pratt also seemed pleased — but I knew I had told a lie.⁵²

Though Standing Bear mistranslates his words due to his uncertainty in the situation, the effect is to render the non-Sioux-speaking audience “excluded from the communications going on.”⁵³ Meanwhile, the very words he chooses to speak to parade his ancestral

⁵⁰ Lyons, “Rhetorical Sovereignty,” 462.

⁵¹ Standing Bear, *My People the Sioux*, 143.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 167.

⁵³ Silva, *Aloha Betrayed*, 66.

language, which the school has forbidden him to use as a means of communication and is now being co-opted as a form of entertainment, are actually a joke at the white audience's expense, and could certainly be imagined to cause the other Sioux boys to smirk into their dinner plates.

A similar exercise of rhetorical sovereignty is evident in the stories of some Coast Salish peoples who locate literacy (in the way I have been using the term throughout this paper) within Salish history, as "something indigenous that was itself once taken away."⁵⁴ One example is recorded by James Teit, an anthropologist, who wrongly identified this as a "Thompson Indian" tale when it was in fact Bert Allison, a Similkameen chief, who related it to him.⁵⁵ In this story, Coyote is gifted an advice-giving paper by "Old One or Great Chief," and proceeds to lose it, which leads Allison to state that "[i]f Coyote had not lost it, the Indians would now know writing, and the whites would not have had the opportunity to obtain written language."⁵⁶ In the same vein, Okanagan elder Harry Robinson tells the story of Coyote and his twin, to whom literacy was revealed by God at the beginning of the world:⁵⁷

He put the paper on the ground... And he find a stone. And he take stone and put the stone on the paper so it wouldn't fly away... Went up to Heaven... But these two [twins] still around... And this younger one, he look at this paper lying there with stone on 'em. He thought, 'I take this paper and I hide 'em...' And he thinks, 'This paper, He's going to give 'em to my friend because he's the older one. He's going to get this paper not me. And he's going to be the boss. And not me. But I take this paper and I hide 'em... Tell 'em that the wind blowed.

... And that younger one, now today, that's the white man. And the other one, that's me. That's the Indian.⁵⁸

⁵⁴ Carlson, "Orality about Literacy," 43.

⁵⁵ Wendy C. Wickwire, introduction to *Living by Stories: A Journey of Landscape and Memory*, by Harry Robinson, ed. Wendy C. Wickwire (Vancouver: Talonbooks, 2005), 24.

⁵⁶ James A. Teit, "More Thompson Indian Tales," *The Journal of American Folklore* 50, no. 196 (April/May 1937): 173.

⁵⁷ Carlson, "Orality about Literacy," 47.

⁵⁸ Harry Robinson, *Write It on Your Heart: The Epic World of an Okanagan Storyteller*, ed. Wendy C. Wickwire (Vancouver: Talonbooks, 1989), 43-46.

These stories posit “that whites were a banished people who colonized this country [‘Canada’] through fraudulence associated with an assigned form of power and knowledge which had been literally alienated from its original inhabitants,”⁵⁹ which, to me, is an excellent example of the exercise of rhetorical sovereignty in that it re-appropriates Eurocolonial notions of the “evolutionary developmental paradigm” of literacy/orality and deploys them in delegitimizing settler presence on the lands — and in the minds, through cognitive imperialism — of Indigenous peoples.

Conclusion

In describing the assimilatory aims of American Indian boarding schools, Lyons notes that “[t]his forced replacement of one identity for another, a cultural violence enabled in part through acts of physical violence, was in so many ways located at the scene of writing.”⁶⁰ In countering these multiple and ongoing violences, Indigenous peoples in the nineteenth century ‘returned to the scene of the crime,’ so to speak, by agitating for access to and strategically employing multimodal literacies that allowed them both to ‘speak to’ the colonizing forces in ways that would engender a response *and* to assert their claims to self-determination through the assertion of rhetorical sovereignty. While these resistances took many different forms and were certainly not all as successful as the instances I chose to examine here, they all speak to the refusal of Indigenous peoples to be subsumed under colonial hierarchies of knowledge and their ability to “situate literacy... within a context of power relationships and a discourse that emphasizes the value of innovation and flexibility.”⁶¹ The erasure of these resistances within mainstream historiography has served the imperial project through the racializing discourses of ‘civilization,’ by which settlers have claimed and continue to claim legitimate sovereignty over the land and peoples. Linda Tuhiwai Smith illuminates the complex intersections of imperialism, history, and writing, situating the historical dynamics I have discussed in this paper very much within ongoing colonization and ongoing resistance. She states: “Indigenous peoples want to tell our own stories, write

⁵⁹ Wickwire, introduction to *Living by Stories*, 30.

⁶⁰ Lyons, “Rhetorical Sovereignty,” 449.

⁶¹ Carlson, “Orality about Literacy,” 44.

our own versions, in our own ways, for our own purposes;" in this pursuit, the "rewriting and rerighting" of history plays a central role:⁶²

A critical aspect of the struggle for self-determination has involved questions relating to our history as indigenous peoples and a critique of how we, as the Other, have been represented or excluded from various accounts... [There is] a very powerful need to give testimony to and restore a spirit, to bring back into existence a world fragmented and dying. The sense of history conveyed by these approaches is not the same thing as the discipline of history, and so our accounts collide, crash into each other.⁶³

The violence enacted in part through the hegemonic discourses of disciplinary history was, in the late nineteenth century, countered by Indigenous peoples' skillful manipulation of colonial literacies; Indigenous peoples today continue to challenge these dominant narratives at the level of text⁶⁴ and beyond, writing an Indigenous future into being.

⁶² Linda Tuhiwai Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples* (London: Zed Books, 1999), 28.

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ Ibid., 19.

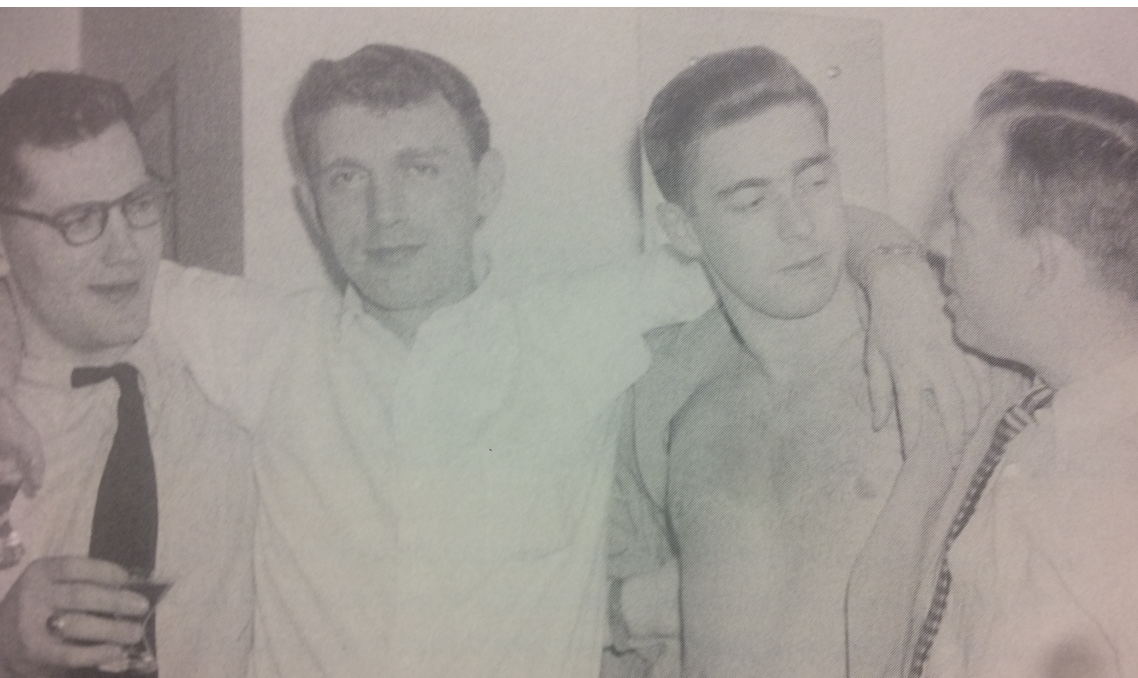
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A photo from one of Paul's parties; many of those affected by the Lavender Scare. This photo is taken from Johnson's *The Lavender Scare*. I based my character of Stanley on the man on the extreme left.



Gay men tried to maintain their community ties during the Lavender Scare. I took the community aspect of this photo and tried to embed it within my story. Taken from David Johnson's *The Lavender Scare*.

The Interrogation

Julia Borghesi

Thursday

His eyes met mine as he stepped through the doorway. Bright. Blue. Piercing. His tall stature gave off an essence of raw, unchecked power. Every step closer to me, my heart beat faster and faster. Thump. Step. Thump. Step. Was it my turn today?¹ Had I been found out? No Stan, I told myself, you cannot let anyone see you like this; you cannot give off any sort of sign. I tried to swallow, but my mouth was too dry. He neared my desk.

I slid my chair backwards slightly, as if to run or fight or simply stand—I hadn't gotten that far yet. The footsteps were getting closer.

The dark blue suit walked past me.

He stopped at Bob's desk down the hall.

"...Come with me... questions," he summoned.

That's all I heard as my heart slowed and feeling returned to my fingers. I looked down at my watch. 3:37pm. This wasn't my time.

"Another one bites the dust," he muttered as he pushed his cigarette into the ashtray.

John slumped back on our couch, grabbed his book, and began his descent into his own little world—something he'd been doing more frequently as of late. John acted as though nothing bothered him, but I knew. He may have a smart retort following the news of yet another man or woman erased from the department, but I saw right through it, down to the pain he felt and the fear that it might be us next.

"Could you try to not be so goddamn nonchalant about this, John? No one appreciates your apathetic comments—OK?" I snapped back.

¹Johnson mentions how government workers wondered every time the phone rang or someone came into the office if it was going to be their turn for a "grueling interrogation about their sex life." David K. Johnson, *The Lavender Scare*, (Chicago: University Press, 2004), 149.

I'd been holding in this anger all the way home from work, a trip I made alone of course, since John and I took different routes to arrive at the apartment at different times. After watching Bob's desk sanitized of his existence, something felt different in me. For a while now, there'd been an ebb and flow to the rising count of people removed from the office. It had been happening so often that I became numb to it. Maybe something finally snapped—after all, this gay witch-hunt has been going on for 3 years now. I'm not sure how much more I can take. I love John, but is this really worth it? Are we fools to think we can keep our relationship a secret when it seems like everyone and everything has been mobilized to root us out? Easily blackmailed, morally subverted, security risks, that's what they say about us.²

I remember when John and I first met in 1949. This life seemed more feasible; it was slightly easier to be gay in those days. When John moved here from Cincinnati in January of 1948, the State Department had needed thousands of new employees,³ so the jobs were readily available. He was hired as a clerk in the Cryptography department; he'd always had a knack for codes and riddles. I'd arrived in Washington a year earlier from South Bend, Indiana. My interests lay more with the desks of the countries and I started as an aide to the manager of the Finnish Desk.⁴ John and I met at the Georgetown University Library. We had both enrolled in the School of Foreign Service night classes,⁵ as had many of our State Department colleagues had done. One night in November 1948, we were talking at the Chicken Hut on 1720 L Street⁶ and things just fell into place. The next weekend, we found ourselves at one of Paul's crazy parties,⁷ as so many of us at the State Department and other branches of government work did, and that was that. It may seem cliché to say but we really did fall in love right away, despite the many ways in which we are polar opposites. John is slightly reserved, quieter and a bit cynical, but it worked.

² Kempton B. Jenkins, Oral history interview, *Frontline Democracy: U.S. Foreign Affairs Oral History Collection*, ed. Marilyn Bentley and Marie Warren. Web, 2000.

³ The New Deal, the Second World War, and the ensuing Cold War brought many men and women to Washington D.C for Civil Service. David K. Johnson, *The Lavender Scare*, (Chicago: University Press, 2004), 93.

⁴ Ibid, 158. This job was taken from C.L., who was uncovered as gay and subsequently fired.

⁵ Barbara Good. "Oral history interview," *Frontline Democracy: U.S. Foreign Affairs Oral History Collection*, ed. Marilyn Bentley and Marie Warren. Web, 2000.

and David K. Johnson, *The Lavender Scare*, (Chicago: University Press, 2004), 60.

⁶ Brett Beemyn, "A Queer Capital: Race, Class, Gender and the Changing Social Landscape of Washington's Gay Communities, 1940-1955," In *Creating a Place for Ourselves: Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual Community Histories*, edited by Brett Beemyn, (New York: Routledge, 1997), 185.

⁷ Johnson, *The Lavender Scare*, 15.

That first year was relatively easy in terms of managing our relationship. Our friends knew, obviously, and we didn't have to be as careful at the office as we do now. There, we pretended to be roommates. Our fellow pretenders knew the truth too, however. This was before everything changed when Peurifoy declared, in March of 1950,⁸ that the immoral people corrupting the government were homosexuals. The grapevines of the federal bureaucracy were alive with gossip about who might be targeted first. Most of us in the State Department knew we were resented for being the effeminate intellectual diplomats for so long;⁹ we had to change everything about our lives. No one really ever talked to each other at work¹⁰ after that and my office became eerily silent.

Everyone's attitude had changed. Once we'd seen the first few people get fired, it was as if we'd been infected with the pervasive suspicion of anyone and every action. But it was Thomas' removal from the office that changed how all of us acted outside of work. Thomas Bradford had been an aide at the Finnish desk, with whom I'd sometimes worked. One Wednesday morning in late 1950, four men strutted confidently towards his desk.

"Thomas Bradford?" the men asked.

"Yes, sir?" he said, his voice slightly higher than others'.

"We need you to accompany us to the Civil Service Commission for an interview please,"¹¹ a shorter man said. The largest of the four changed his posture slightly, readying himself for action. Thomas grabbed his jacket and briefcase from his desk, seemingly relaxed. He even flashed us a small smile as if to assure us he would be ok. The office watched with unease, uncertain of what it was witnessing. Was this part of the investigation going on in the department or something else? Eventually we learned the gist. The two men seemed to know that Thomas spent a lot of his nights at the bar in the Mayflower hotel.¹² Anyone in the know would know that's where guys picked up other guys.

Thomas was interrogated for hours, or so we assumed. Our intel was limited, but apparently a secretary at the Civil Service Commission saw him leave the building at

⁸ Noted as Peurifoy's Revolution, in which he distinctly reveals, alongside Secretary of State at the time, Dean Acheson, that homosexuals were in fact security risks. Ibid,17.

⁹ Ibid., 92.

¹⁰ Ibid., 131.

¹¹ Johnson, *The Lavender Scare*, 145.

¹² Beemyn, "A Queer Capital," 196.

least 3 hours after he'd walked in with those two men. The scariest part of all was not knowing what had happened inside that interrogation room.

I will never forget the feeling that came over me when Barbara, our office secretary, told me. My stomach dropped. I felt like I was going to vomit. Dead? How could someone I saw just yesterday, alive and well, be dead? What the hell happened in that interview? What did they say to him? Could the same thing happen to me? Would it happen to John? I couldn't bear the thought of it. My world would end.

Thomas was quiet. He never seemed to have many friends outside of work—just those that we sometimes saw him with at the bars. It isn't hard to imagine his despair. How could he see a way out after he had lost his job and when his chances at any other job had been pulled out so quickly from under him? Thomas hanged himself that night. Those bastards probably didn't even bat an eyelash.¹³

No one has said his name since. Every trace of Thomas disappeared too. His pens, desk accessories—all gone the next day. I'm not even sure who knows what about the situation. Despite the erasure of Thomas from our office, our silence and our denial, we all knew what had to happen. No more going to the Chicken Hut on the weekends. No more talking with people of the same sex at work—definitely not alone. No behaving in any way that could possibly be construed as homosexual.

"What time do we have to be at Madison's again, Stan?" John yelled from the kitchen.

"Seven. I think she's inviting a new girl since Jenny moved to San Francisco, so Nate will have his partner just in case."

Going to Madison's for dinner has become the best part of our social calendar. Madison works in the Commerce Department¹⁴ as a business economist, so she's fairly high up in the department. John and I met her at one of Paul Glaman's parties¹⁵ in 1951. He'd begun to invite more and more lesbians to make the parties look less suspicious to any potential undercover cops.

¹³ The M-Unit and other Government Security officers were in fact aware of the suicides committed due to their investigations into state department workers. They went to "great lengths" to cover up their involvement. Johnson, *The Lavender Scare*, 159.

¹⁴ Johnson, *The Lavender Scare*, 148.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, pictures contained in the centerfold of the book and seen on the title page.

I arrived first at the door and stood patiently. Finally, John arrived. I had left slightly earlier to avoid anyone seeing us entering the building together. I knocked three times hard to let Madison know it was us. She opened the door quickly, then yanked us inside.

"Madison! You could give me a second to get inside the door!" John said, straightening himself up.

"You don't know who could have seen you!" she countered. She also straightened her skirt as she rushed to her beautiful kitchen, filled with the newest appliances.

"I'm sorry John," she said, checking on some boiling potatoes. "I don't know what's wrong with me lately. I just feel like everyone's watching me. My secretary must suspect something: she's been very odd around me, more so than usual. I just can't think straight." Madison stared ahead as she held the steaming pot. I felt unnerved. Madison always had it together. If she was unravelling, what did that mean for the rest of us?

"Here, let me take that," I said, grabbing the big pot from her hands. "Sit down, have a good gulp of wine."

"I've caught her on the phone when I haven't asked her to place any calls. I catch her staring at me. It's as though she's examining my every move: my clothes, my face and my mannerisms. I think she's trying to spot something that's a bit off, anything she can report to the security officers. Oh and last week, she kept hiding these papers on her desk. When I went out to ask her to call Jonathan in Accounting, she almost jumped out of her skin and quickly pulled a stack of papers to cover a small piece of paper."

"I'm sure it's all in your head. You're so careful, Madison. Besides, she wouldn't have any proof," Samantha said, walking up and putting an arm around her shoulders.

"You don't even need proof anymore," Madison muttered under her breath as she finished plating dinner for everyone. She was the last person I thought I'd see defeated. But how could I blame her? We've been living under the stress of carefully choosing every word we say; creating an image with the clothes we wear; and projecting "normalcy" in the moves we make. Madison had even taken to wearing suggestive clothing in an effort to appear interested in men.

"Okay, table everyone, dinner is just about ready."

We ate in suspended animation, all eight of us uneasy in light of Madison's unusual demeanour. After five minutes of what seemed like a year of silence, the doorbell rang. We looked at one another. Madison wasn't expecting anyone else.

Madison's steps were slow and apprehensive as she moved to the door. The rest of us sprang into action. We quickly paired up as "wives" and "husbands."¹⁶ We'd been ready for this, making sure we were an even number of men and women beforehand and we'd made sure that our couples were matched up, should anything happen. Up till now, we'd never had to use this emergency plan. I grabbed Samantha and pulled her into the seat next to me.

Madison put her hand on the doorknob and turned to look at the table. She was so pale her skin seemed translucent. She turned the doorknob slowly as we held our breath.

"Hello, dear!" a small old lady croaked.

"Hi...um...how many I help you ma'am?" Madison wavered.

"I am so sorry to bother you all, and oh look all your friends, I am terribly sorry"

We managed perfect smiles and assurances that the intrusion was fine.

"I was just wondering if I could borrow some sugar? My grandkids are coming over tomorrow and they love grandma's blueberry pie! Silly old me forgot to pick some up at the store today."

Madison stared at the seemingly kind old lady. John joined her by the door to ease the awkwardness.

"Of course! Uh, dear go get the lovely lady her sugar," John softly nudged her.

Madison wandered over to the kitchen without a word. She gave the old lady her sugar, John closed the door, and we all returned to the table.

Madison began laughing uncontrollably. I looked at John and he shrugged. Samantha crossed over from my side of the table and crouched beside her as the laughter gave way to sobs. Hot tears streamed down Madison's face. She didn't blink or wipe them away but stared at the glass of the dining cabinet that faced the table. The only sound that filled the room was her gasps for breath as she cried. I couldn't think of anything to say. I felt numb.

"Madi, its ok. It was nobody, just the elderly lady from down the hall. It's nothing." Samantha caressed her hand.

"You don't understand. She could be working for them. She could have known we were all here. And she got a good look at every one of us." Madison rose from her chair, stormed out, and slammed her bedroom door shut.

¹⁶ Johnson, *The Lavender Scare*, 148.

“Ok, I think we should leave. Madison needs to rest. It’s been a rough day for everyone,” I said. I wanted to stay and to help her collect herself again, but I was at a loss as to how. What do you say to someone so paranoid? Was it only a matter of time before we’d all crack under the pressure of keeping our entire lives a secret?

Friday

After the fiasco of last night, I was restless. Madison had become a quivering wreck—surely a sane reaction for anyone in this precarious position? Would I fall prey to the same panic? That was the only question I felt I could answer. Yes, it was only a matter of time. Despite all this obsessing, it was seven and I had to get out of bed. How ironic: I needed to get myself to the very reason that caused my restlessness, my job. John had already gotten up, showered, shaved, had breakfast and left long ago. He was generally the one who left early to keep up our façade of separate lives.

I could tell something was different when I walked into the office. The Foggy Bottom¹⁷ seemed gloomier than usual. As I was about to sit down at my desk, Barbara told me that two men had left a note for me about a meeting at the Civil Service Commission at 2pm, and it required my attendance. The sadness in her eyes expressed exactly what I was thinking.

Civil Service Commission meant one thing—they knew. How? How could they know? Maybe this wasn’t what I thought it was. I thought they came to get you in person? Maybe this was something else. Stay positive, Stan, you did everything right. Stay calm.

“Maybe it’s not what we think it is,” Barbara whispered.

I think I counted every black dot on the ceiling while I was waiting for them. Them. I did not even know who they would be. What would they look like? The men, or women perhaps, who would question my very being, I had no idea who they were. Breathe, Stan. Breathe. You can’t convince them of your undying loyalty if you’re not conscious. Thank God I wore my most masculine suit. Down to my tie, black as night, I looked like one of those tough guys in a gangster movie. I’ve had to pretend to be someone I wasn’t before; I’m from a small town. My parents had their suspicions, which I didn’t allow to

¹⁷ A common nickname for the State Department. Barbara Good. “Oral history interview.”

percolate—I left home as soon as I could. But where could I run in this situation? I couldn't leave John. I couldn't leave this tiny, perfectly square, white walled, hot as hell room either.

The door handle twisted, and my stomach follow suit. Two men, one of which I recognized, walked single file into the room and sat down in the two wooden chairs on the other side of the desk. It was Blue Eyes, the one I saw yesterday morning. Was it how I looked at him? Was it the way I looked yesterday? Did someone say something to him? Did Bob say something? The other man looked like just an average Joe. The two of them had obviously just come from lunch; Average Joe had a little bit of lettuce in his teeth. They began to whisper to each other.

They were close to one another and their voices were low, leaving me to listen to my thumping heart. My heart rate hitting 200 at least once a day seemed to have become a regular occurrence.

“...small hands...”¹⁸ I overheard.

It felt like we had been sitting for hours. Their whispering seemed to be in slow motion and I felt like the room was pushing in on me.

“Thank you, Mr. Greene, for your appearance at this meeting today. We are going to give you an opportunity to answer questions concerning information which has been received by the U.S. Civil Service Commission.”¹⁹ My eyes met Blue Eyes' once again and that same numbness returned to my fingers, like the first time we met.

“Um, ok.” I coughed, attempting to shake out the nervousness from my body

“Mr. Greene, the Commission has information that you are an admitted homosexual. What comment do you wish to make regarding this matter?”²⁰

I froze.

Do I lie?

Do I admit it?

I could feel the blood rushing to my face. The heat radiating from my cheeks was probably obvious to them. Quick, Stan, make a decision. Fight or flight? Choose.

Fight.

“I have no comment upon that matter, uh Mr.?” I couldn't believe I'd just said that.

¹⁸ Johnson mentions accusations of homosexuality were sometimes based on smaller or larger body parts than that gender's standard. He specifically mentions a woman's lesbian accusation coming from the larger size and odd-shape of her lips. Johnson, *The Lavender Scare*, 119.

¹⁹ Ibid., 147.

²⁰ Johnson, *The Lavender Scare*, 148.

"Mr. Szluck"²¹

"Yes, Mr. Szluck, I have no comment," I said again.

"Ok well Mr. Greene, do you know John McKenzie? Madison Tress? Bob Hamilton?"

John. No.

No. This can't be possible.

"Mr. Greene, an answer," Average Joe bellowed.

"I..." I gulped. I felt my chest tighten.

"I, I, uh No. No, I don't." How could I have just erased the existence of someone I loved in a simple word? John, please forgive me.

"So you were not at the residence of Madison Tress, known lesbian, last night for dinner?" he smugly revealed.

"Uh."

"I've had it with this faggot's bullshit, he needs to answer the questions straight. Grab the polygraph,"²² Average Joe spat. He got up from his seat, stomped over to the door and vanished. Leaving the crack of the door open slightly, that's when I heard him.

John.

"I would like a lawyer please if there's going to be an interview," he demanded in his gruff voice.

"Shut up you fairy, you don't deserve shit,"²³ his handler yelled.

Their voices receded as Average Joe returned and slammed the door shut.

John.

He was all I could think about.

They pulled my arm from me. I couldn't even feel the small black clips placed on my fingers. Average Joe pulled the tight strap around my chest, then the cuff around my upper right arm. The wires seemed connected to a suitcase-looking contraption, which

²¹ Ibid., 130.

²² The tactic of the personal interview and polygraph tests were used by the Miscellaneous (M) Unit, a group of Security Officers created by the State Department's Bureau of Security and Consular Affairs new head, R. W. McLeod. He created this special unit predominately to deal with moral and homosexual accusations, however homosexual accusations were almost all the investigations. The M unit and the leadership of McLeod was installed by then President Eisenhower's "Let's clean house" new security system, which was primarily focused on the State Department. Johnson, *The Lavender Scare*, 128.

²³ Those who were interviewed and interrogated by the M-Unit and other Security Officials were denied lawyers. Ibid, 148.

itself was connected to a meter than produced a large needle that rested on graph paper.²⁴ What was this device?

"You better answer these questions truthfully Mr. Greene, or else my machine will tell me otherwise," Szluck warned.

"Do you now or have you ever engaged in homosexual sex?" he continued.

"Uh, no," I replied, shaking. The needle moved sharply upwards. What did that mean? Average Joe smiled.

"Come on Stanley, you have haven't you? You fucking disgust me. You probably do it with younger boys don't you? You sick, sick man."²⁵

"No. No. What are you talking about?" I could feel the tears welling up.

"JUST SAY IT MR. GREENE. YOU'RE A HOMOSEXUAL. GAY. FAIRY. QUEEN. HOW ELSE DO YOU WANT US TO SAY IT?" he said, banging his fist on the desk repeatedly with every slur. The bangs reverberated throughout my entire body. I could feel the tears running down my cheeks.

"...yes."

"I DIDN'T HEAR YOU."

"YES," I yelled through the tears.

I tried to wipe them away.

"Yes, that's what I thought." Average Joe obviously derived a lot of pleasure from this.

"Now we've established your status Mr. Greene. We're going to need names," Szluck said.

No. Please. I've told them what they wanted to know. Couldn't they just throw me out. Kick me out of Washington. I'm done.

"Mr. Greene, you're going to need to give me names of other homosexuals you associate with or else I will make sure no one will hire you, ever. Being a homosexual is very detrimental to the security of our great nation." His smoothness in delivering those heart-severing words revealed how many times he'd uttered this threat. I can only imagine how many times.

²⁴ The version of the polygraph machine that was most likely used in this scenario was that of Leonarde Kessler. This version of the machine, which newly added the ability to monitor blood volume change, was updated in 1939. It was purchased by the FBI, as their first polygraph machine and was the prototype of the modern telegraph. Don Gruben & Lards Madsen, "Lie detection and the polygraph: A historical review." *The Journal of Forensic Psychiatry & Psychology* 16, no. 2 (2005): 361.

²⁵ Many believed that homosexuality was perversion, involving some sort of relationship with younger boys, if the homosexual man in question looked older. They were seen as morally as well as sexually deviant.

My mind swung back to John. What was happening to him? Was he enduring the same treatment? What answers had he given? What would John do in this situation? Protect. He would protect no matter the cost.

"I don't associate with any homosexuals." The needle jerked again.

"Mr. Greeeeeeeeene," Joe slurred.

"I don't." The needle jerked again.

"Give us names or your letter of resignation."

The hot light above us swung slightly, left then right, as loud footsteps came from above us. Cheap government buildings, I thought. Any way I could escape making this decision, I would. Distracting myself was the only way to keep from crying.

"Did you not hear me? Names or your letter of resignation"

What do I do? Damned if I do, damned if I don't. I couldn't bear inflicting this upon someone else. I thought quickly.

"Who gave me up?" I inquired.

"That's none of your business. Could've been a self-respecting citizen who is on the lookout for the safety of this country or one of you moral degenerates."

"I can't," I whispered to myself.

"What?"

"I would like to resign," I said as I tore off the cuff on my upper arm and tried to unstrap myself from the chest harness.

"Ok Mr. Greene, wait a second," Szluck requested.

"NO. I'm done. Take me out of this stuff. I'm done. I don't want to do this anymore."

They stared at me, waiting for me to change my mind and reveal other men and women like me. I wouldn't. I couldn't live with myself if I did. After a few seconds, they unhooked me from the machine. I signed the relevant paperwork. Tried to hide my face as I was escorted out of the building. Even being a now admitted homosexual, I still maintained my secretive manner. No sign of John on the way out. Of course, I didn't ask for him. I didn't want him to lose his job too. I'm sure he made it out ok. He was so clever and always so good at hiding it. Everyone had always thought he was hetero.

I normally took the bus home, but I needed to walk and to stretch my arms, my legs that had just been bounded by fear for what seemed like hours in that horrible room. What had I just done? I felt dazed as I walked home. Immune to bumps and pushes of the other people I encountered as I staggered along.

I finally reached home and climbed the stairs to the apartment. Every step took extra effort, my body heavy with exhaustion. I reached into my pocket for the key. Maybe John was home. I hoped he was okay.

I swung the door open.

Clothes were strewn everywhere. There was a broken glass on the kitchen tiles. The sink's tap still running. I walked to the bedroom. All of John's things were gone. At first I couldn't believe it. I checked all his side drawers. No passport, no dress watch, no book. I opened the dresser. Everything gone. Nothing John owned was left in the apartment. It was like he had never lived here.

I slumped down, the weight of my body, my life, too much.

Just like that, I was alone.

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Interview with Jeremy Tai

Kelly Liu

I. What led you to specialize in modern Chinese history?

It was a long and tortuous process. As you know, I grew up in a Chinese family. My parents immigrated to the U.S. right after the economic reforms took off in China. We lived in New York City, but we were often in the company of other Chinese families in our neighborhood, at church, and at Chinese school. I didn't come to appreciate Chinese history or culture until I was in college though. All I had to understand China before that were Cold War representations that convinced me that my parents were from this poor, brainwashed, and unfree Communist country. At NYU, I eventually took a course with Rebecca Karl, an intellectual historian of modern China. Her class on modern China really opened my eyes. She helped me unlearn all of those Cold War constructs by situating the Chinese revolution and its ideas within the global historical contexts of imperialism and capitalism.

That course was an important step in my intellectual journey because it provided me with my first introduction to Marxism. Marxism really spoke to me on a personal level because I grew up in a working-class family. My parents were from rural China and engaged in manual labor, cooking in restaurants, working as street vendors, sewing in sweatshops, and housekeeping for yuppies on the Upper East Side. Learning about the Chinese revolution really helped me understand my family's past, of course, but class analysis also gave me a tool to think about our present too.

At NYU, I wrote an honors thesis that looked at the gendered representations and experiences of rural migrants in Beijing. Migrant neighborhoods were (and still are) subjected to government crackdowns and demolition in the name of public order, public health, and the public interest. I would eventually revisit these themes when working at a labor union in New York City. Our organizing campaigns had to deal with the issues of gentrification, affordability, and displacement. Because the effects of urban renewal were no different in China, it was helpful once again for me to adopt a global historical perspective, now to understand urban politics. After taking off about five years from

school, I applied to work on a PhD at UC Santa Cruz with Gail Hershatter and Emily Honig, two gender historians whose scholarship on urban China always helped me think about gender, class, and place.

II. What does your current research focus on? Can you tell us about the sources you're consulting?

My research focuses on economic development campaigns launched over the twentieth century by the Chinese state in Northwest China. The Northwest is a frontier region that is often considered poor, desolate, and backward. The Chinese state periodically points to the problem of disparities between the wealthy coast and the poor interior and then channels capital and investment into western regions. Regional inequality is certainly an important problem, but the Chinese state has been motivated by other factors as well. The Northwest is where much of the Muslim population lives. This is a region with a history marked by territorial conquest and ethnic uprisings. State-led development is meant to stem unrest and the threat of separatism in the Northwest. My project looks at how the Chinese state also expands westward whenever it is confronted by economic and territorial crises along the eastern seaboard, including the Great Depression, World War II, the Korean War, the Vietnam War, and most recently, the Great Recession. All of these crises have prompted the central government to search for solutions in the interior, but each time it presents its efforts in western regions as a benevolent intervention designed to raise local people out of poverty.

Some scholars view this series of campaigns as part of a grand narrative of historical progress and economic development in Northwest China. Once you take a closer look at official pronouncements and records, however, we see very different regimes with very different visions for this region. In the early twentieth century, the fantasy that Chinese politicians projected onto this region to garner popular support for economic development was the American frontier story. They believed agricultural colonies on vast and empty "virgin land" would enrich the Chinese nation. Nowadays, the state is building high-speed railroads and laying gas pipelines in the name of reviving the ancient Silk Road. This is a fantasy that emphasizes historic ties to neighboring countries with much-needed resources.

To challenge the statist narrative, it is also important to get beyond the perspectives of Chinese officials. I look at the experiences of people in Xi'an, the city that is typically at

the center of all of these development campaigns. I am interested in how the space and the life of the city changed in ways that go beyond official accounts. Local newspaper columns in particular have helped me capture the uneven effects of these development campaigns through the experiences of women, ethnic minorities, wartime refugees, and migrants.

III. What are some particular challenges that historians face when studying China?

One of the major challenges for historians studying China is gaining access to government archives. To enter an archive, you first need a letter of reference (*jieshao xin*) from a local work unit. If you were a Chinese scholar, you would obtain this letter from your university department. If you are a foreign researcher, however, you have to find a host institution that is willing to vouch for you, such as a university or the academy of social sciences. Even with the letter of reference, the process is not always straight forward. Your access to records is largely up to the archivists' discretion. In one of my archives, there was a large sign that said, "Protect state secrets." I have been very fortunate, especially as a foreign researcher. When I visited the Shaanxi provincial archive, the people working there already had experience working with foreigners, including my own PhD advisor. This was not true at the local level. The staff at the Xi'an municipal archives often had their hands full with elderly folks hoping to get copies of their old employment or education records in order to collect benefits. These archivists are often doing the work of a human resources department for millions of urban residents. The last thing they expected was a young scholar with a Chinese face and an American passport. The archivists had no idea what to do with me. Likewise, I had no idea what to write on a form that asked for things like my class background. I know there were other foreign researchers who were denied access to the same archives. After some initial confusion and wariness, I was able to establish trust by providing a detailed research statement that clearly laid out my questions, interests, and possible sources. Nowadays, there is a website called *Dissertation Reviews* started by Tom Mullaney, the modern China historian at Stanford, which provides the latest updates on Chinese government archives.

Once you gain access to the archives, you may not necessarily find the juicy details that you were hoping to find. Instead, you may be wading through extremely dull reports on, say, the design and construction of public toilets in 1940s Xi'an. Only later did I realize

that public health officials were responding to wartime refugees urinating and defecating everywhere. There is hope that the digitization of archives will allow researchers to be more efficient by allowing us to search for keywords. However, there are also worries that digitization can also allow the state to block keywords as it does through the Great Firewall.

Lastly, sometimes you may find a wealth of documentation in the archives, but it may be full of propaganda and not actually tell you much about what is happening on the ground. As a result, my former advisor, Gail Hershatter, conducted oral histories with elderly women in rural Shaanxi provinces and another China historian Jeremy Brown is well-known for his work rummaging through second-hand markets for private collections.

IV. What are some interesting developments in your field?

The China field has grown tremendously over the past two decades in terms of the number of scholars working on modern China and the breadth of scholarship being produced. Many of the trends in the field follow what's going on in the humanities at large as well as what is happening in contemporary China. I will mention just a few themes. First, following the work of Michel Foucault, quite a few scholars have been interested in the body, biopolitics, and governmentality. We have Dorothy Ko's revisionist account of footbinding, Ruth Rogaski on the discourse of hygiene (*weisheng*), a hallmark of modernity, Susan Greenhalgh on the one-child policy, as well as Miriam Gross on public health campaigns in Maoist China. Second, the China field also has a growing number of scholars working on the environment and ecology, such as Judith Shapiro, Mark Elvin, Robert Marks, Micah Muscolino, Joshua Goldstein, Anna Lora-Wainwright, and Julie Sze. Undoubtedly, this interest reflects widespread concerns with pollution and environmental degradation in contemporary China as well as scholarly interest in the Anthropocene and new materialisms. Third, there are scholars that have contributed to the growing scholarship on affect by delving into the history of emotions, such as Haiyan Lee and Eugenia Lean. Alongside these trends over the last decade or so, historians of modern China have expanded the scope of their work beyond the Republican era and crossed the 1949 divide, which had been the domain of political scientists in earlier decades. More government documents from the 1950s and 1960s are available now. New histories of the People's Republic of China even extend beyond the Maoist period to the 1980s.

V. Conversely, are there any changes you would like to see?

Because of my own research interests, I would like to see our historical inquiries grounded in places other than Beijing and Shanghai. Scholars too often assume that these cities can serve as an index of modernity and national progress in China. Yet, these cities have not had a monopoly on modernity and they did not always serve as models for the rest of the nation to emulate. My research shows how frontier imaginaries and colonization efforts were just as crucial to the making of modern China. We have to examine the experiences of people in villages, the interior, and minority regions to capture the unevenness that has characterized modern China.

I also think there is still a lot of room for China historians to engage with other disciplines in the field and scholars in other fields. In particular, transnational frameworks help us look at how modern China was constituted through the global flows of labor, commodities, and ideas. We can also see how the significance of the Chinese revolution extended beyond the country's borders. Recent examples include the edited volume *The Modern Girl Around the World*, Alexander Cook's *Mao's Little Red Book: A Global History*, and Robeson Taj Frazier's *The East is Black: Cold War China in the Black Radical Imagination*.

VI. Which historians and/or intellectuals have had the greatest influence on your work?

My approach to intellectual and gender history has benefitted enormously from training by my teachers Rebecca Karl, Gail Hershatter, and Emily Honig. The work of Arif Dirlik and China's New Left, such as Wang Hui, has always helped me situate scholarly questions and the historiography of modern China within past and present political contexts. In addition, I draw from the work of Harry Harootunian in the Japan field and the French Marxist intellectual Henri Lefebvre to understand two concepts that are crucial to my work: the modern and the everyday. Lastly, my examination of the making of urban space has also been informed by Walter Benjamin's *The Arcades Project* and the geographer David Harvey's work on spatial fixes.

VII. As a new professor, what are your impressions of McGill and Montreal?

I find it quite refreshing not to be in the United States, especially now that the presidential campaigns have kicked into high gear. Some of my students at McGill are already critical of Cold War paradigms that demonize China in order to support U.S. hegemony. At the same time, they understand that it is important to be able to critique the Chinese state. So I have found that my students can appreciate nuanced arguments that go beyond the black-and-white oversimplifications presented by either Orientalism or Chinese nationalism.

VIII. Any advice for history undergraduates?

Two things for your research and writing. First, remember to start with your sources and not your argument. Otherwise, you may not learn anything new. Arguments are much more nuanced when they are grounded in texts rather than your train of thought.

Second, history is all about the writing. You may have produced a very sophisticated argument but no one will appreciate all of your research and writing if you cannot convey your ideas in a clear and accessible manner.

IX. Favorite Movie

Farewell My Concubine. I still appreciate Chen Kaige's epic story-telling, all of the drama and betrayals set within the history of war and revolution in modern China. Leslie Cheung also portrayed Cheng Dieyi, a queer Peking opera star who specializes in female roles, at a time when homosexuality was criminalized in China.